



Social protection and labour market policies for vulnerable groups from a social investment perspective

The case of young NEETs in Espinho, Portugal

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Executive summary

This report was prepared within the framework of the Europe H2020 project ‘Rebuilding an inclusive, value based Europe of solidarity and trust through social investments’ (RE-InVEST). The project RE-InVEST aims to contribute to a more solidary and trust worthy Europe, through an inclusive, powerful and effective social investment strategy at EU-level. Moreover, the project itself adopts a participative approach that lends a voice to vulnerable groups and civil society organisations. The RE-InVEST consortium consists of members of informal network ‘the Alliances to fight Poverty’, a network of civil society organisations, trade unions, policy makers and academics co-ordinated by Flemish Cristian labour movement ‘beweging.net, and committed to a more inclusive Europe. The consortium covers a broad range of European countries, both geographically (12 countries, 13 regions) and in terms of representation of different welfare and labour market traditions. In particular, this report aims to assess the role of active labour market policies (ALMPs) and social protection from a social investment perspective.

The evaluation of national/regional policies has been carried out through participatory qualitative research from the perspective of the most vulnerable groups. Mixed focus groups were created in seven countries (Austria, Belgium, England, France, Latvia, Portugal and Switzerland) between September 2016 and June 2017. The analyses were carried out by the local partners, consisting of NGOs and/or researchers.

The fact that the focus of the Portuguese research paper is on the young unemployed is attributable to unemployment remaining a major problem among young people aged between 18-29 years old. Despite the slight improvement of economic and social indicators in Portugal, this aspect stills requires careful attention, as new entrants to the labour market, young people face serious difficulties to get a job. This is mostly exacerbated when they do not receive any kind of social protection and particularly when they are coerced into accepting job offers. Young people in precarious employment face higher job insecurity and uncertainty about the future, which are relevant negative factors affecting their ability to make life plans and establish their goals in line with reasonable expectations about upcoming opportunities.

This group has been so severely hit by the economic crisis and so it is a great concern and a top priority¹ among EU Member States. Youth Guarantee (YG) as a recent and innovative programme aims to give a response to youth unemployment.

This report examines the extent to which the young unemployed (18 to 29 years) obtain a response from YG to their needs and whether these measures are articulated with social protection policies or not, in other words if they invest in social needs.

The RE-InVEST consortium has jointly developed the PAHRCA – a methodology that combines principles of Participatory Action research with Human Rights and Capability Approaches. This qualitative, participatory research does not produce representative results but rather aims to deepen the understanding of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) and Social Protection (SP) impacts on the lives of vulnerable people and give them a voice.

¹ In the 2015 Annual Growth Survey, the Commission called for determined action to improve the labour market situation of young people, with the Youth Guarantee representing an ambitious way of combining different instruments to address youth unemployment effectively. Thematic fiche youth unemployment European Semester (European Commission, 2015).

Preface

First of all we would like to express our gratitude to the young unemployed people who actively participated in RE-InVEST, expressing their feelings, their opinions and experiences associated with participation in ALMPs and Social Protection and their recommendations to national and European politicians and institutions. Without their participation it would not have been possible to write this report. We would also like to thank the 3G CLDS - Espinho Vivo which includes CERCÍ Espinho and ADCE social entities who works in the social district Ponte de Anta in Espinho, Aveiro. CLDS is a project developed by a grassroots' social organisation engaged in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Last but not least we would also like to express our appreciation to the European Commission for financing this project.

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1. Introduction

The 'Europe 2020' strategy is based on a vision of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, through high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Nonetheless, unemployment and poverty increased due to the economic crisis and the social climate worsened by the cuts in social protection mainly in the southern countries. In order to rebalance economic stabilisation and social progress, in 2013 the European Commission launched the Social Investment Package (SIP) and in 2016 the Social Pillar. It is important to analyse how political discourse and national policies are being implemented from the point of view of the most vulnerable people. Therefore the current national report aims to analyse the impact of active labour market policies (ALMP) and social protection (SP) in how it is being implemented in a local/regional context to meet youngster's needs of training, employment and vocational guidance; and how policies accomplish the right to work and the right to social protection.

In particular, this report is one of the seven national case studies that make up the qualitative research of the RE-InVEST work package 'Investing in social protection and inclusive labour market policies'. The purpose of this work package can be summarised as follows:

- re-assessing the role of social protection and active labour market policies (ALMPs) from a social investment perspective. This means that our theoretical framework, which builds on the key notions of social investment, human rights and capabilities, will be used as the reference framework to evaluate the role of social protection and ALMPs in producing sustainable social inclusion;
- applying this framework to the evaluation of national/regional policies through participatory qualitative research into specific measures in the field of ALMPs and social protection, from the perspective of the most vulnerable groups. Special attention is being devoted to recent reforms and innovations (the EC's Youth Employment Initiative, social activation, social enterprises, tax-benefit reforms, etc.). Mixed research teams have carried out this research in seven countries (England, Portugal, Switzerland, Latvia, Belgium, France and Austria) between September 2016 and June 2017;
- in addition to the national case studies, a statistical analysis is focusing on the distributional effects as well as the effectiveness of social protection systems and ALMPs based on the EU-SILC data, by means of multilevel hazard models;
- the combined findings will result in a synthesis report as well as recommendation papers for the Annual Growth Surveys.

The project reflects the experience of the most vulnerable young people in Portugal and it places great emphasis on the individual's transitory professional pathways by temporary contracts in very bad working conditions and the negative view of the Public Employment Service (PES) in responding by employment and training measures. This report is structured in six sections. After the introduction, section one explores (a) some relevant economic and demographic changes, (b) the national and regional trends in ALMP and SP, (c) in which welfare paradigm (the making work pay approach in the new liberal view; workfare / rights and duties - the conservative view; and the social investment approach) are embodied the recent social protection reforms and ALMP; (d) motivation to select the Youth Guarantee (YG) and in what manner it contains elements of genuine social investment approach and impact of the labour market effects of ALMP. The third section is dedicated to the theoretical and methodological approach. The fourth section focuses on the analysis of YG from a Social Investment, Human Rights and Capabilities perspective: it also evaluates the effectiveness at the micro-level (individual/household). The fifth section provides an evaluation of

‘effectiveness’ at the collective level concerning (a) the role of enterprises, public services namely PES and Social security and social organizations and (b) effects of measures on collective agency. Finally, Section six presents the conclusions and some recommendations to improve labour market policies and social protection measures from the youngsters’ perspective.

2. National context

2.1 Relevant economic and socio-demographic changes

Between May 2011 and June 2014, Portugal was subject to an economic adjustment programme in exchange for European assistance. The Portuguese government prioritised harsh austerity measures that resulted in a deterioration of the labour market and the social situation in the name of fiscal consolidation. According to the Country Report for Portugal 2016,² although there has been a recovery, there has been a decrease in the active population due to the demographic and emigration trends.³ Generally speaking, the economic and social indicators in Portugal have shown a slight improvement since the economic and financial crisis but remain dramatic. According to the scoreboard of the key employment and social indicators from October 2016, despite this slight improvement in the unemployment rate, the youth unemployment rate, the at-risk-of poverty rate and Inequality S80/S20 ratio remain high despite moderate decreases while the NEET rate and Gross Disposable Household Income are in line with the European average.

The unemployment rate dropped to 11.0% in 2016 (after peaking at 16.4% in 2013), and the youth unemployment rate (15 to 24 years old) has followed the same trend, dropped to 27.9% in 2016 (peaking at 37.4% in 2013). Nonetheless, in comparison to the EU28 average, 8.6% and 18.6% respectively, the Portuguese figures remain very high.

The labour market status of young people in Portugal is characterised by lower employment (39%) and higher youth unemployment (27.9%) while the NEET rate remains below the EU average (14.6%).

Unemployment is one of the biggest problems amongst young people aged under 25. The average age of young people leaving the parental household in Portugal has increased. In 2013, the average age was 29 (male (30.0) and female (28.0)) – while in the EU it was 26.1 (male (27.2) and female (25.0)).⁴ Therefore, the levels of relative economic dependence of the young Portuguese population on their family have increased. Social inclusion income in 2001 covered only 0.4% of the population between the ages of 15-29 and reached 1.2% in 2011 (increasing to 1.5% in the 20-29 age groups). Young people living on social support also increased from 0.4% to 0.8%, reaching 1.4% in the 15-19 age group.

The crisis brought a new situation in which educated and skilled middle-class workers, mainly young, were also affected by unemployment. This has created new patterns of poverty and inequality with a special focus on households where both parents were unemployed.

In addition, the proportion of employed persons living in poverty (working poor) is also rather high (10%) indicative of a structural phenomenon rather than a cyclical trend associated with the economic and social crisis. Underpaid and precarious employment predominates, particularly affecting women, threatening social cohesion.

2 http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016_portugal_en.pdf

3 In 2013 and 2014 emigration remained at 110 thousand individuals, similar to rates seen in the late 1960s and early 1970s, despite the economic recovery in 2014. There was a decrease in 2015 of 18.5% (40,377 in 2015 and 49,572 in 2014) and an increase in the number of permanent immigrants by 53.2% (29,896 in 2015 and 19,516 in 2014). The estimated number of temporary emigrants - people who left the country with the intention of staying abroad for a longer period - between three months and one year - was 60,826, a decrease of 28.5% (85,052 in 2014), contrary to the growth trend that occurred in the current cycle (started in 2011) but remaining higher than the number of permanent emigrants. In 2015 the fertility rate was 1.30 children per woman, slightly up for the second year (1.23 in 2014).

4 Eurostat (2015) Being young in Europe Today, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union page 44-47

2.2 National and Regional trends of Social Protection and ALMP

The impacts of the economic and financial crisis led to a reversal of the government's priorities in favour of social support to vulnerable groups and measures to stimulate investment and employment for budgetary austerity in public spending at the expense of social policy. The Investment and Employment Initiative program launched in 2009 included a public investment program and special measures to support economic activity. This reversal of the strategic focus was imposed by the European guidelines in the Troika program: 'the flexibility of labour relations, deregulation and activation of the unemployed while, with the austerity argument, disqualifying or privatizing certain public service functions and reducing the social protection of the unemployed' (Lima, 2015: 7).

In 2014, social transfers to families maintained the general downward trend observed in 2012 and 2013, as a result of the legislative changes approved within the framework of the economic and financial adjustment plan under the budgetary containment process. These include the Social Integration Income which recorded a cumulative drop of 57% between 2010 and 2014, as well as unemployment benefits, dropping by 18.2% in 2014 (compared to increases of 5.6% and 23.3% in 2013 and 2012). On the other hand, expenditure on sickness benefits registered strong growth in 2014 (+5.7%), contrary to the 6.4% reductions in 2013 and 8.0% in 2012 (Social Security Accounts Report 2014). From 2008 onwards, the number of unemployed persons who did not receive any unemployment benefit increased. This increase continued between 2013 and 2015 due to the introduction of restrictions on the award of unemployment benefits (Decree-Law No. 64/2012 - New unemployment benefit scheme and changes to the Labour Code).

In the context of austerity, there has been a reduction in expenditure on employment policies following the reduction of the State Budget for IEFP I.P. – Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (Institute of Employment and Vocational Training) and European Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund (depending on the approval of projects to which the IEFP applied for). This last source represented around 40% of the budget of the IEFP in 2013 (Madelino and Matos, 2015).⁵ This leaves too much room for uncertainty in the annual variable share of the IEFP budget that can be traced to European funding and also on the amount transferred from the Social Security Budget, as governments still fail to respect the percentage of the TSU's Single Social Tax's revenues (Taxa Social Única) to be transferred (Madelino and Matos, 2015). In line with the reduction in expenditure on employment policies, there has also been a reduction of 16.2% in expenditure on public employment services (from 3,803 people in 2008 to 3,186 persons in 2013) and expenditure fell by 14% (from €109.2 million to €94 million (OGE, 2008 and 2013). The reduction in the workforce, the ageing of employees and restrictions on hiring make it critical to keep up with the historical increase of unemployment in Portugal and to promote an early intervention advocated in the European Employment Strategy (MTSS, 1998).

Within the difficult context of financial cuts and a reduction in staff, public employment services are confronted simultaneously with the historical rise in the unemployment rate. The mission of IEFP-PES is to provide a quality response in increasingly complex individual working careers framed by a context of a transitional market, to cooperate with private agents and promote service innovation. These factors put the fulfilment of their mission at risk and threaten the quality of the services offered.

A recent study⁶ assesses the impact of the crisis and the adjustment program agreed with the Troika on employment policies and the public employment service between 2008 and 2015, notably on five key measures: apprenticeships; support to job creation and companies; Employment-Insertion Contract (CEI) Vocational Training Disability, Rehabilitation. This review took into account a set of indicators relating to the coverage, expenditure and employability of measures which reveal negative impacts on the performance of public employment services and on the effectiveness of employment and training policies.

5 Madelino F. e Matos R. (2015), Estudo Políticas ativas de emprego, serviços públicos de emprego e tripartismo, Instituto para as políticas públicas e sociais – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

6 Hespanha, P., Caleiras, J., (2017), Labirinto das políticas e emprego, Cadernos do Observatório nº10, Observatório sobre Crises e Alternativas, Centro de Estudos Sociais, Universidade de Coimbra.

- There is a wide range of designations for the same measures or similar measures. The changes introduced are rarely the result of credible evaluation studies and are usually merely cosmetic measures to make the initiative more acceptable (Hespanha et al., 2007: 297; Dias e Varejão, 2012:149).
- Coverage of active employment measures in the period under review highlighted that a limited number of people are covered and that small amounts are spent on many of the existing measures, that most measures are abandoned over time and that there is almost no regional configuration of measures.
- Effectiveness of the measures in terms of employability according to the Table 2.1 below:
 - in these new jobs there is a predominance of fixed-term contracts, ranging from 53.5% in Internships to 80.3% in Training Courses;
 - employability levels of vocational training measures are lower than those of employment measures;
 - in the Employment-Insertion Contracts (CEI) and CEI + measures where the direct employability rate is insignificant in cases where the promoter is the State: 8.5% in 2014.

Table 2.1 The net employability effect of measures in 2014

High general employability effect of measures (higher 2/3 but lower 3/4)		Low net employability effect of measures (less than 50%)	
Support for hiring	74.7%	Learning courses	45.0%
Support for Self-Employment Creation	67.3%	Adult education and training courses	38.4%
Apprenticeship	67.1%	Employment Insertion Contract	33.7%
		Medida Vida Ativa (Active Life Measure)	30.5%

Source Aggregated data of the authorship collected in the study Hespanha and Calciras (2017)

The analysis of the main measures points to the following conclusions:

- **apprenticeships (Estágio-Emprego)** were reduced from 12 to 9 months, which prevented trainees from accessing unemployment benefits. The increase in number of trainees suggests that the secondary market for employment is precarious and involves low paid forms of employment. The problem is that this program should be an incentive for hiring but the majority of young people are unable to remain within the company after the nine months that the internship lasts. Instead of hiring them, companies prefer to recruit other young trainees and pay just 20% of a normal worker's salary;
- **employment-Insertion Contracts (CEI)**. These contracts are based on a compulsory workfare logic and do not entail the right to a salary, but rather to a grant and the payment of transport, food and insurance expenses. The employee is subject to the same set of rules as other employees and has to fulfil the same tasks inherent to these measures. The individual has four days each month to actively search for a job. These measures are part of insertion and social protection measures, not labour relations. However, most CEI functions are in public administration services (70%).

Evaluation studies of training measures highlight that the effect of these measures on the employability of users is minimal, although it can be positive especially in the case of continuous and modular training (Dias e Varejão, 2012). Another more recent evaluation of the **Learning Courses (Cursos de Aprendizagem)** reaches the same conclusion. The results suggest that they will be ineffective as an instrument for promoting employment and job security for participants and that this is attributable to their long duration, keeping participants away from the labour market for an extended period of time (Dias et al., 2014).

Apart from the constraints of austerity measures, social policy efforts have been made. The value of the IAS Index of Social Support (Indexante dos Apoios Sociais) was €419.22 and was frozen for several years. With the entry into force of Ordinance No. 4/2017, of January 3, this value was updated to €421.32. This update which takes effect as of 1 January 2017 has an impact on various social security benefits. Moreover, the National Minimum Wage (SMN) was frozen at €485 from 2011 until 2014, and since then has been increased slightly to €557 from January 2017.

2.3 The paradigms apparent in most recent social protection reforms and ALMPS

The transition from an economy and society with full employment towards structural unemployment reinforced a trend towards a ‘workfare’ approach with sanctions and more restrictive eligibility conditions in terms of social protection. Under these circumstances, it has become common practice for the unemployed to accept any job and for people to move from unemployment to the *working poor*. Labour relations have deteriorated sharply. The young unemployed are dissatisfied with working conditions. Moreover, there are almost no employment opportunities for them, even when searching at factories, supermarkets, etc. When they do get a job, conditions are very precarious, on rolling monthly contracts and at the end of the third contract, they are dismissed; work is poorly paid, at €2.5 or €3 per hour. In terms of working hours, candidates often have to reject the opportunity of working shifts due to transport difficulties or as they have children to care for.

There is a paradox in the social investment paradigm between discourse, resources and political competencies. The austerity agenda has entailed cuts in resources and staff at the PES, which makes personal attention very difficult and puts the quality of the response at risk (see the testimonies of job centre staff below).

In October 2016, the fortnightly follow-up model for the unemployed was replaced by a new model called ‘Personalized employment monitoring’ (Acompanhamento personalizado para o emprego) (Law No. 34/2016, of 24 August). Adequate support to each unemployed aims to enhance their return to work and to allow the monitoring and control. Potentially applying sanctions according to the PES evaluation will make the pre-scheduled administrative controls that the unemployed person has to fulfil mandatory.

To help the unemployed back into work, Portugal has strengthened its activation framework. While eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits have always been strict on paper, recent measures tightened the way in which these criteria are implemented in practice – and there is some evidence that this has accelerated the drop in unemployment rates. Portugal has also significantly increased its offer of short term training programmes and hiring subsidies for the unemployed, set up a Youth Guarantee and put in place a comprehensive strategy to modernise the Public Employment Service (although some measures included in this strategy have yet to be implemented).⁷

Young people considered the reduction of the amount of training scholarships insufficient for the fees charged. Moreover, recipients of the minimum social income are not eligible for training scholarships. The interested parties do not believe this approach is reasonable and feel that it does not enhance the capabilities of disadvantaged groups. Young people feel discriminated against by society for being unemployed, with the stigma attached to depending on social assistance, and being held responsible for their own unemployment, despite the lack of opportunities. In addition they accept temporary work and low-paid jobs.

Initiatives targeting young people, such as the Youth Guarantee (2013), are potentially important contributions to ensuring inclusive labour markets for specific groups. While implementation reports are presented as positive, these proposals fall short of implementing integrated Active Inclusion approaches. As they focus almost exclusively on employment and education, the approach does not include supporting services, nor access to adequate social protection. Moreover, the quality of job or training offers is not suitably monitored in the evaluation of the implementation. There are no safeguards against negative activation practices, and ownership and participation of young people themselves could be strengthened.⁸ Although a new balance is being sought between monetary stability, fiscal equity and a better protection of basic human rights through ‘Guarantee programmes’ (youth guarantee, a guarantee for the long-term unemployed, skills guarantee) from a young person's perspective, the making work pay approach and the conservative view of workfare, rights and duties still predominate over the social investment approach.

7 OECD 2017, Labour Market Reforms in Portugal 2011-2015, a preliminary assessment.

8 EAPN Europe (2017) Inclusive Labour Market, building pathway approaches to quality employment, Brussel.

2.4 Motivation of the selection of the measure: Youth Guarantee Scheme

The Youth Guarantee⁹ is the measure selected for our analysis as it differs from the mainstream paradigm of ALMP given its innovative approach and it has received strong support from all stakeholders, including governments, social partners and civil society. It seeks to provide a response to the impact of high levels of youth unemployment, such as permanent future income losses, skills erosion and the increased risk of discouragement and inactivity associated with prolonged spells of unemployment. The Youth Guarantee scheme has two atypical characteristics that distinguish it from ALMPs. The first one is the ‘guarantee’ concept – i.e. States’ commitment to providing unemployed young people with work or training opportunities. Indeed, under this programme, States and their institutions are committed to mobilising all the resources at their disposal to ensure that no unemployed young person is left behind (Bussi & Geyer, 2013). The second distinctive feature is the establishment of a maximum period of four months in unemployment starting when a young person becomes unemployed or leaves education; other ALMPs generally do not include such timeframes (Besamusca et al., 2012; Bussi & Geyer, 2013).¹⁰

The key factors to its success are early intervention, identification of the right target groups, strong institutional frameworks, high quality programmes and sufficient resources. The management of the services offered by Youth Guarantees is transferred to PES¹¹ at the regional or municipal levels. Therefore, PES plays a crucial role in diagnosing the needs of unemployed young people and guaranteeing opportunities in terms of employment or vocational training. In addition, the implementation of this scheme often implies the reforming of professional training and education systems and PES, in order to ensure that all young people are offered a suitable employment or training opportunity within a maximum period of four months.

Portugal was considered eligible for The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) due to the high youth unemployment rate, well above 25% in 2012. It presented its plan in December 2013, the target group of which was those under 30, the eligibility criteria is NEETs, the maximum period eligible for YEI was 4 months, and the amount allocated was €160.8 million. At the end of 2014, the Portuguese government¹² provided data about the results of the implementation of its Youth Guarantee plan. Special mention was made of the employability result of 70% in 2013 amongst professional apprenticeships (Estágios Profissional-ais) of the PES (IEFP). The latest update, using provisional data, indicates that by October 2013, about 151 thousand young people had received a Youth Guarantee response, which was reflected in a decrease in youth unemployment. Provisionally, YG would offer support to around 378 thousand young people by the end of 2015. In 2015, data for 2014¹³ confirmed that about 218,000 young people under 30 had benefited from integrated measures as part of the Young Guarantee program. Specifically, 34,000 young people were offered access to the labour market, 63,000 to professional courses, 60,000 to apprenticeships and 38,000 to the dual apprenticeship system.

The YG programme has an official website (<https://www.garantiajovem.pt/comeca-ja?Procuras=6>) that features the application form, the NEET profile, and offers different options: in terms of job search, apprenticeships, studying or working abroad; learning a profession; in addition to categories for those that did not know and those that needed help. In 2015, about 12,000 young people applied for assistance through the YG platform.

9 Formally adopted by the Council on 22 April, 2013 (Council, 2013a), following a proposal made by the European Commission (EC) in December 2012 (EC, 2012c), the Youth Guarantee aims to offer a good continued education, apprenticeship, training or employment opportunity to all unemployed young people within four months of their leaving employment or education.

10 Escudeiro V. and Mourelo L. (2015), The Youth Guarantee programme in Europe: Features, implementation and challenges, Research Department Working Paper No. 4, International Labour Office.

11 Public Employment Service PES in Portugal is provided by the IEFP (Institute of Employment and Vocational Training), structured by employment and vocational training centres, and professional integration offices (GIPS) at least one in each municipality. Also it provide a NetEemprego Portal (www.netemprego.gov.pt) and the IEFP Contact Center (On-line help desk). ALMP is divided in two major areas: employment measures and vocational training measures. The first aim to boost direct labour market integration and the second seeks to impart training and therefore increase jobs skills and employability.

12 <http://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/o-governo/arquivo-historico/governos-constitucionais/gc19/os-ministerios/madr/mantenha-se-atualizado/20141216-madr-garantia-jovem.aspx>

13 https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/economia/garantia-jovem-abrangeu-cerca-de-218-mil-jovens-em-2014_n803778

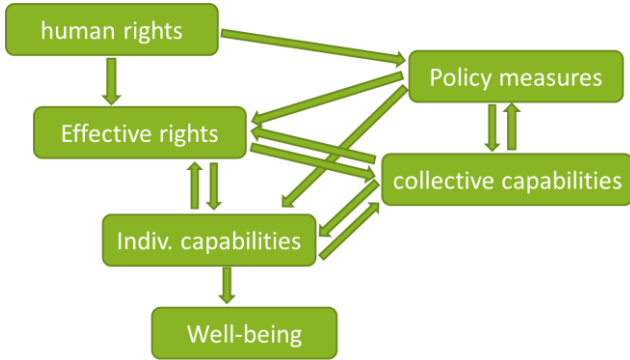
To what extent does YG contain elements of a genuine social investment approach? Most participants who completed compulsory education are not aware of the measures under the YG. To some extent they are familiar with training courses usually imparted by the PES. Nonetheless, they do not recognise its practical value to their social and professional inclusion. Young people who are familiar with the YG often have a higher level of education.

In the briefing about YG offered by the PES officer at one of our research group meetings, no reference was made to the program's name. Instead, specific training measures were provided to each participant according to their age and level of education. However, the corresponding employee stressed that the young people enrolled in the program are eligible for assistance under the current measures. At the Gaia PES, the employee responded that the measure most accessible to young people was the NEET Active Life (Vida Activa NEET) initiative and it had strong employability results. In terms of the YG, she added that work was carried out in collaboration with youth-related institutions in reaching out to young NEETs non-registered with the PES.

3. Theoretical and Methodological Approach

The theoretical and methodological approach proposed is structured around a combination of capability and human rights approaches based on participatory action research. The Capability Approach (CA) developed by Amartya Sen (1999) provided a new framework for economic development by focusing the analysis on what people are able to be (or to do) to achieve their well-being or quality of life beyond income factors. So, the core issue for Sen are not only what individuals choose, but the choices that they would make if they had the opportunities/freedom to live their lives the way they want to. For instance, to be able to hold a decent job and not just any job. Addressing human dignity and what people consider they need and should have is very important in order to establish how conversation factors like labour market policies and social protection measures and companies can constrain or enable people’s capabilities.

Figure 3.1 From human rights and capabilities to individual wellbeing



For the implementation of basic rights, like economic, social and cultural rights, different types of policy measures need to be implemented: legislation, organisation of (public) services, subsidies, social transfers, inspection, judicial enforcement... Although some legal measures may establish effective rights (e.g. right to a guaranteed minimum income), most policies require additional ‘social investment’ in individual and collective capabilities through public or subsidised service provision (e.g. training provided by the employment agency) and the transfer of power and resources – either directly to individuals/households (e.g. social benefits), or to companies and civil society organisations (e.g. employment or training subsidies). These ‘collectives’ in turn interact with individuals and may invest in their capabilities. Fundamental rights establish the standard of living conditions and the deprivation of needs may be considered a denial of rights. In this, context the Human Rights discourse can emancipate and transform through collective action and the participation of those excluded by their own rights. (Nicase)

The Merging of Knowledge (MOK) approach involves a collective of mixed groups of researchers, the co-construction of knowledge on poverty and social exclusion by discussion and reflection: people who experience poverty and social exclusion first hand discuss their needs. This process helps to raise awareness about their situation in which their rights were denied and involves resolving the problem and creating policy recommendations.

The RE-InVEST research approach is a Participatory Action Human Rights and Capability Approach (PAHRCA) developed in seven steps (Toolkit, 44-45): 1. Identify and meet the partner NGO/gatekeeper, 2. Preliminary ‘meet ups’ (for trust building if necessary), 3. First meeting with participants – trust building,

4. Developmental: implement developmental human rights & capability approach, 5. Inquiry/data gathering, 6. Identifying patterns (key issues and themes of concern to the group) and 7. Undertake action/outcome using one or a combination of approaches.

In the Portuguese context, we initially decided to work with the RE-InVEST work package 'Diagnosis of the social damage of the crisis' WP3 participant group and introduce new participants; however, this was not possible as described below and so a new group was invited to participate. Ten young unemployed people (aged 18 and 29 – six of whom were aged between 18 to 24 and 4 between 25 and 29; three were migrants, a married couple from Venezuela who arrived in Portugal in August 2016, and one migrant who arrived from Russia nine years ago; the group comprised three males and seven females), from the social neighbourhood of Ponte de Anta, in Espinho, Aveiro. The CLDS 3G Espinho Vivo' programme¹⁴ (<http://www.adce.pt/clds-3g-espinho-vivo/>), a partnership between social organisations (Cerci Espinho and ADCE), was the intermediary (step 1). This grassroots organisation works with young people in poverty and social exclusion and people with disabilities and that are members of EAPN Portugal. The process to select the final vulnerable group was difficult.¹⁵

In January 2017, three meetings were held at the Community Centre of Ponte de Anta (Centro Comunitário Ponte de Anta) office in the social neighbourhood of Ponte de Anta Espinho (23 and 27 January and 3 February) with the participant group. The 1st meeting was initially attended by social workers as co-researchers to present the project and entailed a brainstorming to define the rules/principles of participation; participants filled in a consent form which indicated that data collected would be kept confidential. They also consented to the sessions being recorded. A presentation exercise was run on how each of the participants defines their families, community, work, dreams and hobbies as a starting point for the debate and reflection on their education and professional pathways. The 2nd meeting was dedicated to an informative session about the Youth Guarantee by local PES staff and the CLDS employee. The session opened with an icebreaker presentation activity and the training measures imparted by the job centre were adjusted to each participant. The second part involved assessing the measures by the young people. The third meeting was a focus group about the ALMP and Social Protection. On 6 February six individual interviews were held with participants to deepen the analysis. All meetings were preceded by a lunch to enhance trust and create a friendly atmosphere. During the second meeting, participants stressed that they enjoy participating in RE-InVEST as it allows them to strengthen ties and begin talking with one another. Beforehand, although they lived in the same neighbourhood, relations were more distant. They also highlighted that sharing their experiences in an intercultural way was a positive experience.

14 The Local Contracts for Social Development Program (CLDS Program) - O Programa de Contratos Locais de Desenvolvimento Social (Programa CLDS)- It is an important intervention instrument that gives greater focus to the territories affected by unemployment and marked by critical poverty situations in particular child poverty.
https://www.portugal2020.pt/Portal2020/Media/Default/Docs/Legislacao/Nacional/Portaria179B_2015.pdf

15 Seven meetings were held in November 2016 and January 2017 with different stakeholders and with participants to try and consolidate the young unemployed group to no avail. Five social organisations were involved and two neighbour counties (S. João da Madeira -S.JM and Stª Maria da Feira -StªMF). As the expected results were not obtained, a third municipality was contacted, Espinho (6th organisation) which identified 10 participants. On 11 November 2016, a meeting was held to coordinate the employment issues of local PES – S. João da Madeira and to introduce RE-InVEST project; on 22 November 2016, the 1st meeting of the steering committee (1 employee from the Social Security service and 4 the social workers) was held to identify 15 to 20 participants; on 30 November, the 1st meeting was held with 7 participants from the 15 expected, after which 3 withdrew from the project. The agenda of the meeting involved the presentation of the steering committee members as 'equal co-researchers', an introduction to the RE-InVEST project; establishing the meaning of RE-InVEST at this stage (WP5) and defining the rules/principles of participation with the group. Significant efforts were made in order to invite young people, to no avail. Therefore the ALPE – Agência em Prol do Emprego (Agency for Employment) in Stª Maria da Feira) was contacted on 12 December, in a neighbouring municipality to recruit new participants in addition to those already involved. The 1st meeting with 5 new participants from the 11 expected, after which 2 withdrew from the project. A second meeting took place on 6 January 2017 with participants from both counties, 2 from S.JM and 3 from Stª M F. During this session the Youth Guarantee was presented by the local PES. The 3rd meeting on 9 January saw 2 participants join in, involving a reflection about the YG measures. A 'Snake exercise' about the relationship of participants with PES (time of enrolment; training, employment...). The meetings of 11, 12 and 13 January were cancelled and new contacts were made with the CLDS.

On 16 February a focus group discussion was conducted with three social workers who work with the young participant group: the coordinator of the Community Centre in Ponte Danta has experience in social-cultural education and has worked in the neighbourhood where the majority of the young people live for 20 years; one young male social worker works in same neighbourhood and forms part of the CLDS 3G Espinho with another social worker from ADCE responsible for working with training and employability measures. On 13 March a joint interview was held with two PES staff, one from Espinho and another from Gaia responsible for coordination.

With regards to the difficulties found in forming the group, in general all the organisations stressed that it would be much easier if the group could be made up of more educated unemployed individuals who are very vulnerable and more aware of these activities. Those with limited qualifications who are most vulnerable are very difficult to reach would be unlikely to participate without a monetary incentive. All these difficulties have made us reflect on the kind of work social organisations undertake with the most vulnerable people in order to promote citizenship and human rights. Theoretically, what kind of anthropological approach is used to assess the concepts of well-being and justice underscored by the definition of social vulnerability?¹⁶

There are three anthropological dimensions (receiver, doer, judge) at the basis of the capability and lack of capability approach (real freedom to lead the kind of life one has reasons to value). The receiver concept includes receiving material goods such as income and assets but also receiving support and care, particularly relevant in the case of children, the elderly and disabled people. In the same vein, the doer concept includes the important issue of participation in the labour market but goes well beyond it, comprising also the equally important aspects of care work and political participation. Thus, the doer concept is best described by referring explicitly to people. (...) Finally, the judge concept refers to the two fundamental preconditions of the 'voice capability', defined as 'the ability to express one's opinions and thoughts and to make them count in the course of public discussion' (Bonvin, 2008: 247).

Based on the foregoing, people receive benefits such as social integration income due to their social exclusion status and the fact that they satisfy special requirements. To break the poverty cycle, participation and human rights need to be promoted for them to become agents of their own lives and make decisions as a judge. This capability approach is particularly important for those implementing social measures to promote the receiver concept, an aspect that is essential to boost participation and having a voice as a way to avoid perpetuating the poverty cycle.

16 Bonvin M. and Laruffa F. (2016) *Receivers, Doers, Judges: Multidimensional Anthropological Conception as a Basis for Studying the Nature of Disadvantage and Public Action A capability approach and human rights perspective*, University of Geneva.

4. Analysis of policy measures from the social investment, human rights and capability approach perspective

The current data analysis results from the empirical study based upon participatory action research. It is based on data obtained from young unemployed people, PES staff and from social workers from social organisations. The discussions of the focus groups were recorded and transcribed and the content analysis was created according to the two main research questions posed by RE-InVEST:

1. Is the Youth Guarantee accessible and adequate for the most vulnerable groups?
2. Do the ALMP and social protection measures enhance human rights and the capabilities of vulnerable groups from a social investment perspective?

First of all, we must address the subjects of this debate. The group of young people is comprised of 10 participants: eight of whom live in Ponte de Anta, in Espinho, one lives in S. João da Madeira and another one in Santa Maria da Feira, in Aveiro. They have attended basic and secondary school, receiving vocational training and leaving school between the ages of 17 and 19. Some waited until the age of 18 to drop out of school but did not complete compulsory education. The common factor reported is that they do not like school because formal education is based on an expositive approach and the obligation to stay inside a classroom for long periods (90 minutes). Instead, they show a preference for apprenticeship-based training with a link to the labour market. Unemployed youths tend to come from backgrounds with a basic level of education and working in blue-collar jobs. Generally speaking, they are long term unemployed or work in temporary jobs or odd jobs, which cannot be defined as a work relationship, or they depend on social protection benefits such as social minimum income and social housing. Some young unemployed live with their grandparents who receive small pensions. In Ponte de Anta *'...There are 100 households receiving SII 110 households with social support (house rent; electricity and water bills).'*(Coordinator of Community Centre).

When we asked about their dreams in a broader sense, the common answer was to obtain a stable job that guarantees their independence and creates trust in the future, to help their households in terms of generational solidarity and create their own family. In the difficult current economic and social context, working in a factory is considered a dream job for many young people as they would receive their salary in time and as these positions offer safe working conditions compared with other jobs. Only two young people aspired to continue on to higher education but could not do so due to financial constraints.

4.1 Is Youth Guarantee accessible and adequate for vulnerable groups?

The main finding that immediately stands out is the lack of familiarity with YG measures amongst participants. YG is unknown to them. Therefore, it is difficult to draw specific conclusions and recommendations relating to this measure. However, their experiences concerning training courses offered by PES and the overall satisfaction with employment services are worth noting, as well as the perspective of PES employees. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in our first attempt to create the group of participants, we found a number of educated young people in vulnerable situations and in a variety of conditions between the education system and employment or between employment and unemployment; this group was aware of the name and measures organised by the YG initiative. In this context, it is more likely that the young skilled and highly educated population have knowledge and are more likely to participate compared to the young

poorly educated unemployed population in very vulnerable conditions. For the poorly educated groups, follow-up and guidance should be reinforced and tailored to match their needs and aspirations. Although further work is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the specific effects, special efforts must be made to improve information and inform these young people of their rights.

PES staff highlighted certain difficulties, briefly described below, in working with these young people. These groups were defined as complex, demotivated and helpless and consequently they require broader social intervention than just employment or qualifications. Their basic needs should be met, otherwise they do not value scholarships and training of limited worth.

Despite the fact that young people are unaware of the scheme, PES staff asserted that this does not mean they are not offered assistance:

'(...) In terms of dissemination of the measure, I want to believe that despite young people not being aware of YG, they are enrolled with public services targeted by this approach (...) I do not think the success of the methodology is contingent on its dissemination. (...)

Mention was made of the huge efforts undertaken with youth institutions to identify young people who were not enrolled with the PES:

'The initiative, dissemination in itself, all partnerships with the IPJ...I do not believe it is due to ignorance or lack of dissemination that things are successful or not. There is no reason for information not reaching people.' (staff 1)

Furthermore, the positive results of the Young Active Life measure (Vida Ativa Jovem) were referred to:

'At the moment, we don't have specific data or numbers to give you and much less in global terms. What I can tell you is that the Training Service of Vila Nova de Gaia has implemented the Young Active Life measure very positively (...) It is a complex measure as part of which it is not easy to set up groups for this type of training; nonetheless, last year we did a good job both in terms of training and job placement in the labour market.' (staff 1)

However, with regards to the Espinho office of PES, it was stated that:

'It is not specifically YG, there are apprenticeship schemes, vocational training qualification, dual certification, job vacancies posted here daily and that are adjusted to the candidates' profiles. This is the work we do here in general with candidates. (...) (in the YG) the Employment Apprenticeship obviously is a very positive measure in terms of placing candidates in the labour market.' (staff 2)

Nonetheless it was stated that early assistance is essential:

'Information should be worked on more at the source, in advance and at an earlier stage, at school, during training and at vocational schools in collaboration with PES ...' (staff 2)

Young people have a negative perspective of certain features of PES: the lack of effectiveness of training in obtaining a job, the low financial support provided by training, the job offers published and the lack of personalised follow-up of employment staff. This negative opinion is reflected in their relationship with services, which they avoid resorting to: *'I don't know why I don't go to Job Centre. I stopped going there and I do not know about it.'* (YG). In the same line of thought, one PES staff member pointed out the need to improve services because their poor image affects the attitudes amongst youths in their search for an answer:

'(...) or we are transmitting a message of inability across generations... I think that public services and specifically the IEFP have to greatly improve the quality of assistance for people to feel like they are getting an effective answer. Although often it is a distorted social representation of the institution that is passed down between generations "(...)" Then, it is about believing that the Job Centre has a response that can be adjusted, sometimes this means they do not come here looking for alternatives to their own needs.' (staff 2)

4.2 Do the ALMP and social protection measures enhance human rights and the capabilities of vulnerable groups from a social investment perspective?

As previously mentioned measures are not accessible, adequate or adapted to the needs and aspirations of participants. The range of measures and language used is not understandable. As young people do not like school, the uptake of targeted training imparted in a similar way to formal education is poor. The reasons that young people fail to recognise the added value offered are as follows:

- The training does not contribute to professional integration:

'Training course upon training course and I cannot find a job ...; if we attended training that eventually leads a job that would be different. I would love to wake up early to go every day and follow the routine ... Whereas going to training that eventually leads nowhere and for which you receive no financial support ... is not worth it!'

- Companies do not value short-term training without apprenticeship:

'When we go to an interview, three-month training means nothing to employers and it is worse when you have no apprenticeship experience.'

- The short duration of training does not enhance learning:

'They (PES staff) sent me a letter for a training course. They showed me the list of courses. What am I going to learn in three months? We don't learn anything.'

- The training plan repeats the training sessions and it is attended by the same people:

'In my opinion, PES courses are always the same or they are industry-based and involve working with machines, how to be a hairdresser ... the course content is always the same.'

'... It is always the same people that go to the same courses ... it is as if they reserve the courses for the same people.'

- Difficulties developing training in areas preferred by the young people:

'They ask if we are interested in this training. We say that we are and to sign us up, it is good for us. And when it comes down to it, either there are not enough people for the classes, or there is no room to do it ...;' 'So I cannot choose what I want to do, rather I have to make do with what is available, hotel management and catering. It had nothing to do with my area of specialism. I did not like the apprenticeship (...) I wanted catering.'

Participants from abroad have to attend 'Português para Todos' (Portuguese for everybody), which imparts a basic level of Portuguese in order to learn the language before participating in other training courses. Nonetheless, participants stressed that since they registered, (August 2016) the course has yet to be run. This may be attributable to the minimum number required to start a course. Concerning the registration process (PES and Social Security) participants found that it is very bureaucratic and information is confusing:

'I went to the social security and they told me that I did not need the social security number for unemployment. I went to register myself at the job centre and the person who answered me said that I needed the social security number. (...) And they told me I would receive a letter with the number. Fifteen days later I went back and another employee told me that it will not be provided until I get a job. (...) The system does not work because I need the job centre to attend courses ...'

The opinion of PES staff differs significantly from the perspective of young people in terms of training boosting professional integration:

'(...) we have this concern despite the specific difficulties with regard to the target audience of the Youth Guarantee. Within the scope of the modalities that include on-the-job training and Vida Ativa NEET (NEET Active Life), we are concerned for contacting companies, in order to promote their employability.' (staff 1)

With regard to participation of young people in the negotiation, design and implementation of training measures, PES staff stated that priority is given to market needs and then to the interests of young people in order to promote their employability:

'... we effectively seek to meet the reality of the labour market as there is no reason to impart training with zero employability. However, we also seek to satisfy the vocational and professional interests of youths. No doubt this work has been undertaken in this area.' (staff 1)

Moreover, mention was made that all participants have all the information (rules, duties and support) about training courses available:

'Based on the vacancies available, we always work with personal interests, it may not be the best way (...) but the individual only attends after having been offered a full explanation of the offers and the kinds of support he or she will receive (...) As he or she receives some kind of support, rights and duties are involved. If they fail to attend, providing justification is part of the rules of the relationship between the institution and its customers. After the negotiation stage, we try to work hard on the information, which must be clear, in terms of the project and then the candidate must make a decision based on the corresponding answer.' (staff 2)

In summary, concerning training courses, there is a lack of flexibility in the responses that fail to match the needs and aspirations of young people:

'We should have a more flexible response capacity taking into account the needs and problems encountered ...' (staff 2)

The same opinion was reported by one social worker, who works with training measures: *'The diversity of the measures is very limited.'* Special mention was made of a young woman aged 21 who was motivated to attend a training course (logistics course to complete 12th grade for those aged over 23) but was ineligible on account of her age.

Similarly, in terms of job offers from the PES, the reasons for young people not valuing the service were as follows:

- Outdated job offers:

'(...) the job offers in the dossier when we got there featured codes for jobs that are no longer available! ...I started to compare the job offer I've seen elsewhere ... in the CV submission I had sent the previous week. (...) As job offers were really outdated.'

- Job offers available are a long way from the young people's place of residence:

'I went to the job centre to check the dossier with job offers ... A warehouse, a meat cutter in Aveiro and another in Porto and a cleaning job in Gaia. Some never answered me ... others said if they needed me they would call ... I went again to the job centre and was shown offers in Bragança, Braga which is too far away ...'

Moreover, the service provided by job centre staff is perceived by the young unemployed as routine and no interest is shown in the young person's qualification. This discourages young people from resorting to the services offered: *'They are always asking the same questions and they do not help at all (...)'* After the presentation of the YG training measures by the job centre employee, at the second RE-InVEST meeting, young people have not changed their opinion about the added value of training: *'They get your hopes up for three months ... you work for three months but then what?'* Based on these testimonies, measures do not promote their wellbeing, stimulate better work or enhance freedom by means of negotiated pathways of integration.

In terms of the foregoing, austerity measures affected the quality of the PES' response due to the reduction of the workforce. This idea is reflected in the opinions expressed by PES staff:

'(...) I would say, with more than 30 people in a day, the quality is getting worse, which is normal, it is only human as there are limited staff available to meet demand (...) Personal assistance is only available in crisis scenarios as we have experienced, and given the human resources available, it is no mean feat.' (staff 2)

Therefore, there are constraints on implementing a personalised career development plan:

'It is not possible to find tailor-made measures for each person... It would be essential for us to think about a career plan for each of these people and that should be the way we work. Despite all the public policies based on career management models advocating this personal approach, we are well aware of the difficulties in implementing these methodologies given the high number of people registered at our job centre. (...) The recommended model stating that each candidate should have an employee who is responsible for defining the steps needed in a personalised career development plan is difficult to implement in most services.' (staff 1)

Given the complexity of labour market and the transitory professional paths of individuals, PES staff complained about the effects of staff reduction on the performance of their activities such as field visits and contacting companies to improve the understanding of supply and demand:

'(...) PES staff should visit companies on a regular basis to establish which jobs are needed from the profile point of view and then could work this connection (...) Follow-up is dependent on the apprenticeship programs and in the scope of the different measures depending on the candidacies; even so, the service is too small as this would imply the availability of the teams to go into the field.' (staff 1)

In order to provide more information on the difficulties PES staff face in working with the most disadvantaged young unemployed people, they were asked to identify the most relevant aspects. Firstly, they said that social intervention must come before employment intervention with this target group in order to meet basic needs:

'Social aspects should be given more consideration before any intervention is made by the employment services in order to assist youngsters to develop positive attitudes and to build favourable expectations. Only then, perhaps would it be possible to work on certain vocational and professional opportunities (...) we have lots of candidates who are registered but haven't the employability profile which nowadays is required by most companies.'

The need for a social response is justified by the target group being described as a complicated, hopeless and discouraged public:

'When we work with this population, in many cases, we are confronted with the psychological effects of demotivation, often as a result of the unsuccessful experiences, whether by the job seeker him/herself or his/her relatives.' (staff 1)

The vulnerable social and economic background of young people leads to low expectations in terms of work and life-long learning:

'There is in fact a negative history, a sum of unsuccessful experiences from a family, personal and emotional perspective, and when it comes to professional aspects, it seems like they have no expectations. These disadvantaged young people that are still living with their families, many of them are also disadvantaged in that they have little financial capacity as part of which basic needs are not met, so it becomes difficult to aspire to life-long learning perspectives. Breaking this generational cycle of poverty is difficult.' (staff 1)

Based on the foregoing, there is resistance to training and educational paths:

'(...) this population, from a background of school dropout (...) is usually more resistant to longer training courses. There are some individuals that may be involved in the Learning with double certification (Aprendizagem com dupla certificação) as an IEFEP measure that is more structured as opposed to practical and theoretical training.' (staff 2)

Finally, it is difficult to adjust the profile of young people's expectations to the demands of the job market:

'The difficulty is twofold since they do not have, on the one hand, a profile that matches the available vacancies and, on the other hand, they do not have, in many cases, any intention of adapting to the modalities of vocational training that provide school and professional certification.' (staff 1)

Young people and PES staff agree upon the need to reinforce the connection between SP and ALMP from a social investment perspective. Considering the vulnerable context of young people, social investment in

better education is needed, quality within vocational training needs to be enhanced and the combination of active labour policies and social protection improved, rather than reproducing the stigma and poverty cycle as reported by social workers. Training measures penalise the most vulnerable as they prevent them from combining social benefits with a training scholarship:

'(...) you either receive unemployment benefit or RSI (SII), so you will not receive a scholarship... Whereas in the past, it was made up of the social benefit on one hand, and the scholarship on the other.' (staff 2)

The low level of financial support offered for training discourages young people from participating on courses:

'The support is not brilliant, people end up choosing not to take part because of these financial issues ... We try to do this work focussing on the added value of learning, which makes more sense to them (...) But the issue is that the need for financial support is stronger, as they belong to disadvantaged families and support is limited, meaning they need to access the labour market as soon as possible to raise their income.' (staff 2)

Moreover, young people claim that there should be a specific social benefit when searching for work after ending school.

'When you finish the 12th grade, we do not know if we are going to get work (...) we should receive support as part of the job search. I would say €200, €100 if the person finds a job and after these 5 months goes to Social Security service and says they do not need it anymore.'

The urgency of this recommendation is linked with the low amount of SII benefit received:

'When I left school, I was unemployed, I applied for the SII benefit and they offered me €24 and I rejected it. What is €24 going to do for me? (...) I also asked her what she would do with the €24 if she were in my shoes. She said nothing, just that those are the rules. I told her I did not want it. I couldn't do anything with €24 and so I didn't accept it.' ‘

5. The collectivities and their influence on the effectiveness of measures

Below, we will explore the role of private enterprises, civil society organisations and public services in fostering the effectiveness of the policy measures from a young person's perspective, in addition to the extent to which these collectivities directly or indirectly enhance capabilities of individuals/households, for instance by disseminating information, defending their rights, participating in the design/implementation of the measures. Furthermore, it is important to establish how the effects of these measures undermine or strengthen trust and social cohesion from a young person's perspective.

The current dynamics in terms of job creation, nationwide, seem to favour temporary contractual arrangements: based on data from the Work Compensation Fund, 82% of the new employment contracts in 2014 and 2015 were non-permanent.¹⁷

The labour market reflects the deterioration in the working conditions that has occurred in recent years, particularly for young entrants, in terms of the precarious forms of integration in the labour market and difficulties achieving a stable job. The lower the age, the worse the working conditions are. Young women are more affected by this precariousness, e.g. part-time work and temporary contracts, than younger men. Differences by economic sector and company size are noticeable, with the services sector offering worse working conditions and smaller companies offering more permanent jobs for young employees. In general, the working conditions of young entrants in the labour market have deteriorated in Portugal over the last five years, as a result of the financial crisis.¹⁸

5.1 Role of employers

In line with the aforementioned negative image of PES, young people have also a strongly negative view of employers based on their professional experiences and those of their friends and relatives. The same goes for apprenticeships. Employers often exploit vulnerable people according to the young people we met: *'they know they can exploit poor people'*. Due to their social and economic vulnerability they accept unworthy conditions that do infringe upon labour and human rights in order to survive. Due to scarce job opportunities, they feel obliged to consent to these conditions for the purposes of survival and not by free choice. However, they demand more active surveillance and inspection from authorities as they felt helpless to do so. Many experiences of bad working conditions were reported. At one multinational company in the gastronomy sector, a high employee turnover is attributable to the poor conditions offered: wages lower than the minimum wage, as reported by a young participant, with no break time allowed and a salary of just €300 per month, for night shift work. High profits are not distributed fairly in wages.

Their ability to choose a decent job is reduced to a few local companies that employ people mainly on a seasonal basis or illegally, enhancing the strong sense of instability.

¹⁷ Livro Verde sobre as relações laborais, 2016, Gabinete de Estratégia e Planeamento do Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social, Lisboa.

¹⁸ (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/comparative-information/national-contributions/portugal/portugal-working-conditions-of-young-entrants-to-the-labour-market>)
Published on: 08 January 2014.

I've been to restaurants and they want to pay under the table. And if you do not accept the job, somebody else will. I think there are a lot of things that work really badly ... unfortunately there are a lot of people like me, they do not pay holiday allowance, overtime work, and there are no rules ... I don't know ... I have experience of illegal work at an retirement home ... At the interview I was told that social security payments are made in cash. I understood that it was not legal but I needed the money. I just accepted and I ended up working like this for two months until I left.

Moreover, according to young people, most employers resort to temporary employment agencies to hire employees, especially since the onset of the crisis, which has led to an increase and a 'standardisation' of precariousness, creating great instability and uncertainty in people's lives in general and young people in particular, preventing them from planning ahead, and leaving them in a permanent state of 'waiting':

Temporary work agencies are dominant now. And we are dependent on them, this is what is happening to me... we go there for a month and then we are left with this sense of instability and we never receive assistance again, they toy with us. They sometimes only call you for one day. We spend money on travel and it is not worth it. If you say no and reject this option, they do not call again because they believe you're not interested.'

Young people are also registered with different temporary work companies, but they do not have a positive opinion of them. They don't feel respected as they are only needed for short-term work and are expected to be available at short notice. Also, in some cases, they are not informed of the outcome of the interview, despite having been told that they would be. The same goes for employers during job interviews, undermining trust. The complete lack or loss of trust is even more serious when at particular stages of an employee's life, for example, youth- which plays an essential role in structuring an overall view of solidarity and social cohesion. Alternatively, their frame of mind is being defined by little hope for a better future. It is impossible to plan for the future, taking each day as it comes, nothing is sure or guaranteed. Moreover, job instability deteriorates the social rights of youngsters, namely the entitlement to unemployment benefits and holiday allowance and puts their future rights, such as an entitlement to receive a pension, at risk. This poses a challenge for the future design of the welfare system.

Furthermore, the impact of the worsening of working relationships during the financial crisis can be attributed to the fear of job loss and the need to achieve results. According to young people, the reception and initial training of new employees by companies has also deteriorated.

(...) First of all, they do not impart training. They throw you into the middle of the team and the team does not accept the newcomers either. (...) And sometimes you ask for help and want to understand and you receive a bad answer, making you feel insecure and afraid to ask for help, making the process of entering the company more difficult than it should be. (...) People are closed-minded and aggressive. Sometimes you feel like crying and I've seen colleagues arrive and leave work crying and not coming back for their second shift. I think this is general; it is not just my experience. (...) it is rare for companies to provide training ...'

The bad working conditions offered are recognised by PES staff. Schedules do not allow for a balance to be struck between family life and work:

Working hours conflict with family time (...) often you have to start early in the morning, in terms of shift work at factories, in the trade industry working hours are also stretched out, often in shopping centres and they don't close until midnight. In the catering industry, the same goes, people work in shifts as part of increasingly smaller teams managed by companies over very long hours and for which pay is poor.'

More than the precarious conditions of work, the most common issue is the lack of work.

Finally, young people address the transitory process between jobs:

'... NEET youths here (Espinbo) rotate between employment, often in short-term, part-time jobs; and those who manage to find a place in the labour market are subject to very precarious conditions. They work as are part-time cashiers at supermarkets, tack shelves, or at factories and they remain in this cycle or work part time or are in higher education.' (staff 2)

5.2 The role of social protection and social organisations

Regarding social protection measures for vulnerable people, social workers reported a complex social puzzle in which people in receipt of SII obtain around €180:

'At the age of 50, it will be difficult to get a job and obtain the minimum social security pension when aged 66 so they will have no money to pay for healthy food, worsening health and they will die at 70. The food they consume is cheap, flour-heavy and canned products. Social organisations offering help by providing food give what they receive – and that involves this kind of product. Vulnerable people do not have money to maintain their teeth, or buy medication.'

Instances of social injustice were reported in terms of the payment of benefits:

'This week I attended a lady, she lives alone in substandard housing, the owner of which is a gentleman who lives in France. He allows her to live there and thus she takes care of the house. She had a health problem and afterwards never returned to work. Her divorced son, is now living with her, and therefore she was penalised under SII because his salary was taken into consideration when calculating the benefit, and she said I have to make a choice, I can either eat or buy medication, and she told the doctor and he said this was not possible ...'

The most vulnerable remain in the same conditions whilst trying to find work:

'From, a group of 10 or 15 helping just one person is considered a good result. But at the moment, I have a lot of cases in the CLDS that I attended at UNIVA a few years ago. People are exactly the same.'

Despite these difficulties, social workers asserted that projects and social organisations play an essential role in social cohesion; otherwise the social situation would be much worse. Moreover, the role of social organisations is subject to constraints and pressures from the political sphere when encouraging citizenship and the involvement of vulnerable people. As one social worker stressed:

'If I were to empower the community to fight, to defend their rights, to express ourselves, to fight, I would not be respected by the political class and I would be seen as a left-wing agitator.'

Social Integration Income is a poverty mitigation measure and not quite a social protection policy to fight poverty and social exclusion. Social workers reported a complex social puzzle in which people in receipt of SII obtain around €180:

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One of the answers to the complexity of the poverty phenomenon is also the articulation between social protection and employment policies. As we have seen before, the SII measure has reduced the total expenditure by 57% between 2010 and 2014. The low subsidy they receive is a factor that potentiates the vulnerability during the life cycle: lack of access to healthy food is reflected in poor health condition, including the lack of access to oral health care, which also stresses the difficulty of getting a job. The reduction of the benefit associated with the increase of the conditions of appeal, e.g. the greater requirement of conditions of access to the measure creates situations that violate human rights.

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The workers of social organizations are the agents who intervene directly with the most vulnerable groups, seeking to respond to their multiple needs which, by their very nature, require the integrated intervention of the various social policies and services. This work should promote the participation of people in the implementation of their human rights through their empowerment, so that they are true agents of change of their own life. However, the effects of long-term unemployment on the vulnerable groups characterized by low educational level and weak occupational skills, factors blocking their (re) insertion into the labour market, sharpen the generational effects of poverty.

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Integrated intervention implies the active role of combined state policies at the central level and of responding to the various problems at the local level by their proximity to the citizens. In this sense, the dimension of political power is fundamental to the realization of effective human rights of the poorest population. The idea that political power can be a blocking force to empower people to effectively improve living conditions is a real constraint to their development and to the communities themselves. The social inclusion of the poorest groups is multi-challenging and to this extent requires an effective integrated intervention of all the actors so that the recurrence in unemployment is minimized, avoiding that the same people are always the target of intervention. People who are not able to enter the labour market due to illness, as already mentioned by the job coaches heard, should be subject to social protection measures and not employment measures avoiding their inclusion in public employment services. The criteria for applying the SII measure should be more flexible to very critical social situations in order to avoid unfair situations as reported by social workers.

5.3 The role of Public Employment Service

A number of proposals for improvement were suggested by the staff interviewed:

- The need for more skilled employees able to manage the complexity of unemployment:

'The employees at the Job Centre have to be increasingly qualified. The information we work with has to go to different areas and we need to understand the needs of candidates in the different spheres in terms of education, family life, qualification, employment, in different areas ...' (staff 2)

- The need to improve the quality of assistance:

'The work that is done with people rather than merely gathering information to insert it into the database. From the outset, we should apply a different approach in terms of the monitoring stage, otherwise, people will just be considered as one more unemployed person, and the idea is the exact opposite (...) to implement a successful follow-up plan.' (staff 2)

- The need for a better service:

'... To give the idea that the other person is listening to you. Often people do not even look others into the eyes. You are providing a service and deal with people in a mechanical way.' (staff 2)

- The need to have better knowledge of groups to provide a more adequate answer:

'And a more precise local diagnosis because it is not enough to say the group ... understanding the individual differences would be very important in finding answers.' (staff 2)

- **The need to improve communication:**

'(...) To improve the communication channels, which are better, but we should have IT, more comprehensive information networks, information does not always arrive on time or adapted information is obtained one way or another.' (staff 2)

6. Conclusion

The OECD recently published its main findings and recommendations¹⁹ regarding activation policies in Portugal:

- ensure that more costly active labour market programmes (ALMPs) target those that need them most (i.e. disadvantaged youth and the long-term unemployed) more specifically and that programmes are well-tailored to the specific needs of job seekers;
- consider building stronger incentives to recruit permanent employees under active labour market programmes, ensuring that take-up amongst employers is not limited unduly as a result and evaluate existing measures that incentivise hiring on permanent contracts;
- aim for more stability in the ALMP measures on offer to ensure jobseekers and firms have a better understanding of what help is available to them;
- devote more resources to the careful monitoring and evaluation of ALMPs. In particular, pilot studies should be carried out on a trial, random basis for all new programmes;
- fully implement the measures outlined in the programme to modernise the Public Employment Service (*Programa de Relançamento do Serviço Público de Emprego*).

There are many consequences of youth disengagement due to the lack of job opportunities: poor future employment outcomes, an additional risk of experiencing physical and mental health issues, a deterioration of well-being and general living conditions, and increased risk in terms of life style, including an increased risk of crime and drug misuse, with only partial participation in economic, social and cultural life and a lower standard of living and well-being than is considered normal in European societies. These consequences may lead to further social exclusion, which can be lifelong.²⁰ The labour market integration of the most vulnerable youngsters is impaired by these consequences, creating a vicious circle that is difficult to break, leaving young people to rely permanently on social welfare systems, when there are special social policies oriented to this specific target. In order to provide an urgent response to young unemployment and correct the generational effects of youth disengagement, the Youth Guarantee scheme was implemented in Portugal in 2014. This report does not aim to assess the impact of labour market reforms and the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee, to do so would require more time and a much deeper analysis. Instead it seeks to figure out if and how it is reaching the most vulnerable unemployed young people, and how it impacts on their capabilities and human rights. Young people are unaware of the Youth Guarantee as a programme that aims to guarantee training, apprenticeship or vocational orientation within four months after having left school or becoming unemployed. They are familiar with training measures and have a negative idea about the PES as a promoter of ALMPs and the same goes for the Social Security service in granting social benefits like social minimum income and the connection between both kinds of policies. In their opinion, employers don't promote the right to work and labour rights.

The recommendations made by young unemployed people to improve ALMPs and social protection policies are as follows.

- Adequate income support during the transition from school to the labour market to help with the search for employment.

19 OECD (2017) Labour Market Reforms in Portugal 2011-2015, a preliminary assessment. OECD Publishing, Paris.

20 Eurofound (2015), Social inclusion of young people, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 23.

- Better connection between ALMPs and social protection policies seeking combinations in terms of employment protection, unemployment benefits and active labour market policies. The recipients of SII should not be penalised in terms of social support when attending professional training.
- The SII should include vulnerable people who are on the borderline of legal benefit, as they are still considered poor.
- Access to vocational orientation at public employment services to help to define a personalised career plan.
- Access to quality training courses that enhance (re-)entrance to the labour market, with a dual apprenticeship system that combines training at work and school.

Following the same line of thought, PES Staff advocated a social intervention involving young vulnerable people before employment integration. In their view, basic needs must be met before starting to work, putting the focus on a better connection between social protection and public employment policies. Furthermore, PES staff highlighted the need for proper staffing (in terms of both numbers and skills) to offer customised support to the NEET group, as a heterogeneous group that requires an individual approach. It is also argued that the dual apprenticeship system is the most adequate support for this target group.

For social workers and young people, the training offered by PES should be based on a real analysis of demand and supply in the labour market, in order to fulfil the needs and expectations of young people. In other words, the measures should be regional and local, implemented according to individual needs and local/regional characteristics.

Moreover, the confidence of young people in the future is seriously compromised by the lack of job opportunities. They feel exploited by employers, obliged to survive on low wages as if this was 'normal', due to their vulnerable social condition. Therefore they advocate more strict supervision by labour authorities to promote the quality of the work environment (conditions such as wages, working time, etc.). There is a need to promote dignifying employment conditions that respect human beings, human rights and capabilities.

In summary, we can conclude that the official Youth Guarantee website features programs and measures that are insufficient or inefficient for the most vulnerable young people due to the huge variety and lack of transparency of measures. The same goes for job offers and training offered in dossiers for consultation that requires a personal orientation and individual approach by PES staff. The ALMP and Youth Guarantee in particular should better target the less skilled and vulnerable young unemployed group, in line with social protection policies and strong social service provision. The quality of training measures should be improved by listening to what they have to say and actually enhancing their capabilities and rights. To facilitate individualised, tailor-made measures and early intervention, the PES needs to expand its workforce and offer them the skills required to deal with the complexity of unemployment and the labour market.

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RE-InVEST - Rebuilding an Inclusive, Value-based Europe of Solidarity and Trust through Social Investments

In 2013, as a response to rising inequalities, poverty and distrust in the EU, the Commission launched a major endeavour to rebalance economic and social policies with the Social Investment Package (SIP). RE-InVEST aims to strengthen the philosophical, institutional and empirical underpinnings of the SIP, based on social investment in human rights and capabilities. Our consortium is embedded in the 'Alliances to Fight Poverty'. We will actively involve European citizens severely affected by the crisis in the co-construction of a more powerful and effective social investment agenda with policy recommendations.

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