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## YOUTH GUARANTEE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION



North Macedonia implemented the Youth Guarantee program, targeting individuals aged 15 to 29. The program aimed to provide all young people with a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship, or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. This initiative sought to facilitate the integration of young people into the labor market and reduce youth unemployment rates.



Similarly to EU Member States, the progress under this policy pillar has been slower than expected, with the burdensome procedures for amending the legislation playing a role, among other factors. The rationale for including these measures in the youth guarantee is mainly associated with minimizing the risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education, or training) for youth who are still at school. With an estimated stock of over 100,000 young North Macedonians already eligible to apply for the youth guarantee, the focus of policy-makers may be drawn elsewhere. However, one should not give in to the erroneous perception that delays in this policy pillar would not severely affect also the short-term outcomes of the guarantee



A study analyzing youth underemployment in North Macedonia found a significant negative relationship between underemployment and wages. The research highlighted the importance of addressing skills mismatches in the labor market. Recommendations included aligning educational curricula with labor market demands and providing targeted vocational training programs to equip young people with relevant skills, thereby enhancing their employability and reducing underemployment.