



**Danish Youth Guarantee  
Implementation Plan  
April 2014**



# Danish Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

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## 0. Introduction

The tackling of youth unemployment is a severe challenge for the EU and its Member States and the Danish government supports the Youth Guarantee Scheme and the strong focus on youth unemployment.

By EU-standards Denmark has a relatively low rate of youth unemployment measured in both general terms and as long-term unemployment. This is largely due to the strong focus on reform policies by the Danish Government. This focus has led to important results – in partnership with social partners and other relevant actors. This report maps the extensive range of recent reforms and schemes enacted and implemented during recent years and months.

### ***The Youth Guarantee***

According to the Youth Guarantee all young people under the age of 25 years should receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

Amongst other guidelines, the Youth Guarantee scheme should be based on a partnership-based approach involving all relevant public authorities, social partners, education institutions, guidance centres etc. The scheme should secure early intervention and offer supportive measures for labour market integration.

### ***Danish compliance***

Denmark fulfil the EU Youth Guarantee given the range of initiatives that are available to help young people to obtain an education and the range of employment and training measures aimed in particular at young people as part of the active labour market policy.

The overall objective for the Danish youth schemes is to:

- get young people without an education into education
- get young people with an education into employment
- give young people without an education and without the preconditions to begin and complete an ordinary education the needed upgrading of skills to obtain an ordinary education.

As explained in detail in this report, young people registering as unemployed at a job centre will have their first interview within seven days. If they lack an ordinary education, they have the right to an educational activation within the first month. If they already have an education, but do not succeed in finding a job within three months, they will receive a quality offer of relevant activation, training or employment.

The time of unemployment is counted from the day of registering at the job centre.

If a young person drops out of education he or she will be contacted by the Youth Guidance Centres. All youths formulate a personal education plan and if they deviate from the plan, the Guidance Centre must contact them within 5 days of receiving this information, and the young person must receive an offer of an alternative activity within 30 days from the first contact.

The Danish labour market is regulated in strong cooperation with social partners and recent reforms have established new initiatives such as the Youth Units and others to improve integrated cooperation between all relevant labour market actors and public authorities.

The youth unemployment initiatives are part of the general Danish active labour market approach and reforms, but also include various initiatives targeted at youth and specific groups of youth with

higher risks of unemployment. This report presents implemented initiatives and measures most relevant for youth.

Education is a special focus of the Danish policy concerning unemployed people below 30 years. In 2013 more than 50.000 persons below 30 years received cash benefit (kontanthjælp). Approximately 90 percent of this group did not have an education. With the cash benefit reform from January 2014 young people are therefore met with clear expectations and support for them to start and finish an education, which can give them access to the labour market.

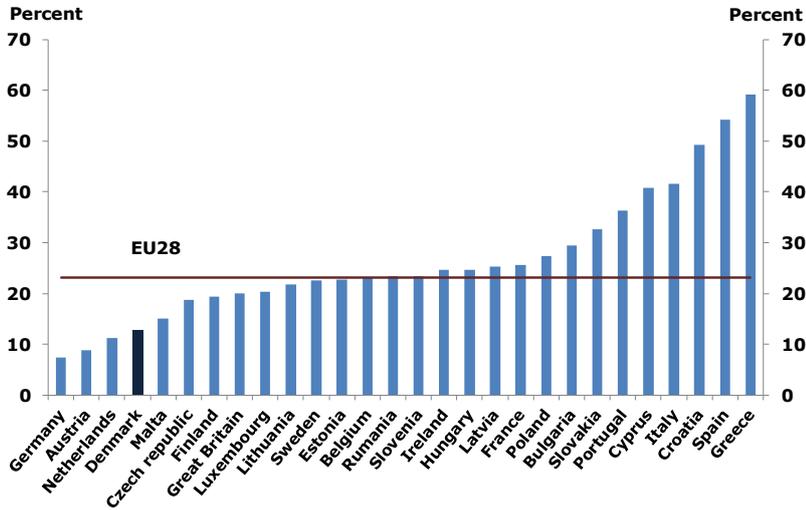
The following report outlines the Danish reforms and policy measures to implement the Youth Guarantee. Section 1 describes the facts on Danish youth employment. Section 2 outlines the initiatives and measures taken under the Youth Guarantee Scheme. Danish labour market policies are characterised by the close cooperation with social partners and between relevant partners explained in section 3. Section 4 describes measures taken to secure early intervention and activation of youth and section 5 outlines supportive measures to ease labour market integration. Part of the presented initiatives is a part of the general active Danish labour market policies and others are wide focused initiatives. In section 6 objectives, funding and planned evaluation of the focused initiatives are presented. Section 7 concludes the report.

The report has been prepared by The Ministry of Employment with input from other ministries and agencies, primarily The Danish Ministry of Education, The Danish Agency for Labour Market and International Recruitment and The Danish Business Authority. The social partners have been consulted in the making of the report.

# 1. Facts on the youth unemployment in Denmark incl. NEETS

In December 2013 the Danish youth unemployment was 12.9 percent. Only three other countries had lower youth unemployment, cf. figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Unemployment rates of under-25 year olds in the EU28 countries, December 2013

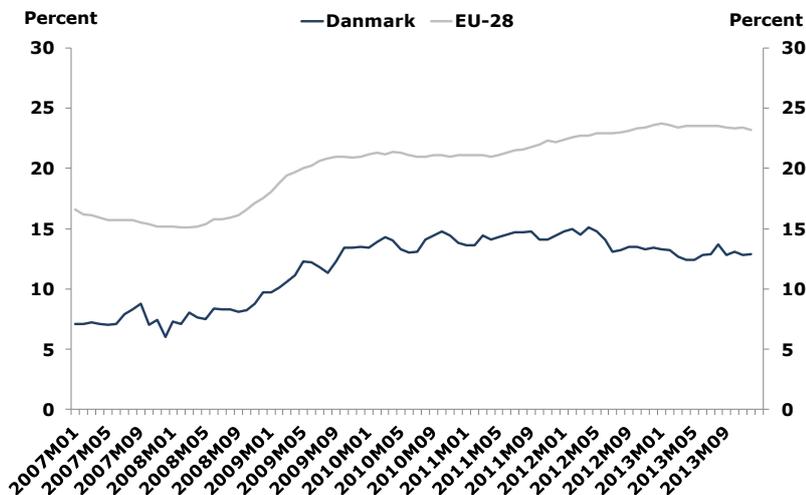


Note: December 2013. The rates are seasonally adjusted  
Source: Eurostat.

Comparing the Danish youth unemployment to the rate among the EU28 countries, youth unemployment in EU28 is almost double the size of the Danish rate. This indicates that the various policy measures have been effective. It is expected that increased focus on the youth, e.g. from the recent Vocational Education and Training Reform and cash benefit reform, will improve their labour market opportunities, and as such it is expected to lower the Danish unemployment rates among the youth.

Up until mid-2012 the economic downturn affected youth unemployment in Denmark to the same degree as EU28 as a whole. That is, the gap between the youth unemployment in Denmark and EU28 has roughly been the same. Since mid-2012 the Danish rate has had a slight downward trend, which has increased the gap, cf. figure 2.

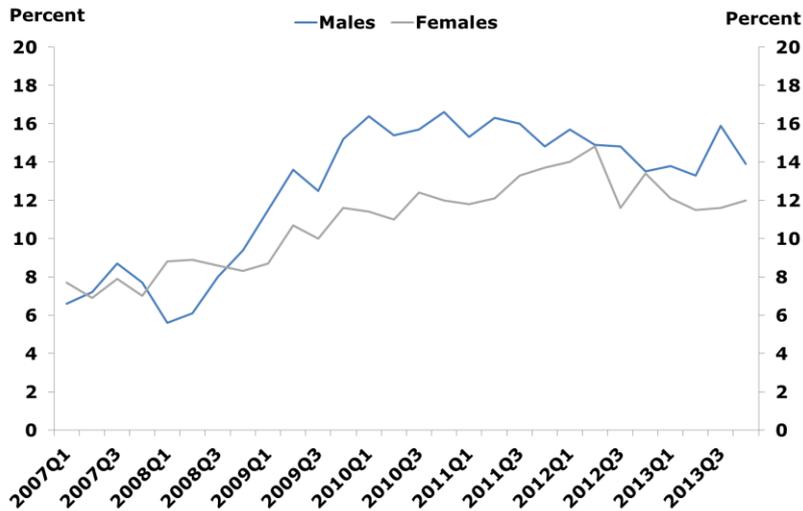
**Figure 2.** Unemployment rates of under-25 year olds in EU28 and Denmark, 2007-2013



Note: 2007-2013. The rates are seasonally adjusted  
 Source: Eurostat.

The unemployment rate for the age group 15-24 years olds have from fourth quarter of 2008 to 2 quarter of 2012 been higher for males than females. Since the end of 2012, the difference in unemployment between sexes grew once again reaching a gap of 4,3percentage points in third quarter of 2013, cf. figure 3.

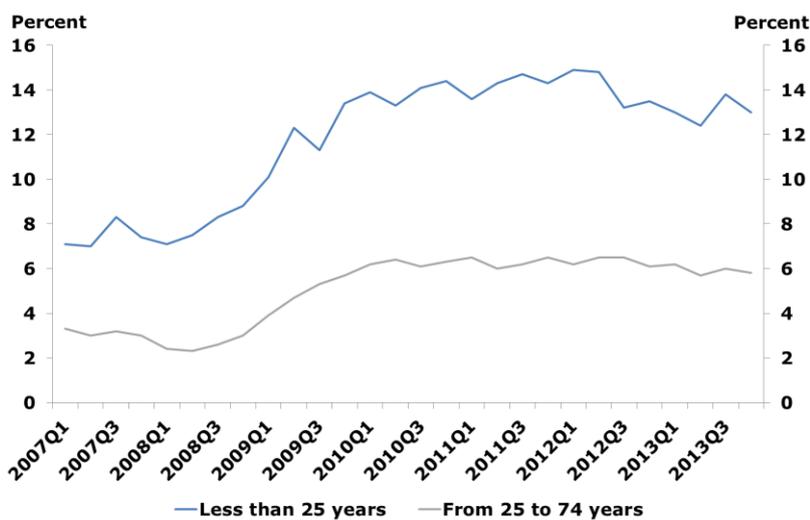
**Figure 3.** Unemployment rates among 15-24 year olds Danish males and females, 2007Q1-2013Q4



Note: 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2007 – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2013. The rates are seasonally adjusted  
 Source: Eurostat.

For the group of 15-24-year-olds the unemployment rate has in the entire period been higher than the unemployment rate for the overall age group, cf. figure 4.

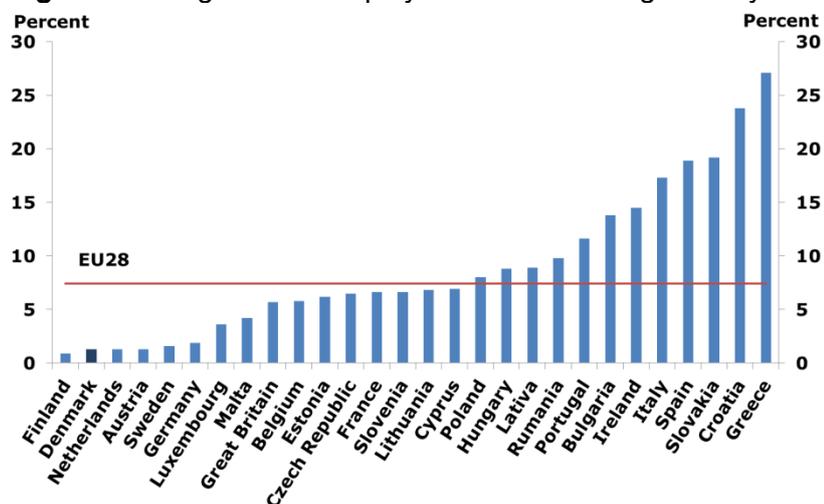
**Figure 4.** Unemployment rates among 15-24 year olds and 25-74 year olds on Denmark, 2007Q1-2013Q4



Note: 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2007 – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2013. The rates are seasonally adjusted  
 Source: Eurostat.

An important part of the youth effort is to reduce the risk of becoming long-term unemployed. Only one other country in EU28 had a lower long-term unemployment among 15-24 year olds in 2012. The Danish rate was 1.3 percent, compared to the significantly higher EU28 rate of 7.4 percent, cf. figure 5.

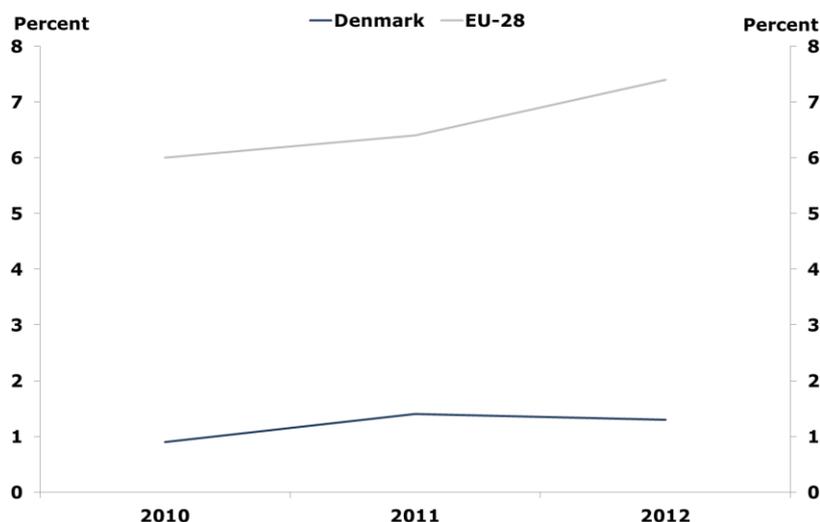
**Figure 5.** Long-term unemployment rates among 15-24 year olds in the EU28 countries, 2012



Note: 2012.  
Source: Eurostat.

From 2011 to 2012 the long-term unemployment rate among 15-25 year olds in EU28 increased, whereas the rate decreased in Denmark, broadening the gap, cf. figure 6.

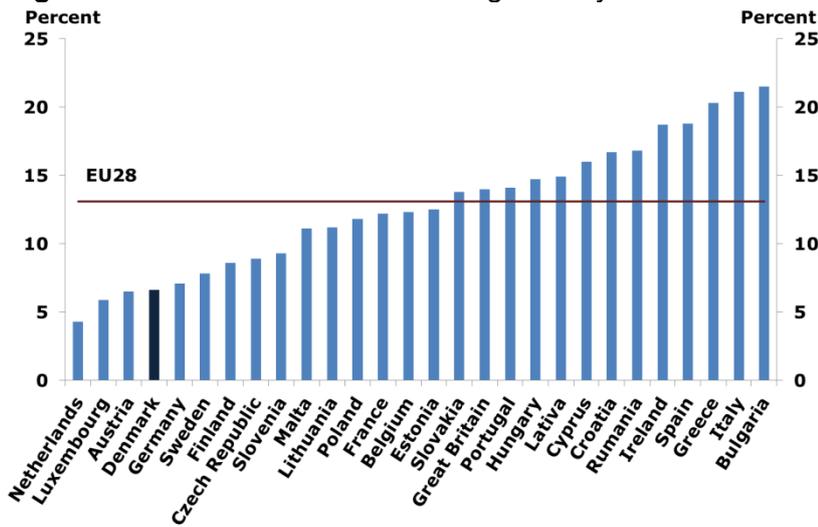
**Figure 6.** Long-term unemployment rates among 15-24 year olds in Denmark and EU28, 2010-2012



Note: 2010-2012. Danish data is only available in the period 2010-2012.  
Source: Eurostat.

The NEETs accounted for 6.6 percent of the Danish 15-24 year olds in 2012, which is nearly half the size of the EU28-rate, cf. figure 6. The gap to EU28 has been relatively constant since the beginning of the economic crisis.

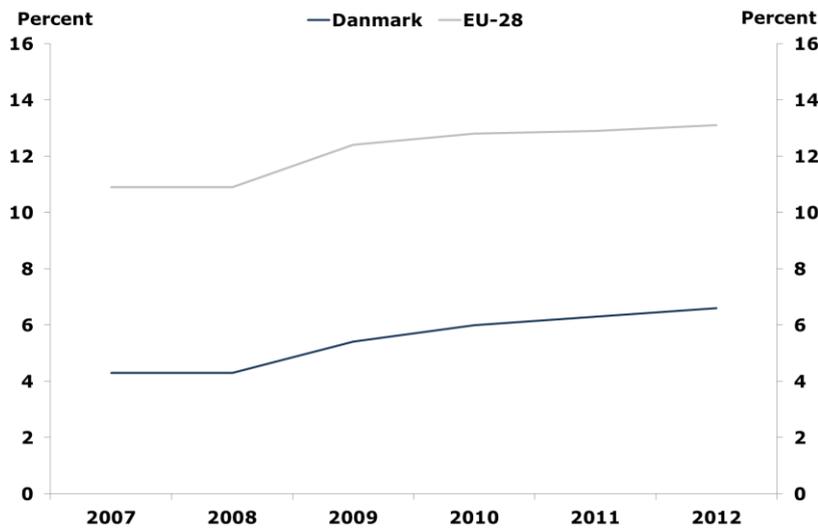
**Figure 7.** The share of NEETs among 15-24 year olds in EU28 countries, 2012



Note: 2012.  
Source: Eurostat.

The difference between the share of NEETs in EU28 and Denmark has been relatively constant since 2007, cf. figure 8.

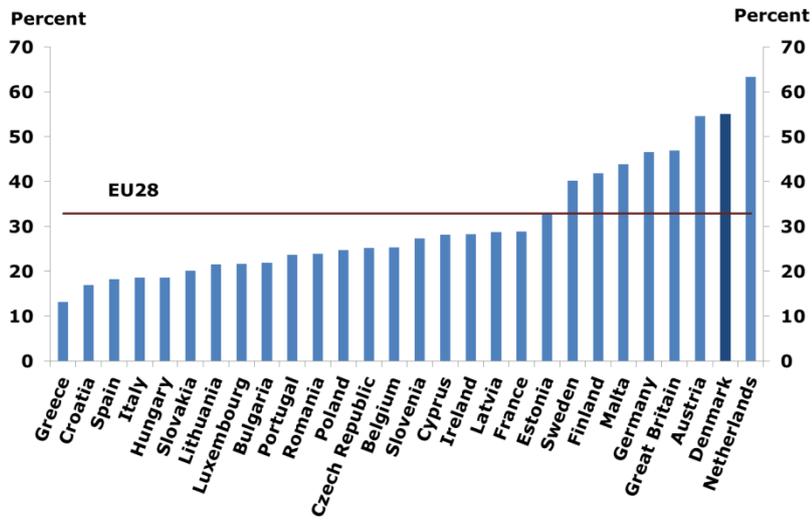
**Figure 8.** The share of NEETs among 15-24 year olds in Denmark and EU28, 2007-2012



Note: 2007-2012.  
Source: Eurostat.

In 2012 the employment rate among 15-24 year olds in Denmark was 55 percent, which makes it the second highest rate in EU28, cf. figure 9. In EU28 the youth employment rate was 32.8 per cent, and thus the Danish rate was around 22 percentage points higher.

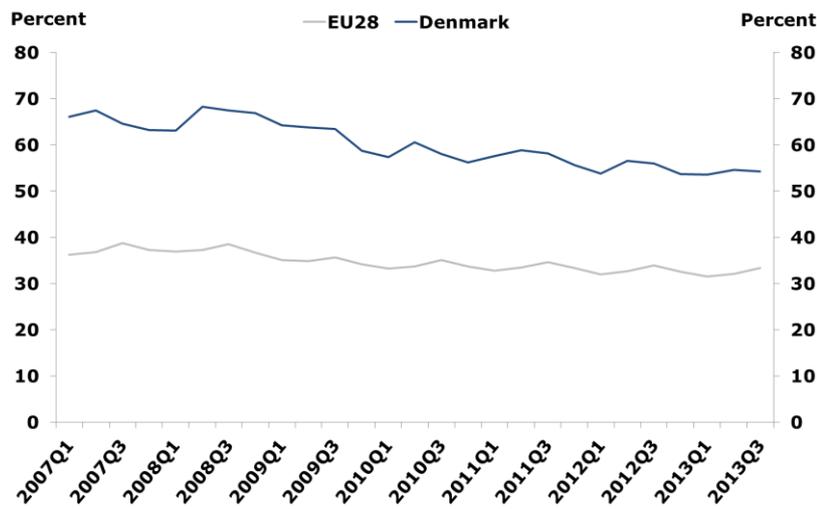
**Figure 9.** Employment rates among 15-24 year olds in EU28 countries, 2012



Note: 2012.  
Source: Eurostat.

Though the Danish employment rate among the youth is much higher than the EU28-rate, the gap between the two has decreased since the beginning of the crisis, cf. figure 10.

**Figure 10.** Employment rates among 15-24 year olds in EU28 and Denmark, 2007Q1-2013Q3



Note: 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2007 – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2013. Not seasonally adjusted.  
Source: Eurostat.

## 2. Implementing the Youth Guarantee Scheme

As shown above, the youth unemployment rate in Denmark is relatively low compared to the EU28-rate. The long-term unemployment rate among 15-24 year olds in 2012 was the second lowest in the EU. Correspondingly the size of NEET group is low. This indicates that the Danish actions have been effective.

Denmark fulfils the Youth Guarantee. Still, the Danish government continues to implement reforms and initiatives, with the purpose of getting more people, and especially young people to take an education, and to get young people with an education into job. Initiatives and measures listed in this report are already enacted.

The efforts start early. Following a political agreement from November 2009 a comprehensive piece of legislation was passed in the Danish parliament in June 2010. 15-17 year olds are obliged to be in education, employment or other approved activity and their qualifications and readiness for education is assessed.

In order to focus on attaining an education, pupils in primary and secondary school work with the subject *Education and Job*. Table 2.1 shows measures securing early intervention for 15-17-years old.

**Table 2.1 Measures for all 15-17-year olds**

| Measure  | Description  |
|--|--|
| <b>15-17-year olds must be in education, employment or other agreed activity</b> | 15-17-years old are obliged to be in education, employment or another activity in accordance with their personal education plan. The activities shall aim at that the 15-17-year old sooner or later completes vocational or upper secondary education or gain foothold at the labour market.  |
| <b>Assessment of 15-17-year olds readiness for education</b>                     | When a young person is leaving primary and lower secondary education to vocational or upper secondary education, the Youth Guidance Centre (explained in detail below) must assess whether the young person possesses the necessary educational, personal and social skills. For young people, who are assessed not yet ready for education, the municipality must provide training or whatever needed to qualify for a positive assessment. |
| <b>Municipal provisions for the 15-17-year old</b>                               | The municipalities must offer young people who are not ready for education special courses aiming at uncovering the interests and competencies of the young person and prepare him/her for education.  |

Steps have been taken to ensure a consistent focus and cohesion between measures for children and measures for young adults. Section three and four mentions the newly established Youth Units as an example. Furthermore the focus of the job centres has been extended to include all young people from the age of 15.

The Youth Guarantee scheme covers youths until 25 years. The Danish focus on youth employment extends until the age of 29 years. Young people aged 18 to 29 is met with tailored measures if they are unemployed. If they have an education making them ready for employment, the aim is to ease the transition in to work. If they do not have an education and perhaps are not preconditioned to begin one, then the goal is to provide the necessary upgrading of skills preparing them to begin an ordinary education. Table 2.2 gives an overview of the three target groups of unemployed youth

and the corresponding aims and offers. The measures mentioned in table 2.2 are explained in detail in section four and five.

**Table 2.2 Initiatives for 18-29 year olds**

| Group  | Aim   | Measures include  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Young people without an education</b>   | The aim is to get young people to complete vocational or further education.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cash benefit reform: Early intervention and activation</li> <li>• Initiative 'Building Bridge to Education'</li> <li>• Reform of vocational education and training</li> <li>• Youth Guidance Centres</li> <li>• The Retention Taskforce</li> <li>• Internship Centres</li> </ul> |
| <b>Young people with an education</b>  | For young people vocational or further education, the aim is to ease their transition into employment.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainee effort for graduates</li> <li>• Wage subsidy jobs</li> <li>• Enterprise training</li> <li>• Jobrotation</li> <li>• Upgrading in connection with an employment</li> <li>• Usefulness job (nyttejob)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Young people without the preconditions to begin and complete ordinary education</b> | Young people without an education and without the preconditions to begin and complete an ordinary education, should be given the needed upgrading of skills to be able to obtain an ordinary education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better transitions to, and retention in VET</li> <li>• We Need All Youngsters</li> <li>• Youth Guidance Centres</li> </ul>   |

The cash benefit reform – along with other recent reforms explained in detail in section 4 and 5– introduces a more active approach and incentives in general and towards young people – which means that everyone is met with clear requirements, expectations and guidance so that more people will have the chance to get a stable relation to the labour market or the educational system. Table 2.3 gives an overview of types of benefits relevant to unemployed youth.

**Table 2.3 Overview of benefit types for young people**

| Type of benefit                             | Description  |
|---|--|
| <b>Unemployment benefit (dagpenge)</b>      | All unemployed persons who are insured through an unemployment insurance fund (A-kasse) have the right to receive unemployment benefit.  |
| <b>Cash benefit (kontanthjælp)</b>          | <p>An unemployed person above 18 can receive cash benefit if the person is not able to provide for herself and the person is not eligible for unemployment benefit or retirement benefit.</p> <p>Concerning all young unemployed persons below 30 years without ordinary education, the cash benefit reform replaced cash benefit with education benefit.</p> <p>Unemployed persons above 30 years with or without education and persons below 30 years with an ordinary education, still receives cash benefit.</p> |
| <b>Education benefit (uddannelseshjælp)</b> | All young unemployed persons below 30 years old without education, receives education benefit as a result of the cash benefit reform. The rate corresponds to the state educational grant and loan scheme rate, which is lower than cash benefit.  |

In this way the young people does not experience a lower rate when beginning an ordinary education, which was the case receiving the former cash benefit rate.

Recipients of education benefit who has challenges, i.e. they are not able to begin and follow through on an ordinary education within a year, have the right to receive a higher rate of benefit after three months, if they participate in an active offer or receive mentor-support in cases where participation in an active offer is not possible.

**State educational grant and loan schemes (SU)**

Danish students are entitled to public support for further education - regardless of social standing. There are two main support programmes.

One is the grant for people over 18 year following a youth education program.

The other support programme is for students enrolled in a higher education course. These students are entitled to a number of monthly grants corresponding to the prescribed duration of the chosen study, plus 12 months. Inside a maximum of 70 grants students can change from one course to another. If the student is taking a higher education programme and used all his/her study grant portions, the student can get a completion loan. The student can receive a completion loan in the last year of studies.

It is expected that increased focus on the youth will improve their labour market opportunities, and as such it is likely to lower the Danish unemployment rates among the youth.

### 3. Partnership approaches

The effort towards unemployed young people under 30 years is, as well as the general employment effort in Denmark, handled through a partnership-based approach.

Depending on the need of the person, the different actors cooperate in partnership-based approaches in order to make sure that the right effort is initiated towards education or job. The cash benefit reform for example reinforced the cooperation between the job centres and the educational institutions, in order for the transition between unemployment and education to become easier.

In this section key organisations supporting the Youth Guarantee are presented.

#### ***Youth Guidance Centres (UU)***

There are 53 youth guidance centres distributed among the 98 municipalities in Denmark. Each centre covers a “sustainable” area in terms of geographical distance and quality. According to the Act on Guidance, all 15-17 year olds have an obligation to be enrolled in an education, employment or other activities designed to ensure that they will get an ordinary education. The Youth Guidance Centres assess the extent to which young people have the academic/vocational, personal and social competencies, which make them ready to begin and complete an upper secondary education.

The municipal Youth Guidance Centres provide guidance services for young people up to the age of 25 years, focusing on the transition from compulsory to upper secondary education or, alternatively, to the labour market.

#### ***Vocational Education and Training including stakeholder involvement (Erhvervsuddannelser)***

The Danish vocational education and training system (VET) is based on the dual training principle: Alternation between school-based education and apprenticeship in an enterprise (workplace training). The VET system qualifies students for labour market entry as skilled workers. Denmark has a high transition from VET to labour market and a low unemployment rate among young people with a VET program.

VET is characterized by a high degree of partnership involvement. The various partners have influence on how VET is organized, which ensures that programs continually meet the requirements for each profession, technical, business and health care.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the general rules and regulations as laid down by the Parliament. It is the Ministry of Education that sets the overall framework of stakeholder's involvement.

The Advisory Council for Initial Vocational Education and Training (REU) is established under the Act on Vocational Education and Training, which regulates its consultative function. The council's main objective is to advise the Minister of Education, but the Council may at its own initiative also discuss and give advice on matters the Council regards as important.

REU consists of a Chairman and 31 members and a number of officials. The majority of those represent the social partners, i.e. employers' and workers' organizations. VET-colleges are represented by representatives of managements, teachers and students through their organisations. The trade committees establish the teaching conditions as duration, objectives, evaluation, entrance location and approval of internship enterprises.

Employers and employees are equally represented in the committees and each year they submit a development report for each of their respective vocational education.

**Production Schools (Produktionsskoler)**

Production schools are an alternative entrance to a VET-college offering individual courses based on practical work and production. The target group is young people below 25 who have not completed an upper secondary education and are without immediate qualifications to enter secondary education. Participating in a production school program up to one year can contribute to the development of the pupil's personal, social and professional skills to enhance opportunities for continued education or transition to stable employment.

**Job centres (jobcentre)**

There are 94 job centres in Denmark. In principle, each municipality has a job centre; however, some of the very small municipalities do not have their own.

The main responsibility of job centres is to establish a quick and efficient match between job seekers and enterprises. Within the employment system, the job centres are responsible for the effort towards young people.

The job centre has a duty to make sure that the effort towards education does not end until the young person begins an education and to make sure that the education is begun. If needed, the job centre should offer mentor-support for the young person who has begun ordinary education.

The job centres are run by the municipalities. The Ministry of Employment is responsible for the general rules and regulations as laid down by the Parliament.

**Municipalities (kommuner)**

There are 98 municipalities in Denmark. Each municipality has its own council elected by the population. The municipalities manage the job centres and employment measures within the framework of legislation for all groups of citizens.

**Youth Units (ungeenheder)**

Several municipalities have made a youth unit at educational institutions. These units offer a broad and cross-sectoral effort to young people so that they meet a coordinated effort and so that they are not sent from one administrative unit to the other.

The units are made up by representatives from the job centre, the health care sector, the social affairs administration, and the educational sector. They must ensure that the young people experience a systematic effort and that he or she will receive relevant offers across the various administrations. The offers must be targeted at education and employment.

**Enterprises (virksomheder)**

Enterprises are a crucial stakeholder to the job centres. By establishing contacts with the enterprises, the job centres are able to match job seekers with job openings.

**Unemployment Insurance Funds (a-kasser)**

There are 27 unemployment insurance funds in Denmark. These funds are responsible to pay out benefits to their members. The unemployment insurance funds provide sector-specific advice on job seeking to the members. And a number of unemployment insurance funds go further by locating job openings and establishing matches between job seekers and enterprises based on their network of union representatives in the enterprises.

**The Social Partners (arbejdsmarkedets parter)**

The social partners are members of the local employment councils. These councils provide advice about employment measures to the job centres. The social partners are also members of the re-

gional and national employment council, where they are able to influence the employment policy on a more strategic level.

Finally, the partners are members of the boards of the vocational educational institutions. Thereby, the social partners are involved in the youth guarantee in both the employment and education sectors.

**Regional Growth Fora (regionale vækstcentre)**

The regional growth fora are responsible for prioritizing most of the European Social Fund in Denmark based on regional growth and development strategies.

The regional growth fora represent the regional partnership: the regions, the municipalities, the business organisations, the education institutions and the social partners.

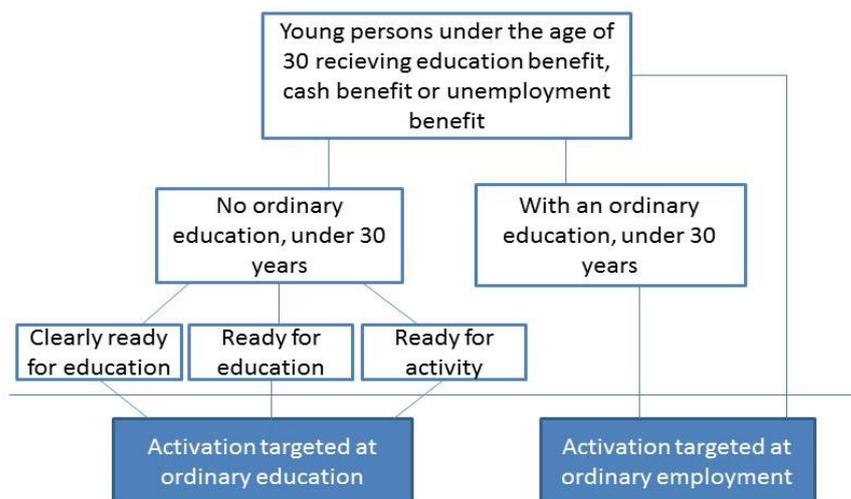
**Table 3.1 Overview of main actors**

| Actor  | Role in the employment effort  |
|--|--|
| <b>Youth Guidance Centres</b>  | Provides guidance services for young people up to the age of 25.   |
| <b>Vocational Education and Training including stakeholder involvement</b> | REU advises the Minister of Education on how the vocational educations should evolve.  |
| <b>Production Schools</b>  | Development of personal, social and professional skills to enhance opportunities for continued education or transition to stable employment.   |
| <b>Job centre</b>  | Establish matches between job seekers and enterprises and general job-related guidance.<br><br>If the unemployed is without an education, the job centre coordinates the effort towards education. |
| <b>Municipalities</b>  | Manage the job centres.  |
| <b>Youth Units</b>   | Provide cross-sectoral efforts to young people.  |
| <b>Enterprises</b>   | Possible employers.  |
| <b>Unemployment insurance funds</b>  | Pay out benefits and provide advice and job-related guidance to members.   |
| <b>Social partners</b>   | Provide advice about employment measures to the job centres and vocational educational institutions.   |
| <b>Regional growth fora</b>  | Prioritize the European Social Fund in Denmark.  |

#### 4. Early intervention and activation

A central aspect of the Danish labour market policy and the Danish youth measures is early intervention and activation which has been improved in recent years. This section describes the Danish measures of early intervention and activation of the labour market policy.

**Figur 4.1 Rules for the Danish employment effort for youths**



##### ***The Cash Benefit Reform (Kontanthjælpsreform)***

The Danish Government adopted a major change of the cash benefit system in 2013, which has been implemented from 1 January 2014. The cash benefit reform is a major reform with many aspects. The reform consists of two parts; A part concerning unemployed over 30 years, and a part concerning unemployed 18-29 years old youngster. Both parts of the reform focus on early intervention and activation taking account of the needs of the individual person. The overall aim is to help more people obtain an ordinary education and a permanent job.

All young unemployed below 30 years, who receive cash benefit or education benefit (see description above), will have their first interview in the job centre within the first seven days from asking the job centre for support. Young people eligible for education help have the right to an educational activation no later than 1 month after asking for support. Young people eligible for cash benefit will also attend their interview in the job centre within the first seven days from asking the job centre for support. The unemployed is obliged to search for employment. If employment is not obtained within three months, the unemployed will be guided for either a so-called 'nyttejob' for a maximum of 13 weeks, training at an enterprise or a wage subsidy job. The unemployed furthermore has the possibility to receive offers on upgrading of skills and qualifications.

If the unemployed is insured through an unemployment fund he or she will receive unemployment benefits instead of cash benefits. Young people under 30 years receiving unemployment benefit are entitled to a first interview in the job centre within 1 month and an active offer within 13 weeks from unemployment. So the youth guarantee is also valid in this system.

The time of unemployment is counted from the day of registering at the job centre.

As a result of the cash benefit reform the rules on visitation and activation has furthermore been changed in order to ensure that young people entitled to education benefits, receive an early, individually designed effort, which takes into account the specific challenges of the person. Vulnerable young people, people with a range of challenges, single parents and young mothers will receive additional support and assistance such as a coordinating caseworker and mentor support. With the reform, focus has also been on a more holistic approach with closer cooperation between relevant stakeholders.

With the reform follows a strong focus on the basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills of young people without education, which are necessary for education and employment. The job centre is obliged to test the young people for difficulties in this matter, and afterwards begin the necessary efforts towards upgrading the basic skills on reading, writing and calculating until a level of skills matching the level of skills after finishing primary school, is obtained.

The reform has a direct focus on education of all young persons under 30 years without education, which means that this target group receives an instruction (*uddannelsespålæg*) to start an education, when they have their first interview at the job centre. The reform contains a division of the target group into three categories:

- Clearly ready for an education
- Ready for an education within one year
- Ready for activation

The main reason of dividing the target group into three groups is to be able to design a tailor made meaningful effort towards education for the young people, and thereby ensure that young people, with serious challenges – social, personal and physical – are met with the right support and help towards education.

The group of young unemployed, who are clearly ready for an education, should as soon as possible begin an education and they are urged to try to provide for themselves, until they begin an education.

For young unemployed, who are ready for education within a year, the way towards education can include: Upgrading of skills and qualifications, short internships in educational centres, mentoring and practical work training in enterprises.

For the groups above, the job centre is obliged to support young people in the transition from unemployment to education in order to secure, that they finish their education. For instance this is implemented by strengthening the cooperation between the job centre and educational institution.

Young people who are ready for activation include those who are in need of extra measures in order to begin an education.

A young person with a number of challenges are categorised as 'ready for activation' which entitles to a particular effort. The measures for this group include the right to a coordinating caseworker in the job centre. This way the young person receives coordinated support in a period of time as a result of the partner-based approach to the youth efforts. The young person must receive close and regular follow-up, and measures such as upgrading of skills and qualifications, short internships on educational centres, mentoring and practical work training in enterprises can also be offered. If the young person in periods is not able to participate in any activities, a mentor is obliged to support the young person.

The reform on cash benefit was implemented on 1 January 2014. It is funded by the government (cf. chapter 6).

### *Quality of services and offers*

The overall quality standard for offers to young people is that all measures in the Danish active effort must be directed towards ordinary employment or ordinary education. The effort must be based on the specific wishes and skills of the individual unemployed person. These standards are a built-in part of the Danish legislation towards young, unemployed persons.

There is a continuous follow-up towards the public employment services (PES) on whether the active offers are being used in a correct manner in regards to the intentions of the employment legislation. Some PES have implemented internal follow-up on how the active offers result in satisfaction among the persons participating in them and are thereby working on improving the quality in the individual's perspective. The active offers are furthermore often being evaluated through projects put down by parliament, which should result in qualifying the effort towards young unemployed persons below 30 years.

In Denmark there is always an opportunity to complain over an active offer for free, if the person participating in an active offer experiences, that the offer is not satisfying towards bringing the person closer to ordinary employment or education.

The Danish government has appointed an expert committee which has analyzed the entire employment effort. The aim is to raise the quality of the offers to all unemployed, young people below 30 years included. An example would be to target the offers directly to the needs of the individual unemployed person. The government will introduce a reform on the basis of the recommendations of the expert committee in 2014.

### ***The initiative 'Building Bridge to Education' (Videnspilotten 'Brobygning til Uddannelse')***

The initiative 'Building Bridge to Education' runs from the beginning of 2013 until the end of 2014, and focus on creating more knowledge about how to move vulnerable young people from unemployment towards an education and ensure the ability to finish the education.

The objective of the project is to experiment with how the educational effort for young unemployed persons under 30 without an education, can be strengthened. All positive results from the project will be used actively to strengthen the educational measures in the new cash benefit reform.

'Building Bridge to Education' is a big-scale initiative, which consist of 12 different projects in Denmark that have individually designed efforts and all seek to bring further knowledge on measures that have the potential to move young people under 30 without education from unemployment to education.

All projects must follow 12 basic principles in order for the effects of the initiative to be measured. To mention some of the principles, all participants must have a mentor as well as an upgrading of skills. They must receive the upgrading at an educational institution.

The initiative runs from the beginning of 2013 until the end of 2014 and is funded by the government (cf. chapter 6).

### ***The Vocational Education and Training-reform (Erhvervsuddannelsesreformen)***

In February 2014 the Danish Government and a majority of the political parties in the Danish Parliament agreed on a reform of the vocational education and training system (VET).

The vision for the reform is to make VET more attractive for young people. The structure of the vocational education and training programs is to be simplified so that young people enrolling direct-

ly from the compulsory school's 9th and 10th forms are presented with a more manageable choice and have more time to make their final educational choice. They will in principle start on a one-year basic programme, whereas students with a training contract or practical experience are to receive the school-based part of the basic programme in three to six months.

Another aim is to give young people who complete a vocational education and training program better opportunities to move on to higher education.

Clear admission requirements are to raise the completion rate and improve the quality of the education. This is in line with the country-specific recommendations 2014 for Denmark about improving the quality of vocational training to reduce drop-out rates.

Young people who are not able to start on a VET program or another youth education program must be offered a targeted program, such as a new program in the 10th form (EUD10) that prepares students for the VET programs and empowers them to meet the admission requirements. Furthermore, a new flexible study program is to be established for young people who cannot complete a VET program or an upper secondary school program. The purpose is to give these youngsters who are at risk of being marginalised basic competencies to improve their opportunities of finding a job. This responds to the country-specific recommendations 2014 for Denmark regarding further steps to improve the employability of people at the margins of the labour market.

#### ***The role of guidance and of the Youth Guidance Centres (UU-centre)***

Guidance is regarded as a continuous process that should help young people become more conscious of their abilities, interests and possibilities, thus enabling them to make decisions regarding education and employment on a qualified basis. In Denmark there is an act on guidance covering guidance in the education system. The act on guidance supports the Danish Government's declared aim that by 2015, 95 % of a youth cohort complete at least upper secondary education.

#### ***Contact to youths***

The Youth Guidance Centres and the job centres collect data on the education and employment of youths aged 15 to 29. The data available to the centres are different for different age groups:

15-17 year olds are obligated by law to be in some sort of educational activity or activity with an educational perspective. For this group the data available are:

- Educational status including highest completed education
- Education plan from the Youth Guidance Centres including activities pertinent to the plan
- Employment (from tax records)
- Activities within the purview of the Active Employment Policy

The Youth Guidance Centres are obligated to oversee the young person's compliance with their education plan. If a young person deviates from the plan, the Guidance Centre must contact them within 5 days of receiving this information, and the young person must receive an offer of an alternative activity within 30 days from the first contact.

For 18-24 year olds, who haven't completed upper secondary education, the data available are:

- Employment (from tax records)
- Educational status including highest completed education

The Youth Guidance centres are obligated to follow the records of this age group. If a young person has not completed upper secondary education and is not currently following an educational programme, the Youth Guidance Centres must contact them and guide them about their educational possibilities.

For 25-29 year olds, the data available are:

- Educational status including highest completed education

For this age group the Youth Guidance Centres have no obligations. The data are forwarded to the Ministry of Employment for the use of Job Centres.

### *National guidance objectives*

A number of national objectives have been laid down for guidance concerning the choice of education and career provided in relation to the transition from lower secondary education to youth education programmes and programmes of higher education. The aims of guidance in Denmark are the following:

Guidance must:

- help to ensure that choice of education and career will be of greatest possible benefit to the individual and to society
- be targeted particularly at young people who, without specific guidance, will have difficulties in relation to choice and completion of education, training and career;
- take into account interests and personal qualifications and skills of the individual, including informal competencies and previous education and work experience, as well as the expected need for skilled labour and self-employed businessmen;
- contribute to limiting, as much as possible, the number of dropouts and students changing from one education and training programme to another and ensure that the pupil or student completes the chosen education with the greatest possible academic/vocational and personal benefits;
- contribute to improving the individual's ability to seek and use information, including ICT-based information and guidance about choice of education, educational institution and career;
- help to ensure coherence and progression in the individual's guidance support.

The program period runs through 2020; however, projects can be shorter in term. Each individual project will be evaluated and a general evaluation will be performed at the end of the program period as well.

### **Other initiatives**

- *Better transitions to, and retention in VET (Bedre overgang til og fastholdelse i erhvervsuddannelse)*  
The initiative 'Youth on the cross' (2013-2014), initiated by The Ministry of Education, will help to develop methods and to implement best practices for youth transitions to vocational training - whether young people coming directly from primary school or from other stations in their lives. 12 projects each have their angle on solving a part of the overall task. See: <http://ungepaatvaers.dk/>
- *We Need All Youngsters, Ministry of Education ("Brug for alle unge")*  
We Need All Youngsters (WNAY) aim to increase the number of ethnic minority youth that begin and complete an upper secondary education. Since 2011, the initiative has primarily focused on deprived residential areas with large concentrations of ethnic minority youths from homes with little education. WNAY has a special focus on the boys as they have a higher dropout rate than the national average.
- *The retention taskforce (FastholdelsesTaskforcen)*

The Retention Taskforce cooperates with vocational schools on improving the quality of the pedagogical leadership and the pedagogical practices in the learning environment, with the purpose of significantly improving the retention of the target groups. The Retention Taskforce organizes network activities such as cluster meetings, network meetings, and conferences.

- *Trade pilot scheme (Fagpilotordningen)*  
In 2012, the government granted 2.81 mio euros to run an experimental scheme during 2013-2015 called "Fagpilotordningen". The aim is to strengthen the innovation in small and medium-sized businesses and connect young people under 30 years with a vocational education to the labour market by hiring them to create innovative solutions and knowledge in the businesses during a period of 6-12 months.
- *EU Structural Funds (Strukturfondsprojekter)*  
The program for EU Structural Funds 2014-2020 – primarily ESF - will focus on contributing to a qualitative development of the Youth Employment efforts in Denmark.

In Denmark the ESF funds amount to 170 million EUR for the period 2014-2020.

The ESF Funds only represent a marginal part of the financial funds available for Youth Employment initiatives in Denmark. The ESF focus will therefore be on developing knowledge on areas where new methods are relevant.

The priorities of the 2014 ESF programs in Denmark relevant for the YG will be:

- Training and support initiatives for young people's involvement in Entrepreneurship and SME's.
- Improvement of the Labour Market and job relevance of Vocational and Further Education
- Support to disadvantaged youth in order to strengthen their capability to fulfil a job relevant education.

The structural funds set a framework for projects implemented regionally. It is still too early to say which projects will be enacted.

## 5. Supportive Measures for labour market integration

This section maps the measures enacted to ease the transition for youth into the labour market. Table 5.1 provides an overview of measures mentioned in the section.

**Table 5.1 Overview concerning supportive measures for labour market integration**

| Initiative/measure   | Content  | Target group  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Trainee effort for graduates (Trainee-indsats for dimittender)</b>    | The aim is to increase the possibility of getting a job for young, unemployed graduates by gaining competencies through concrete upgrading with a focus on professional relevance and business-orientation. At the same time, the graduates will establish a relevant and valuable network in the labour market. | Young unemployed graduates with a polytechnic or higher education   |
| <b>Wage subsidy jobs (Løntilskudsjob)</b>                                | The aim of wage subsidy jobs is to strengthen personal skills, for instance technical, social or linguistic skills.  | Unemployed people in general, registered for employment at the job centre.  |
| <b>Enterprise training (Virksomhedspraktik)</b>                          | The target group will often be persons, who are challenged in regards to obtaining a wage subsidy job. The offer can take place in a private or public enterprise.<br><br>The aim is to bring the group closer to employment by upgrading skills and experience from enterprises.                                | Unemployed persons in general, registered for employment at the job centre.   |
| <b>Job rotation (Jobrotation)</b>  | The aim of job rotation is that enterprises make sure that the employees are well trained and updated with the newest education and that the unemployed gets a chance to earn work experience from a specific enterprise.  | The primary job rotation scheme is aimed at skilled and unskilled workers, while the secondary job rotations scheme is aimed at persons with a higher education   |
| <b>Upgrading in connection with an employment (Opkvalificeringsjobs)</b> | The aim is to improve the employability for the unemployed by financing upgrading after employment.  | Newly employed persons, having had a minimum period of unemployment prior to the job. Persons under 30 years, and persons having a high risk of long term unemployment, must have had a preceding unemployment period of at least 6 months, others a period of at least 12 months, before the employment. |
| <b>Internship Centres (Praktikpladscentre)</b>                           | The aim is to increase the total number of apprenticeships. It is furthermore expected that the internship centres will lead to an increase in the number of short apprenticeship contracts.   | Students who do not achieve training contract with an enterprise.   |

### ***Trainee effort for graduates (Trainee-indsats for dimittender)***

The goal of this initiative is to get more young unemployed graduates with a polytechnic or higher education into a traineeship. Thereby the opportunity of the graduates to find a job is increased.

With the initiative, the graduates will gain competencies through concrete upgrading with a focus on professional relevance and business-orientation. At the same time, the graduates will establish

a relevant and valuable network in the labour market. Examples of specific measures are subsidised employment, job training, or job rotation. A combination of measures can also be applied.

The initiative was implemented at the beginning of 2012 and continues until 31 March 2014. The evaluation is expected to be carried out shortly after and will be presented during the summer of 2014.

The aim of the initiative is that 2,000 trainee programs will be achieved

The initiative is financed by the government. In 2012 and 2013 2.7 million EUR has been set aside for the initiative.

#### ***Wage subsidy jobs (Ansættelse med løntilskud)***

The purpose of wage subsidy jobs is to rehabilitate and strengthen the skills of unemployed people, for instance technical, social or linguistic skills.

The target group is unemployed people in general, registered for employment at the job centre, and a part of the group of persons receiving education help from the job centre.

In a wage-subsidy job the unemployed can obtain work experience within a wanted work area. A wage subsidy job in the private sector can have a maximum duration of 1 year. During the wage subsidy period the person is employed by the firm. The private employer pays the collectively agreed wage and receives a wage subsidy.

A wage subsidy job in the public sector can have a maximum of six months. The employer pays a wage corresponding to the unemployment benefit or social benefit and receives a wage subsidy. There are specific rules in order to avoid distortion of competition between enterprises. The rules define e.g. the number of subsidized persons allowed in an enterprise depending of the size of the enterprise.

#### ***Enterprise training (Virksomhedspraktik)***

The target group is unemployed persons in general, registered for employment at the job centre. This offer can take place in a private or public enterprise. The aim is to bring the target group closer to employment by upgrading skills and experience from enterprises. The target group will often be persons, who are challenged in regards to obtaining a wage subsidy job.

The job centre coordinates with the enterprise in regard to the purpose, length and content of the training. Training at enterprises must last no more than four weeks and in certain cases 13 weeks. The offer is funded by the government.

#### ***Internship Centres (Praktikcentre)***

Students who do not achieve a training contract with an enterprise have the opportunity to spend an alternative apprenticeship period in an internship centre at the VET-college - praktikcenter - which will contribute to increase the total number of apprenticeships. In addition the internship centres are expected to lead to an increase in the number of short apprenticeship contracts.

The new 51 internship centres were established during 2013 within the existing organizational framework of the vocational schools.

Students are in the future admitted directly to the main program on the basis of either an apprenticeship contract with an enterprise or a school agreement with an internship centre.

### ***Job rotation (Jobrotation)***

When an employee takes part in temporary education job rotation allows an unemployed person to temporarily replace the employee at the enterprise. Both public and private enterprises are able to benefit from the job rotation scheme.

The aim of job rotation is twofold: Enterprises make sure that the employees are well trained and updated with the newest knowledge. Meanwhile the unemployed gets a chance to get work experience from a specific enterprise. Furthermore, the unemployed is hired on normal wage conditions and does not receive any unemployment benefits or social assistance while working in the enterprise.

The job rotation scheme has two different target groups: The primary job rotation scheme is aimed at skilled and unskilled workers, while the secondary job rotations scheme is aimed at persons with a higher education.

For the primary target group, the job centres have the exclusive authority to grant job rotation benefits. In the case of job rotation benefits for the secondary group, the job centre must apply to the National Labour Market Authority for benefits before the start of a project. While there is a legal right to receive job rotation benefit on behalf of the group including skilled and unskilled workers, the legal right for persons with higher educations is dependent on the availability of funding.

The Danish government granted 160 million EUR for the fiscal year of 2014 to the job rotation scheme. 50 million EUR of these funds are earmarked to job rotation schemes for persons with higher educations

### ***Upgrading in connection with a job (Opkvalificeringsjobs)***

The local job centre has the possibility to subsidize upgrading of a former unemployed in enterprises when the person gets an ordinary job. The purpose is to improve the employability of recently unemployed by financing upgrading during employment (financial support to the enterprises). The subsidized upgrading must be supplementary to the normal training of new employees in the enterprise.

The target group is newly employed persons, having had a minimum period of unemployment prior to the job. Young people, i.e. persons under 30 years, and persons having a high risk of long term unemployment must have had a preceding unemployment period of at least 6 months, others a period of at least 12 months, before the employment.

The employer applies for the subsidy at the local job centre. It is financed by the municipalities, and part of their expenses is reimbursed by the state.

## 6. Funding an continuous improvement of schemes

The table below provides an overview over a range of initiatives/measures, their implementation, expected impact, funding and planned evaluation.

| Name of reform/initiative                          | Timetable for implementation   | Expected change   | Planned evaluation   | Sources & levels of funding  | No. of beneficiaries   |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Cash benefit reform</b>                         | The reform was implemented on 1 January 2014                           | 4.375 fulltime unemployed persons will be moved from the cash benefit system into education.  | The result of the reform is monitored on an ongoing basis.   | The initiative is financed by the government. The entire reform is expected to cut expenses in the cash benefit system with approximated 134 million EUR yearly. | 4.375 full time unemployed persons will be transferred from the cash benefit system into education.      |
| <b>Trainee effort for graduates</b>                | The initiative was implemented in 2012 and continues until March 2014. |   | The evaluation of the initiative will be carried out in 2014.  | The initiative is financed by the state. 2.7 million EUR has been set aside for the initiative.  | 2,000 trainee programs are expected to be achieved.  |
| <b>Bridge building to education</b>                | 2013-2014  | 2800 young unemployed persons under 30 without education are expected to finish a bridge-building effort  | The initiative is finally evaluated by May 2015.   | The initiative is financed by the government with 17 million. EUR.   | 2800 young unemployed persons under 30 without education are expected to finish a bridge-building effort |
| <b>Reform of vocational education and training</b> | Expected Implementation start date: 2014<br>Expected End date: 2016    | The overall aim is to have better and more attractive vocational education and training programmes targeting young people and to provide adults with more flexible training opportunities to acquire VET-qualifications | The reform is, when fully implemented, expected to increase number of young people choosing VET (25% in 2020 and 30% in 2025), improve completion rates (2 out of 3 in 2025), more VET-graduates to move on to higher education programmes and more adults qualifying to become skilled workers. | Estimated increase in government spending: 400 million EUR in total from 2014 – 2020.  | Not an accurate number   |

| Name of reform/ initiative                         | Timetable for implementation                        | Expected change   | Planned evaluation  | Sources & levels of funding   | No. of beneficiaries   |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Youth Guidance Centres</b>                      | Guidance is a permanent part of educational system. | To contribute to achieving the Government's target of 95 pct. of a youth cohort to complete at least upper secondary education. To reduce dropout rates at school (upper secondary)   | Monitored by the Ministry of Education. There are yearly surveys amongst users (user satisfaction). Statistics show yearly transition rates from compulsory school to youth education and also contains a status of young people outside education and labour market. | It is financed by municipalities. Approximately 82 million EUR/year is spent on youth guidance            | All young people in 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grade and young people (up to 25 years) outside education - total of about 250.000 young people, some will have individual guidance, others will be covered by class-based (or similar) activities. |
| <b>EU Structural Funds (ESF-programme)</b>         | 2014-2020   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of self-employed.</li> <li>• Increase the employment, also for social marginalised people</li> <li>• Increase the labour mobility</li> <li>• Increase the number with vocational and further education</li> </ul>  | The ESF-programme will be evaluated while running   | 206 million EUR for 2014-2020. No specific amount is allocated to youth employment efforts.               | -  |
| <b>Better transitions to, and retention in VET</b> | 2013-2014   | To help to the more vulnerable and disadvantaged young people to start and complete vocational training. The aim is that a larger proportion of the weak young people will be able to both initiate and complete vocational training.   | The initiative will be evaluated while running  | Approximately 1 mio. Euros, half part from regions funding and half part from central government funding. | 12 projects with unspecified number of young people.   |
| <b>We Need All Youngsters</b>                      | 2013-2014   | To contribute to achieving the Government's target of 95 pct. of a youth cohort to complete at least upper secondary education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enhance the professional, social and personal skills of ethnic minority young people - and thus strengthen training readiness.</li> <li>• To enhance the involvement of parents in their children's education and training choices.</li> <li>• To develop knowledge-based methods, based on the need for all young people's experiences and tools that improve motivation and prerequisites.</li> </ul> | End of 2014   | Governmental financing, about 0.9 mio EUR/year  | -  |

| Name of reform/ initiative     | Timetable for implementation | Expected change  | Planned evaluation   | Sources & levels of funding  | No. of beneficiaries   |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------|
| <b>The Retention Taskforce</b> | 2013-2014                    | To contribute to increase the number of young people in the target group to enrol in and complete a vocational education.<br>To contribute to achieving the Government's target of 95 pct. of a youth cohort to complete at least upper secondary education.<br>To strengthen the successful vocational schools to be much more successful in enrolment as well as heightening the quality of the schools pedagogical work | The Retention Taskforce will evaluate its initiatives in order to find out effects and evidence of the projects. | A total of 6 million EUR in the years 2013-2016  | Not an accurate number |
| <b>Internship Centres</b>      | Already implemented          | Pupils are in the future admitted directly to the VET main program on the basis of either an apprenticeship contract with an enterprise or a school agreement with an internship centre.   | Internship centres were established during 2013 and are to be evaluated late 2015                                | 1.5 million EUR for implementation   | N/A                    |
| <b>Job rotation</b>            |                              |  | An analysis of effects of the initiative will possibly be initiated in 2014.                                     | The initiative is financed by the state. 160 million EUR has been granted for the fiscal year of 2014. |                        |

## 7. Conclusion

As shown in this report Denmark has experienced a low youth unemployment compared to most other EU-countries. This relative success has not lead to complacency. By contrast, the Danish Government has carried out extensive reforms to enhance initiatives of early intervention, measures to ease the transition into the labour market as well as secured that available benefits provide strong incentives for young unemployed to achieve an education and actively search for employment.

Given the initiatives described in this report and the range of the Danish policies of early intervention and targeted support for unemployed youth, The Government of Denmark fulfil the Youth Guarantee.

A central focus in the youth policy is that young people complete an education. It is clearly seen, that young people without an ordinary education are over-represented among the unemployed. The focus on education is a coherent effort secured by personal education plans from primary school, Youth Guidance Centres and job centres among other institutions.

For youth the transition from education to labour market can prove particular difficult. A number of reforms address issues related to the gap or mismatch between supply of education and demand of the labour market. The report highlights vocational education and training (dual learning) as an example of how dialogue between social partners and educations institution helps to address this.

As part of the Danish active labour market policy, early intervention is core. In addition, young persons who experience unemployment have particular rights. As a general rule the unemployed will have a personal interview within the first week of announcing their unemployment to the job centre. This interview is then the starting point for a tailored and integrated effort to secure entry or a return to education or employment. All young unemployed will receive an active offer within 1 month of unemployment. As part of the cash benefit reform and other initiatives and reforms in recent years efforts have been improved. Benefits as well as assistance have been adjusted to secure stronger incentives to enter or return to education or employment. This approach will continue as part of future reforms – e.g. the Government's plan for a reform of employment initiatives.



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