



# What have countries done to support young people in the COVID-19 crisis?

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Young people have been hard hit by the wide reaching labour market and social impacts of the COVID 19 crisis. Youth unemployment has increased considerably; education and work based learning have been heavily disrupted; and many young people are suffering from financial insecurity, housing instability and mental distress. OECD governments have responded to this situation by taking comprehensive policy measures for young people, ranging from labour market and income support measures, to housing responses and mental health support. This policy brief provides an overview of the measures that countries have put in place to avoid a long-lasting negative impact on the employment prospects and aspirations of young people.

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## Key messages

- **Young people (15-29 year-olds) have been heavily affected by the labour market and social implications of the COVID-19 crisis.** Youth unemployment rose sharply at the onset of the pandemic and remains above pre-crisis levels in almost all OECD countries. Many work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities, which can help smooth school-to-work transitions, have been disrupted, while many young people are experiencing financial insecurity, housing instability and mental health issues. Among the youth, those bearing the brunt of the crisis are those who were already facing difficult circumstances prior to the pandemic.
- **Almost two-thirds of OECD countries have introduced emergency income support for young people, but scope and scale vary across countries.** Young people, especially those experiencing financial hardship or job loss, have been given greater access to existing income support measures from which they were previously excluded. One-off payments were made to students to compensate for loss of part-time work and to support continuation of studies.
- **Although job retention schemes are not targeted to specific age groups, they have been used more frequently for young workers by employers.** The hardest-hit industries – e.g. accommodation, food services, arts – that relied the most on job retention schemes to protect jobs tend to have a high share of young workers. Expansion of eligibility for these schemes to include temporary workers further benefited many young workers.
- **Almost two-thirds of OECD countries have had hiring subsidies in place specifically to employers recruiting young people.** Around a third of OECD countries have introduced new hiring subsidies to employers recruiting young people, or extended existing schemes at some point during the pandemic. These subsidies can be a cost-effective way of helping young people into jobs in the (uncertain) recovery. In addition, private and public employment services have launched new youth-specific programmes, and a few countries are stepping up efforts to increase outreach and register young people with employment services.
- **More than three-quarters of OECD countries have strengthened work-based learning opportunities including apprenticeship schemes and summer jobs for young people.** Measures range from new and increased subsidies for work-based learning to increased flexibilities in existing schemes. Shortages of work-based learning opportunities are likely to persist in some countries, but in others, measures taken have enabled countries to maintain or even increase the number of apprenticeship placements.
- **Around half of OECD countries have strengthened youth mental health services or increased financing for youth mental health, including in education settings, but these measures have often only represented moderate changes.** Given that the COVID-19 crisis continues to hit young people's mental health particularly hard, greater long-term financial commitments and integrated policy action are needed now and beyond the crisis.
- **Many OECD countries have introduced emergency housing measures such as eviction bans and rent deferrals to support people to stay in their homes, but these were usually not targeted at young people.** Most OECD countries have also treated homelessness as a public health emergency during the pandemic, resulting in concerted policy efforts to provide accommodation for homeless people.
- **Early action is the best way to prevent long-term scarring effects on young people's labour market outcomes.** After the 2008 global financial crisis, many governments failed to take early and sufficient action for young people, resulting in long-lasting scars on their career development and impacts on well-being. With the right policies in place, young people can find their way to the labour market and independent living.



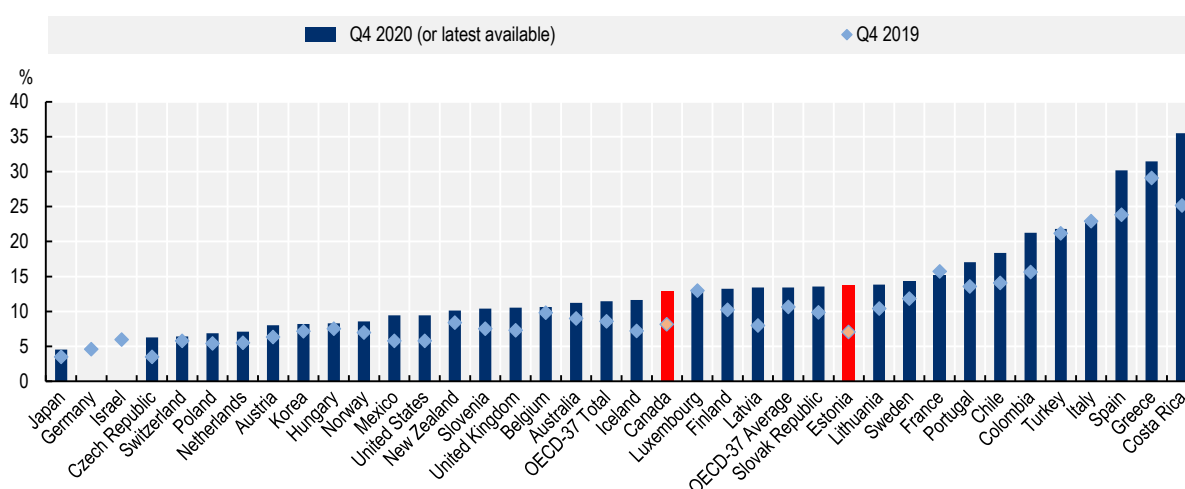
## Young people have been heavily affected by the COVID-19 crisis

After a decade of decline, the weighted average OECD unemployment rate among 15-29 year-olds increased from 8.6% at the end of 2019 to 11.5% at the end of 2020 (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> This rate is significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate, which stood at 7.1% at the end of 2020. At the onset of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, unemployment rose considerably more among young women than among young men, but the gender gap has since closed. Increases in youth unemployment rates have often come on top of existing structural challenges for young people to enter the labour market, with many countries having persistently high levels of youth unemployment from before the pandemic.

The COVID-19 crisis has hit young people harder in the labour market because of several factors. Young workers are over-represented in industries and sectors most affected by the crisis, and are more likely to work on temporary contracts, exposing them to a higher risk of job loss. Across the OECD in 2019, 15-24 year-olds were more than twice as likely to be on temporary contracts (25.7%) than the total working population (11.8%) (OECD, 2021<sup>[1]</sup>). In addition, as the last in, young people tend to have less company-specific knowledge and skills, and are therefore often the first out. Young people who are looking for work – often for the first time – are doing so at a time of limited vacancies and fierce competition from more experienced jobseekers, making their labour market integration even more difficult.

### Figure 1. Unemployment rates of 15-29 year-olds have increased in nearly all OECD countries

As a percentage of the youth labour force, 2019-Q4 and 2020-Q4 (or latest quarter available)



Note: OECD-37 Average is the unweighted average of 37 OECD countries (excluding Israel). OECD-37 Total is the weighted average of 37 OECD countries (excluding Israel). Data are not seasonally adjusted.

Source: European and National Labour Force Surveys.

<sup>1</sup> This brief accompanies the update of the OECD Youth Action Plan (OECD, 2021<sup>[22]</sup>), which provides the building blocks for improving support in key areas, and the policy brief on *Young people's concerns during COVID-19: Results from Risks That Matter 2020* (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>), which sets out the findings of young people's concerns and policy preferences based on a cross-national survey covering 25 OECD countries. The mental health impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on young people and the necessary policy responses are covered in the policy brief from May 2021 on *Supporting young people's mental health through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond* (OECD, 2021<sup>[7]</sup>). Further analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on young people's labour market outcomes and employment prospects is provided in the *OECD Employment Outlook 2021* (OECD, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>).



The increase in unemployment rates does not fully capture the impact of the crisis on young people's labour market outcomes. In the second quarter of 2020, hours worked by young people had fallen by 26% year-on-year, which is 11 percentage points more than for prime-aged and older workers, and the return of hours worked to pre-crisis levels has been much slower among young people (OECD, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>). In the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis, the proportion of 15-29 year-olds not in employment, education or training (NEETs) also swelled, with many young people becoming inactive. At the end of 2020, the average NEET rate among 15-29 year-olds in OECD countries stood at 12%, and 2.9 million more young people were NEETs compared to one year before (OECD, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>).

Many firms have been reluctant to hire (young) people at a time when economies are weak and profits are down, mirroring patterns seen during most economic downturns. The proportion of young people in work who started jobs in the past three months, which can be interpreted as the youth hiring rate, was down 12.7% year-on-year in the EU-26 at the end of 2020 (OECD, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>). Job opportunities for young people remain heavily affected by the COVID-19 crisis, and new labour market entrants account for a large share of the rise in joblessness among young people.

In the context of this labour market crisis, it is unsurprising that young people are reporting significant financial pressures. When surveyed in September-October 2020 for the OECD Risks that Matter survey, 36% of 18-29 year-olds reported financial difficulties since the onset of the pandemic – a higher rate than among 30-49 year-olds (33%) and 50-64 year-olds (26%) (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). The impact has also been uneven among young people. Among young respondents who identify themselves as belonging to low social class, 61% reported that their household had been affected by some form of job-related disruption, and 21% reported outright job loss, compared to 49% and 13% respectively for young people from the middle class (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>).

Work-based learning opportunities and apprenticeships have also been hard hit. Existing legislation excluded conducting apprenticeships remotely in some countries, and enrolments fell because of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 restrictions and the inability of employers to continue providing work-based training in light of the economic impacts of the crisis and health restrictions (OECD, 2021<sup>[4]</sup>). In Australia, commencements of apprenticeships and traineeships had fallen by 18.8% in the 12 months ending September 2020, compared with the 12 months ending September 2019. In Germany, by the start of the training year in September 2020, the number of applicants for apprenticeships was down by 7.6%, while the number of available positions had fallen by 7.3% compared to one year before. Monthly evidence up to May 2021 suggests that both the number of applications and places available have not recovered to pre-crisis levels. In a few OECD countries, however, the number of apprenticeships have been maintained (e.g. Switzerland), while France saw a 40% increase in apprenticeship commencements in 2020, in large part due to policies to promote hiring of apprentices.

Young people in education are also facing pressures from the COVID-19 crisis. Learning has been disrupted for many months, and in some cases, for more than a year. While learning losses may only be temporary, educational aspirations might be lowered, and student disengagement and rates of early school leaving may rise due to factors such as discouragement, challenges to attend (virtual) classes, and difficulties in providing support to students. There is growing evidence that school attendance has fallen in many countries. In the United States, it was estimated that as many as 3 million young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have received any formal education between March and October 2020 (Bellweather Education, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>). On the other hand, some young people may delay labour market entry and extend their studies, which can help bridge the crisis at a time when jobs are less available. For working students, the lack of temporary job opportunities may cause challenges for financing of education and living costs, and for some may prevent of their education.

Despite these difficult circumstances, young people are creatively responding to these challenges and developing new forms of solidarity. Many young people have been adept at moving to digital forms of communicating, learning and working, and quick to seize opportunities of the accelerated digital



transformation. But not everyone has been able to reap the benefits. Large inequalities exist in access to the Internet and digital devices, both of which are prerequisites for learning and working in remote settings. Across the OECD, in 2018, around one in five 15-year-olds from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds had neither a quiet place to study at home nor an Internet connection (OECD, 2020<sup>[6]</sup>).

The mental health of many young people is also being severely affected. Across three OECD countries (Belgium, France and the United States) where data are available, the prevalence of symptoms of anxiety and depression was around 30% to 80% higher among young people than the general population in March 2021, with young people particularly affected by loneliness. This deterioration in mental health can be attributed to a combination of weakening of protective factors – access to exercise, schooling, routine, social connection and employment – and an increase in risk factors of poor mental health – financial insecurity, unemployment and uncertainty (OECD, 2021<sup>[7]</sup>). Young women and LGBTI+ individuals are reporting greater declines in mental health during the pandemic. In 2018, in Belgium, prevalence of symptoms of depression among 15-24 year-old women was 2.5 percentage points higher than among young men. Yet, by March 2021, the gender difference in prevalence of symptoms of depression among 18-29 year-olds stood at almost 15 percentage points.

Last but not least, the COVID-19 crisis has shed light on the importance of ensuring safe, accessible and affordable homes for young people, especially for those no longer living with their parents. Containment measures left many young “hidden” homeless people with no safe place to stay, especially those who were previously staying with friends or extended family. Despite efforts to move rough sleepers into self-contained accommodation, young people remain heavily affected by housing instability. In England (United Kingdom), 78% of surveyed local councils reported an increase in youth homelessness from the onset of the pandemic to mid-2020 (Centrepoin, 2020<sup>[8]</sup>). Meanwhile, 2.4% of young people surveyed in the OECD Risks that Matter 2020 survey reported that they had lost their home because they could no longer afford mortgage or rent since the onset of the pandemic (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or marginalised communities such as LGBTI+ and young people with disabilities face additional challenges.

## OECD policy responses to support young people through the COVID-19 crisis<sup>2</sup>

In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, many governments addressed young people’s difficulties too late and insufficiently, often resulting in long-lasting scars on young people’s careers and overall well-being (OECD, 2013<sup>[9]</sup>; Carcillo et al., 2015<sup>[10]</sup>). It took a whole decade for the OECD youth unemployment rate to return to its pre-2008 level, and many other outcomes have remained fragile. This time, to avoid similar long-term impacts on young people’s prospects, all governments across the OECD have put in place targeted policies to support them through the crisis and recovery. Responses have differed significantly from country-to-country both in scale and areas of focus, but nonetheless span across many policy areas, ranging from support to find and keep jobs; to income support and prevention of social exclusion; as well as mental health initiatives. Table 1 presents an overview of the measures taken.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the information included on policy responses by OECD countries is based on a questionnaire sent to country representatives of the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee in February 2021. 37 OECD countries provided responses. Detailed policy responses are available in Annex 1.A. Descriptions of policy responses to support young people through the COVID-19 crisis.



**Table 1. Dashboard of policy responses to support young people through the COVID-19 crisis**

	Youth strategies to guide cross-sectoral and employment policies	Providing emergency and additional income support measures for young people	Hiring subsidies to promote employment of young people	Supporting work-based learning opportunities and apprenticeships	Strengthening employment services for young people	Expanding mental health services, funding and supports for young people
Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Austria	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Belgium	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Canada	✓			✓	✓	✓
Chile			✓	✓	✓	✓
Colombia	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Czech Republic		✓	✓			
Denmark		✓		✓	✓	✓
Estonia	●		✓			
Finland	✓	✓		✓		✓
France		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Greece	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Hungary	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Iceland		✓		✓		✓
Ireland		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Israel		✓		✓		
Italy	✓		✓	✓		
Japan	✓	✓			✓	
Korea	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Latvia	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lithuania	✓		✓	✓		✓
Luxembourg	●	✓	✓	✓		
Mexico	✓	✓			✓	
Netherlands		✓		✓	✓	✓
New Zealand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Norway	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Poland		✓	✓		✓	✓
Portugal	✓		✓	✓		
Slovak Republic	●		✓			
Slovenia	✓		✓			
Spain				✓		
Sweden	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Switzerland	✓			✓		
Turkey	✓		✓	✓	✓	
United Kingdom	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
United States	✓			✓	✓	✓

Note: The dashboard covers a total of 37 OECD countries. The check symbol (✓) is used when countries have put in place new measures since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 that correspond to the category. The only exceptions are for youth strategies and hiring subsidies, for which measures in place before the crisis are also marked with a check symbol. The dot symbol (●) is used to refer to national youth plans that are currently in development. Further details for each category and descriptions of policy responses are available in Annex 1.A. The dashboard of measures is based on responses to policy questionnaires sent to all OECD member countries in February 2021, and where possible, information has been updated to include latest measures up to May 2021. Responses were received from the 37 OECD countries which are included in the table above.

Source: OECD Policy Questionnaire on Youth Policies (2021).



## **Youth strategies to guide policies for young people during a crisis**

National youth strategies and plans can help guide policies across ministries and sectors, and most OECD countries had such youth-specific strategies prior to the COVID-19 crisis, although they differ in scope and ambition.<sup>3</sup> 22 out of 37 responding OECD countries have an operational national youth strategy covering multiple sectors, and five were in the process of elaborating a new or updated strategy (see Annex 1.A). These findings are consistent with a survey in April 2020, in which 25 OECD countries reported having an operational national youth strategy (OECD, 2020<sub>[11]</sub>).

In a number of OECD countries, new plans, strategies and commitments have been made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, often with an emphasis on youth employment. In Korea, the government announced a Youth Policy Basic Plan in December 2020 to promote a whole-of-government response to support young people through the COVID-19 crisis with policy directives for each ministry. In New Zealand, a youth plan for 2020-22 was developed to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on young people with an emphasis on Māori and Pacific young people, LGBTI+ young people and young people with disabilities. In France, while there is no cross-cutting national youth strategy, the government developed a youth employment strategy for the COVID-19 recovery. Launched in July 2020, the *1 jeune 1 solution* (1 young person 1 solution) plan which had an initial budget of EUR 6.7 billion, which was later increased to EUR 9 billion, offers tailored solutions through a package of measures, including hiring subsidies for youth under 26 years old and for apprenticeship contracts, strengthened employment support, and training targeted at disadvantaged young people.

### **Box 1. The reinforced Youth Guarantee of the European Union (EU)**

In October 2020, amidst concerns over the impact of the crisis on employment prospects of young people, all EU countries adopted a Recommendation reaffirming their commitment to “ensuring that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.” The reinforced Youth Guarantee builds on the Youth Guarantee from 2013, by extending the age limit of young people from 25 to 29 years and by requiring targeted and individualised approaches for vulnerable groups. The reinforced Youth Guarantee is forward-looking and looks to facilitate development of young people’s skills for a changing world of work, including the skills needed for the green and digital transitions.

Several EU countries are updating or developing new youth strategies to reflect the reinforced Youth Guarantee. In Spain, the 2021-27 Strategy for the reinforced Youth Guarantee was developed and negotiated with regions, trade unions, business organisations and youth stakeholders, and released in June 2021. In Ireland, the Pathways to Work 2021-25, currently being finalised, presents the next strategy for employment services, and will be used to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee by strengthening services available to young jobseekers. In Luxembourg, the revised national implementation plan for the reinforced Youth Guarantee will include mapping of target groups and policies to increase outreach to vulnerable groups. Source:

Participation of young people and youth organisations is key for an effective national youth strategy, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to (re)build trust of young people in governments and public institutions. In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, trust in public institutions declined in many countries, and especially so among young people. There is a risk that the

<sup>3</sup> Countries that had youth strategies covering multiple policy areas from before the crisis are also included as an existing strategy may be sufficient to guide youth policy during the COVID-19 crisis.



COVID-19 crisis could similarly reduce trust (OECD, 2020[12]). Most countries have provisions to engage young people in decision-making processes within their youth strategies. In Mexico, one of the three pillars of the National Youth Program for 2021-24, which was adopted in January 2021, is to involve and consult young people in developing policies. In Luxembourg, as part of the elaboration of the 2022-24 Youth Action Plan, a survey is being conducted to consult the views of young people as well as professionals working with young people.

### ***Extending income support measures for young people to cushion the impact of the crisis***

During periods of crisis, emergency income support through transfers and scaled-up social benefits can provide income support for those most affected, and most countries quickly responded to the pandemic by putting into place broad measures (OECD, 2020[13]). These measures have been vital to provide swift relief to those who need it urgently, although careful consideration will be necessary to ensure these measures are both effective and sustainable. Even when not directed at specific age groups, these measures have often helped to support the incomes of young people.

Yet in some cases, young people have not been able to access such support, especially when tied to employment. Minimum contribution requirements for unemployment insurance – ranging from 3-4 months in France, Italy, Greece, Canada and the United States to 12 months in Belgium, Germany, Portugal and Sweden, and 24 months in Ireland and the Slovak Republic prior to the crisis – exclude young workers who recently started a job. Young people also often work on non-standard contracts and are therefore less well-covered by existing social protection measures. In light of the crisis, a number of countries loosened minimum contribution requirements, which may have particularly helped young people who are more likely to be newly in work. In Canada, until September 2021, individuals only need around 3 weeks of uninsured work to become eligible for employment insurance, while in Portugal, the minimum contribution to access unemployment insurance was lowered to 6 months for those who were unemployed between mid-March 2020 and end-June 2020. In Spain, the minimum contribution requirements were temporarily suspended, including for temporary workers.

The measures taken to provide targeted income support to young people have varied within the OECD, both in terms of scale and approach (see Annex 1.A). At least nine OECD countries have implemented emergency income support and increased social benefits targeted specifically at young jobseekers and young people from low-income backgrounds (Australia, Belgium, Colombia, France, Korea, Israel, Latvia, Mexico and New Zealand). In these countries, emergency income support was provided at regular intervals, often during the most acute periods of the crisis. In Latvia, the government introduced an allowance for jobseekers who recently acquired higher education, which could be paid for up to four months until June 2021. In France, an initial EUR 200 payment was provided in May 2020 to 800 000 young people under the age of 25 experiencing financial hardship. This was followed by two decrees in December 2020, which established monthly allowances for previous recipients of higher education scholarships under the age of 30 who are looking for a job, and for young jobseekers under the age of 26 who are registered with employment services. In Australia, a Coronavirus Supplement provided income support for 16-21 year-olds receiving the Youth Allowance and looking for full-time work, studying part-time, or temporarily unable to work. The supplement was set at AUD 550 per fortnight until September 2020, and was slowly reduced before being phased out in March 2021 as conditions improved. Similar measures were taken in Colombia, where the government provided five additional extraordinary payments (totalling COP 356 000 per recipient) to participants in the *Jóvenes en Acción* (Youth in Action) programme, which provides conditional cash transfers to 14-26 year-olds who are living in a situation of poverty or vulnerability. In New Zealand, meanwhile, an increase to the Youth Payment for 16-17 year-olds and Young Parent Payment for 16-18 year-old parents was introduced in the 2021 budget as part of a broad effort to increase social benefits beyond the pandemic.





In at least 11 OECD countries, emergency income support measures for students in post-secondary education and universities have been put in place, with these measures usually targeted at students who have lost part-time jobs, who were unable to find work, or are experiencing financial hardship (Austria, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States). Measures taken include the introduction of new allowances, expanding eligibility of existing measures to students, and adjustments to tuition fees and loan repayments. In the United States, a Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund was set up to provide financial aid to students during the crisis. USD 6 billion was allocated to student financial aid in March 2020, and a further USD 18 billion was allocated in March 2021 to prevent hunger, homelessness and hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis. In the Netherlands, emergency one-off income support ranging from EUR 800 to EUR 2000 was made available to students in vocational education and tertiary education to compensate for delays to studies and support young people in completing education. A bill is currently being discussed in the Senate which would lead to a 50% reduction in tuition and course fees for students in post-secondary education for 2021-22, including in vocational education centres and universities. In Denmark, the government made temporary changes to the State Education Grant to increase the financial support available for young people, many of whom had been heavily reliant on part-time work to finance their living. This support measure remained in place until June 2021 and includes the provision of an additional loan for young people who have exhausted their educational grant.

### ***Implementing job retention schemes to supporting the retention of young workers***

Across many OECD countries, job retention schemes – primarily short-time work schemes and wage subsidies – have been crucial to protect jobs and livelihoods, thus cushioning the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. These schemes seek to preserve jobs at firms experiencing a temporary decline in business activity by reducing their labour costs and supporting the incomes of workers whose hours are cut back. While job retention schemes have not been targeted specifically at young workers, they have been used much more for young people than other age groups.

This outcome likely reflects the large share of young people in hard-hit industries, which have made heavy use of these schemes. In Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, more than 25% of young workers were on job retention schemes in Q2 2020, more than 5 percentage points above rates for prime-age workers (OECD, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>). It also reflects government efforts to expand eligibility of job retention schemes to temporary or non-standard workers. Data from Switzerland, for example, show that a large number of temporary jobs were supported by such schemes, albeit slightly less than permanent jobs. In Austria and Germany, meanwhile, apprentices could also be placed on job retention schemes. While job retention schemes will need to remain in place as the crisis continues, they can only be a temporary tool and will have to be increasingly targeted to jobs that are likely to remain viable in the medium term or sectors where activity can resume.

### ***Hiring subsidies to stimulate job creation for young people***

Amidst the ongoing uncertain recovery, when carefully targeted, hiring subsidies can be a cost-effective way of helping young unemployed people into jobs. Evidence from the global financial crisis shows that temporary hiring subsidies targeted at small firms and low-wage workers successfully promoted job creation and proved cost-effective (Cahuc, Carcillo and Le Barbanchon, 2018<sup>[14]</sup>). To minimise deadweight losses, hiring subsidies should only be used in the case of temporary weak demand or targeted at more disadvantaged groups (e.g. young people or long-term unemployed). Combining hiring subsidies with on-the-job training is crucial to guarantee long-term benefits for the workers supported.

23 OECD countries have had hiring subsidies in place at some point during the pandemic for employers recruiting young people on a full-time or long-term basis (see Annex 1.A). Of these countries, 13 introduced new youth hiring subsidies or extended existing schemes amidst the COVID-19 crisis (Australia, Belgium,



Chile, Colombia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom). In Chile, employment subsidies targeting young workers were introduced in September 2020 and made available until March 2021. Companies newly hiring 18-24 year-olds, women, or people with disabilities from disadvantaged backgrounds could receive a subsidy of up to 60% of the monthly remuneration of the employee – compared to 50% for other workers. The subsidy was capped at CLP 270 000 per month and was available for up to six months, with the employer having to prove that the new hire increased the number of employees compared to levels in July 2020. In Italy, employers can now receive hiring subsidies that contribute up to 100% (maximum EUR 6 000 per year) of wages over a period of three years when they hire anyone not in employment, education or training aged under 36 on a permanent basis. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, subsidies were limited to 50% of wages and capped at EUR 3 000, and employers could only claim subsidies for people aged under 31. The remaining 10 OECD countries already had youth hiring subsidies in place from before the pandemic, and have not made any adjustments in response to the pandemic so far (Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey).

### ***Promoting work-based learning for young people at a time of crisis***

Work-based learning is important to facilitate the school-to-work transition, but has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 crisis, and often suspended over the past year. Work-based learning is often a component of formal education; it includes not only apprenticeships, but also informal on-the-job learning, internships and work placements. Across the OECD, around three-quarters of young adults (25-34 year-olds) who attained vocational upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education gained some work experience during their period of study, including apprenticeships, mandatory traineeships and summer jobs (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>).

30 OECD countries have strengthened work-based learning opportunities (see Annex 1.A), and in many countries, this has been the result of new subsidies or the expansion of existing initiatives to promote retention and hiring of apprentices during the COVID-19 crisis. In eight countries (Australia, Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), new incentive schemes for hiring or retaining apprentices were introduced, while in a further eight countries, existing schemes were scaled up (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States). In Germany, the federal government set up a “secure apprenticeships” scheme in July 2020 to financially support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that were hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, and incentivised them to maintain training for apprentices. The scheme also rewards SMEs that take on trainees who were working for companies that became insolvent due to the COVID-19 crisis. As the scale of the challenge became clear, the federal government increased the generosity of the scheme. In March 2021, the scheme was extended to 2021/2022 and will receive EUR 500 million in 2021. The training bonus for companies that maintain their current level of training was also doubled from EUR 2000 per apprentice to EUR 4 000 for this year. In Flanders (Belgium), the apprenticeship fee paid to employers was increased from EUR 500-750 to EUR 1 000 per year per apprentice from September 2020 and August 2021.

Some of these schemes have even contributed to maintaining or increasing the number of apprenticeship positions. In France, where strengthening uptake of apprenticeships has been a priority for the government from before the COVID-19 crisis, an increase in apprenticeships in 2020 has been attributed to a combination of the *1 young person 1 solution* initiative, which provides a EUR 5 000 to 8 000 bonus for companies recruiting apprenticeships between 1 July 2020 and 31 December 2021, and a law passed in 2018 that simplified conditions for employers to recruit apprentices, extended the age from 25 to 29 years old, and increased the attractiveness for young people to opt for apprenticeships. In Switzerland, a new COVID-19 apprenticeship taskforce was set up in May 2020 to co-ordinate policies at the sub-national level, and contributed to preventing any decrease in the number of apprenticeship enrolments in 2020



compared to the year before. In Geneva, for example, lump-sum payments worth CHF 3 000 have been available from May 2020 for companies hiring apprentices.

Even with such financial incentives for employers, shortages of work-based learning opportunities could persist in some countries. For study branches with a mandatory apprenticeship component, the lack of work-based learning opportunities could delay graduation, making school-to-work transition more difficult (OECD, 2021<sup>[4]</sup>). Many OECD countries have therefore made work-based learning arrangements more flexible, while in some countries, flexibility was already provided in the system. Spain adopted regulation in September 2020 to increase flexibility of work-based learning components of vocational education. Work-based components can temporarily be reduced to the minimum amount of hours permitted by law, and may even be replaced by taught modules that seek to reflect the benefits of work-based learning where this is not possible. In the Czech Republic, the flexibility of the apprenticeship system allows for students to reduce the work-based learning elements of their education. In Austria, a training guarantee was already in place before the crisis to ensure that young people who cannot find apprenticeship positions are enrolled in equivalent apprenticeship programmes in a supra-company training entity including recognised final exams. In response to the crisis, the government made 3 000 additional supra-company placements available. An additional obstacle to continuing work-based learning have been requirements or expectations that training would be provided in-person, which led to the suspension of placements while movement restrictions were in place. In the United States, the Department of Labor released a circular providing guidance on delivering work-based learning virtually in December 2020, as well as an online guide on virtual apprenticeships. These measures have facilitated employers in shifting provision of work-based learning to virtual settings.

In OECD countries where apprenticeships play a less prominent role, measures have been introduced to support summer jobs and internships that often provide young people with a ladder into the labour market. In Canada, the Summer Jobs Program, which provides wage subsidies to SMEs to hire young people for quality work experience, has been adapted in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Wage subsidies have been increased from 50% of the minimum wage to 75%, part-time placements are now eligible, and job placements outside the summer period are also now eligible for subsidies until the spring of 2022. In Iceland, the government dedicated ISK 2.2 billion to create 3 000 temporary summer jobs for students aged 18 and above during the summer of 2020, and the campaign was renewed for 2021, resulting in the creation of a further 2 500 summer jobs. In Portugal, a nine-month scheme came into force in February 2021, in which employment services provide allowances for young people who enrol in internships, with employers also reimbursed for costs associated with hiring. In Turkey, the government launched an Internship Mobilisation Programme in July 2020 to compensate for the reduction in number of internships available during the COVID-19 crisis. The programme provides a platform to help match final-year university students, for whom internships are often a compulsory component of curricula, with public institutions and employers in the voluntary sector. More than 300 000 young people have registered to the platform since its launch.

### ***Strengthening employment services to support young people in finding and keeping jobs***

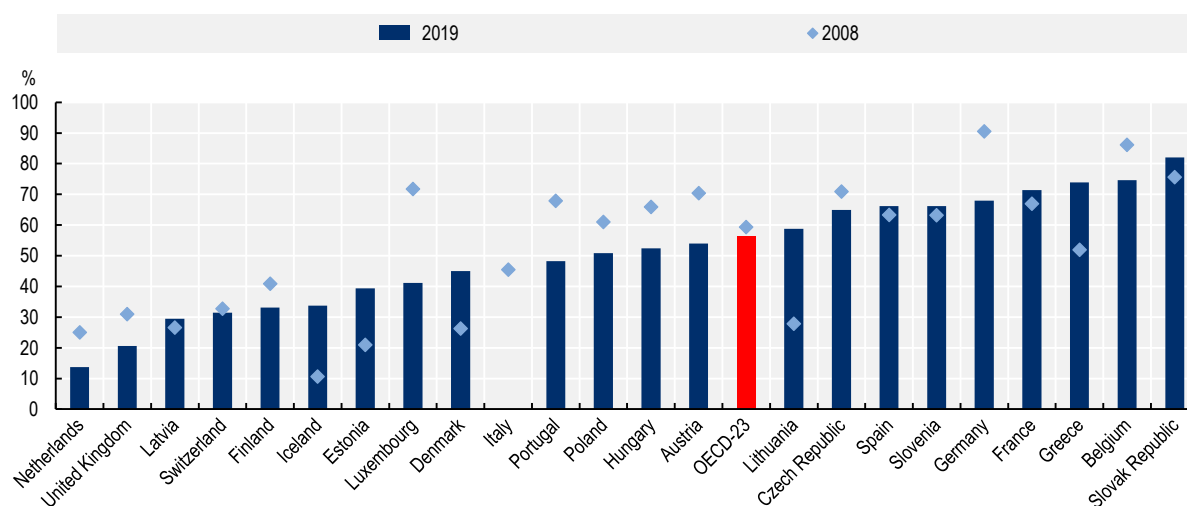
Public and private employment services connect young workers with the labour market, and offer a wide range of services, including job matching, counselling and career advice, and training and skilling opportunities. As joblessness increased, especially among young people, at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, employment services quickly adapted to respond to large inflows of new jobseekers, while also expanding digital services to ensure continuity. Even in the context of the pandemic, where they may not be able to offer many job opportunities, employment services have an important role in ensuring young jobseekers' access to benefits (if eligible), providing information, and encouraging young jobseekers to remain active (OECD, 2020<sup>[16]</sup>).



Early outreach is crucial, as opportunities to get in touch become more limited over time, as young people disengage from school or work and become increasingly detached from the labour market. Young people do not reach out to employment services for a range of reasons: they may not be eligible for support; they may not be aware of services; they may not trust public authorities; or they may not be looking for a job. Despite the Youth Guarantee initiative in EU countries, the share of unemployed young people who contacted public employment services had decreased in 12 out of 22 European OECD countries for which data are available. In 2019, the proportion of unemployed young people registered in European OECD countries stood at 56%, down from 59% in 2008 (Figure 2). This decrease can be attributed to a combination of underdeveloped outreach strategies and low youth unemployment rates prior to the crisis. Evidence for 2020 points to a further decline in the share of young people registering with public employment services, most likely related to outreach and registration challenges in the context of the COVID-19 crisis (OECD, 2021<sup>[21]</sup>).

## Figure 2. Public employment services need to strengthen outreach to unemployed young people

Share of unemployed people aged 15-29 who registered with the public employment service in 2008 and 2019



Note: The average is weighted and includes EU countries, Iceland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.  
Source: European Labour Force Survey.

A few countries are making outreach to young people a priority in their public and private employment services, with initiatives often swiftly adjusted to remote and digitally enabled settings (see Annex 1.A). In Germany, the Federal Employment Agency is conducting virtual career orientation services, open-air career orientation and counselling in parks to reach out to young people. In the Netherlands, 35 Crisis Regional Mobility Teams work closely with employment services, employer organisations and trade unions to provide additional support to jobseekers and those at risk of unemployment, with young people one of the target groups of this scheme. In Latvia, the project to increase outreach to young NEETs (KNOW AND DO!) which was originally planned to end in 2020, has been extended through to 2022.

Many countries have extended employment support available to young people to help them find a job. In Japan, in April 2020, special consultation services were made available at 56 locations of New Graduates Public Employment Service Offices. The services are specifically targeted at young people who have had their job offers withdrawn due to the COVID-19 crisis, and includes counselling, job-matching and mental health support. In Australia, the Transition to Work service, which specifically targets 15-24 year-olds, now allows young people to receive support for 18 months instead of 12 months previously. In Finland,



EUR 45 million was allocated in 2020 to strengthen employment services for young people in light of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. As part of these efforts, pilots covering more than 100 municipalities were launched in March 2021 to strengthen the role of local governments in organising employment services, and improve co-ordination of services with the national government.

Employment services are also offering more training opportunities for young people, often with an emphasis on digital skills and supporting transition into sustainable employment. In Korea, the employment service is offering training on digital skills such as artificial intelligence as part of its K-Digital Credit programme, while in Greece, the employment service is working with Google Hellas to provide an online vocational training programme on digital upskilling that aims to reach 3 000 unemployed young people aged up to 29. In Ireland, the government announced in July 2020 that it would make over 19 000 full and part-time student placements available for young unemployed individuals, providing opportunities to reskill in sectors identified as providing sustainable employment such as health care, software development and e-commerce. In Norway, the budget for labour market measures and staffing at public employment services was increased by NOK 1.4 billion in 2021. The funding will be key to meeting the Youth Effort launched in 2017, which aims to ensure all NEETs under the age of 30 receive individualised employment support within eight weeks of registration with the employment service. Much of the investment will go into skills-enhancing measures for young people.

### ***Addressing the youth mental health crisis***

At a time when young people are experiencing increased rates of mental distress, mental health support for young people – notably through schools, universities and workplaces – has also been heavily disrupted. In a WHO survey in June to August 2020, for example, more than three-quarters of countries reported that their school mental health programmes had been completely or partially disrupted, and over 70% of countries reported disruptions to child and adolescent mental health services (WHO, 2020<sup>[17]</sup>). Young people increasingly turned to crisis phone lines and external youth centres for support. In Ireland, the youth mental health charity “Jigsaw” saw a 50% surge in demand for services in August 2020, and a four-fold increase in traffic to its e-mental health platform in the first half of 2020. While mental health services in some countries have been swift to shift to remote consultations, and young people have been adept in accessing digitally enabled mental health support, these services were already often over-stretched prior to the crisis (OECD, 2021<sup>[7]</sup>). As the crisis became prolonged, mental health services and programmes could be resumed, and in some cases, newly introduced or scaled up. In the United States, 15% of respondents in a survey of high school students in January 2021 reported that their schools offered mental health programmes and services while they did not offer such programmes before the pandemic (EdWeek Research Center, 2021<sup>[18]</sup>).

While many countries have recognised the disproportionate impact of the crisis on young people’s mental health, measures taken have often been moderate or represented only small increases in the budget. In 19 OECD countries, mental health services have been expanded for young people specifically, or new funding has been allocated to supporting young people’s mental health during the COVID-19 crisis (see Annex 1.A). In France, the “psy check” measure introduced in February 2021 provides all university students with access to up to three free sessions with mental health specialists. In Poland, where reform of child and adolescent mental health services was underway before the crisis, a PLN 220 million package was announced in January 2021 to respond to the mental health impacts of the crisis on young people, including measures such as the launch of a 24-hour hotline, the expansion of service provision through recruitment of mental health specialists, and the provision of digital addiction treatment programmes.

As outlined in the [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Integrated Mental Health, Skills and Work Policy](#), mental health policies also need to be integrated in educational settings, workplaces and welfare systems through cross-sectoral measures, and a few OECD countries have taken initiatives in this direction during the crisis. In Finland, the government has provided additional funding to the *Onni* project,



which provides low-threshold psychological support and services in one-stop youth centres, including to recruit new mental health specialists. In Austria, the government announced that the number of school-based psychologists would be increased by 20% in June 2021, and staff are currently being recruited to meet this target. In England (United Kingdom), building on the GBP 13 million allocated in March 2021 to provide tailored mental health services for 18-25 year-olds, a further GBP 17 million was allocated in May 2021 to improve mental health supports in educational settings. The government is also developing a Suicide Safer Universities Framework that will support students in higher education experiencing mental health issues.

### ***Ensuring safe, accessible and affordable housing for young people***

The COVID-19 crisis has brought to light many of the housing challenges facing OECD countries, including for young people. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, many young adults across OECD countries struggled to afford a home of their own, and in the context of rising rents and house prices, most young adults, on average, were living with their parents (OECD, 2020<sup>[19]</sup>). Young people themselves also report housing to be a major concern. In the OECD Risks that Matter 2020 survey, just over half of 18-29 year-old respondents (53%) were somewhat concerned or very concerned with not being able to find or maintain adequate housing over the next year or two, higher than the rate among all respondents (44%) (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). A few OECD countries have been putting into place policies to support people in getting a foothold in the housing ladder, with these efforts mainly benefitting young people. In Iceland, an Equity Loan was introduced in 2020 for first-time buyers from low-income backgrounds, to help people buy housing for the first time by bridging the equity gap.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries introduced emergency housing measures for tenants and homeowners to help them stay in their homes, including eviction bans, rent deferrals and freezes; as well as income support for utility payments (OECD, 2020<sup>[19]</sup>). In most countries, housing support measures have been means-tested, but have not specifically targeted youth. In a few OECD countries, however, emergency housing policies have specifically targeted young people (see Annex 1.A). In France, since February 2021, young workers under the age of 25 who have been employed for less than 18 months can benefit from a financial installation allowance of EUR 1 000 to support payments for housing. To be eligible, employees also have to prove it is their first home and earn a salary of less than EUR 1 400 per month. In the United States, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 allocated USD 20 million to support rental payments for young people who were formerly in foster care.

Many OECD countries have provided more accommodation for homeless people during the COVID-19 crisis. Even where action to address homelessness had been slow, countries were swift to respond, seeing homelessness as a public health emergency – addressing homelessness was seen as important not only to those directly affected, but also to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Parsell, Clarke and Kuskoff, 2020<sup>[20]</sup>). Support measures included, *inter alia*, additional funding (to service providers or to individuals); increased shelter and accommodation for the homeless; adapted shelter provisions (including longer opening hours; adjusted capacity levels; additional services; etc.); expanded service provision to the homeless; the establishment of quarantine facilities; and the provision of advice (OECD, 2021<sup>[21]</sup>). In most cases, these efforts have not specifically targeted young people, although there are a few exceptions. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Netherlands allocated EUR 200 million to tackle homelessness, and in The Hague, in February 2021, the local government implemented a new plan to eliminate homelessness among young people, contributing to the national Youth Homelessness Action Plan for 2019-21.



## Conclusion

Young people have borne a disproportionate brunt of the labour market and social implications of the COVID-19 crisis, and especially so for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Recognising the need for early action, especially in light of the late and insufficient response in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, most OECD governments have responded with targeted youth measures since the start of the pandemic.

Labour market measures to support young people in finding and keeping jobs and work-based learning opportunities amidst the COVID-19 crisis have been frequently deployed. Job retention schemes have helped to protect their jobs, and financial incentives to recruit and retain apprentices and young people in full-time positions have been strengthened or newly introduced in many OECD countries.

Policy responses beyond labour market support have been more varied and less comprehensive. While broad emergency income support has been implemented by most OECD countries, often to the benefit of young people, only around half of OECD countries have introduced targeted income support for young people and measures remain limited in scope. Similar observations can be made for mental health. While more than half of the OECD countries have put in place initiatives or new funding to support young people's mental health, given the scale of the challenge, greater investments and integrated policy action will be needed.

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## Annex 1.A. Descriptions of policy responses to support young people through the COVID-19 crisis

This annex includes descriptions of policy responses by countries to support young people through the COVID-19 crisis. Descriptions based on responses from 37 OECD countries to a questionnaire sent to country representatives of the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee in February 2021. Where possible, information has been updated with the most recent policy responses up to May 2021. Upon publication of this policy brief, this annex will be made available on an online webpage. The tables were also used as a basis to prepare a dashboard summarising policy responses, and the criteria for inclusion in the dashboard is elaborated under each section. The dashboard is merely descriptive, and offers no judgment on specific measures, and should thus not be used alone to assess whether country responses to support young people in the COVID-19 crisis have been sufficient or effective.

### Youth strategies

Annex Table 1 includes descriptions of youth strategies that existed prior to the crisis, as well as strategies and plans that have been newly developed in response to or during the pandemic. For member states of the European Union, information on implementation plans for the reinforced Youth Guarantee are provided where appropriate. For countries where youth policy strategies take place at the sub-national level, consideration was given to regional youth plans and strategies. As youth policy cuts across ministries and sectors, only countries with cross-sectoral and operational youth strategies or plans are marked with a check symbol (✓) in the dashboard of policy responses. Countries that are currently developing or elaborating a new youth strategy or plan are marked with a dot symbol (●). For example, countries that had youth strategies until 2020, but have not begun working on a new youth strategy are left blank, as are countries that only have youth strategies for one sector or ministry (e.g. employment).

**Annex Table 1. Youth strategies to guide cross-sectoral and employment policies**

Australia	The most recent national youth strategy is from 2010. The government is developing a National Youth Policy Framework, following consultations with young Australians in 2019 and 2020. The Framework will demonstrate the principles and priorities for youth policy and outline the efforts underway to address issues faced by young Australians. The Framework will reflect the realities of the world in which young Australians find themselves in 2021, including the impact of COVID-19. The Framework is expected to be released in 2021.
Austria	The National Youth Strategy is defined as a process and is thus constantly updated through regular inter-ministerial meetings. The latest formal Youth Goals, agreed to in September 2020, identifies four priority areas: employment and education; youth participation and initiative; quality of life and a spirit of co-operation; and media and information. Federal ministries are required to develop at least one objective for young people related to their spheres of competence, and young people are actively consulted and involved in the design and implementation of youth policies. A cross-ministerial initiative also set up a Youth Employment Task Force for 2020/2021 with a focus on increasing the supply of education, apprenticeships as well as coaching and counselling and preparatory offers low threshold offers.
Belgium	Youth strategies exist at the regional level. A new Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan for 2020-24 was released in 2020 for all young people under the age of 30. The implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee is led by regional public employment services in Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia and the German-speaking Community.
Canada	The most recent and first-ever national youth policy is from 2019. Canada's youth policy response to the COVID-19 crisis is multi-pronged and includes strengthening action on a number of strategies, including most notably the Youth Employment and Support Strategy (YESS).



Chile	
Colombia	In 2014, the government outlined a national strategy on employment of 14-28 year-olds. A new National Youth Strategy for 2021-25 is currently being developed as a cross-governmental initiative, and likely areas of emphasis include ensuring quality employment, closing gender gaps in employment, and reducing youth unemployment.
Czech Republic	The most recent Youth Strategy was from 2014-20, and since 2021, there has been no national youth strategy. The Youth Guarantee implementation plan was not adapted in 2020 and no modifications are planned in 2021.
Denmark	
Estonia	The most recent youth field strategy was for 2014-20, and a new strategy for 2021-35 is currently in development. Likely priority areas include strengthening mutual information exchange, increased community support for potential early school leavers and NEETs, and increasing inclusion of all young people in the labour market. The government is currently developing an implementation plan for the reinforced Youth Guarantee to replace the first plan that was presented in 2014 and updated in 2017. The new plan is intended to focus on supporting vulnerable groups and promoting a smooth school-to-work transition.
Finland	The government has a cross-sector National Youth Work and Policy Programme for 2019-23. Local government pilots on youth employment were already launched in March 2021 as part of implementing the reinforced Youth Guarantee.
France	There is no overall national youth strategy, but a youth employment strategy dedicated specifically to the COVID-19 recovery was launched in July 2020. The <i>1 jeune 1 solution</i> plan had an initial budget of EUR 6.7 billion, which was later expanded to EUR 9 billion, with the aim of providing a solution for every young person through a package of measures including hiring subsidies for full-time employment of young persons and apprenticeships, strengthening of employment support, and training targeted at disadvantaged young people.
Germany	The most recent youth strategy is from 2019. To adapt the government response to the needs of young people amidst the COVID-19 crisis, a youth-hearing took place in March 2021, which will be used to elaborate youth policy recommendations for the post-COVID-19 era. There is also an Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Youth, which discusses difficulties faced by young people in transition as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and potential measures to strengthen support.
Greece	The government has a cross-sectoral Strategic Framework for the Empowerment of Youth for 2017-27, which is designed to set the principles and objectives of youth policy in Greece. The Action Plan for the Youth Guarantee is being updated to reflect the reinforced Youth Guarantee, and will likely have an increased emphasis on strengthening outreach of employment services to vulnerable groups.
Hungary	The National Youth Strategy 2009-24 includes three pillars of action, namely, to improve social integration of young people, empower young people and their communities, and promote youth work and non-governmental youth organisations. No plans are in place to adopt a new Youth Guarantee Plan.
Iceland	
Ireland	The National Youth Strategy 2015-20 was in place until last year, but there is no currently operational youth strategy. The Pathways to Work 2021-25, which is currently being finalised, presents the next strategy for employment services, and will be used to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee by strengthening services available to young jobseekers. Ireland is also implementing the reinforced Youth Guarantee.
Israel	
Italy	Priorities in youth policy are decided each year in an annual conference. The national Youth Guarantee Plan remains the flagship youth employment strategy. Since this already meets many of the new parts of the reinforced Youth Guarantee, there are no plans to make major adjustments, although special attention will be given to profiling and career guidance, and scaling up programmes to enhance digital skills for young NEETs.
Japan	In April 2021, the government released the new "Outline for the Promotion of Development and Support for Children and Young People" which updates the version from 2015.
Korea	The government announced a Youth Policy Basic Plan in December 2020 to promote a whole-of-government response to support young people through the COVID-19 crisis with policy directives for each ministry. A more specific Youth Employment Promotion Plan was also released in March 2021.
Latvia	A Youth Policy Implementation Plan was in place from 2016-20, and the government is currently working on developing new employment as well as educational strategies which will focus on ensuring continuity of Youth Guarantee measures. The government is also updating its Youth Guarantee -related measures and support towards youth according to the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, labour market demand and the amendments made in the reinforced Youth Guarantee.
Lithuania	The government adopted the National Youth Policy Action Plan for 2021 in November 2020 to guide the implementation of the Law on the Framework for Youth Policy from 2019. The law and action plan is cross-sectoral and covers participation of young people in politics, employment, education, housing, leisure, health and social protection. The Youth Guarantee Implementation was adopted in 2013, and updated in 2014. There are no plans to update the implementation plan to the reinforced Youth Guarantee as the target of the guarantee is already for 15-29 year-olds.
Luxembourg	A new 2022-24 Youth Action Plan is currently being elaborated to replace the previous plan that expired in 2020, with a view to release by end-2021. Views of key stakeholders including young people themselves, and professionals working with young people, will be taken into account to decide on a number of cross-cutting priority themes. The previous plan was centred on the themes of housing, political participation and employment. A revised national implementation plan on the reinforced Youth Guarantee is also being developed, and will include components on the mapping of target groups and policies to increase



	outreach to young people from vulnerable groups
Mexico	The National Youth Program for 2021-24 was released in January 2021, and is the governing document that guides the implementation of national youth policy. Its three pillars are to strengthen research on youth policy, involving and consulting young people in policy, and mainstreaming youth priorities across all areas of government. This document replaces the 2014-18 programme.
Netherlands	There is no cross-cutting national youth strategy. A Tackling Youth Unemployment Strategy was put in place in response to the COVID-19 crisis, which has recently been extended to 2022. There is no country-specific implementation plan for the Youth Guarantee.
New Zealand	A number of complementary national youth plans are in place, including the Child and Youth Well-being Strategy from August 2019, which offers a vision for youth policy across sector to ensure the country is the best place in the world for children and young people, and the National Youth Employment Action Plan released in August 2019. There is also a Youth Plan for 2020-22, which sets out government actions to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on 12-24 year-old rangatahi and Maori populations.
Norway	The 2015 Plan on Child and Youth Policy Initiatives provide an overview of priority policy areas, although this is primarily aimed at children and adolescents. The 2017 New Youth Effort also aims to provide registered jobseekers (both young unemployed and young people with reduced working capacity) under the age of 30 with personalised employment support within eight weeks of registration.
Poland	There is no national youth strategy. A consultation of young people has been conducted in recent years, culminating in the publication of a document in February 2019 outlining priorities from the perspectives of young people for 2020-30. The priority areas identified are the labour market; civic activities; sport, health and tourism; innovation and digitalisation; culture; and education. An update is currently being conducted for the implementation plan for the reinforced Youth Guarantee, which is expected to include an increased focus on digital and green skills, individualised support in employment services, and expansion of outreach efforts to young people.
Portugal	The first-ever National Youth Plan for 15-29 year-olds was approved in September 2018, and remains operational through to 2021. The plan covers areas such as education, employment, housing, governance, participation, social inclusion and the environment. A new implementation for the implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee is currently in development.
Slovak Republic	A new national youth strategy for 2021 onwards is currently in development as there is no operational youth plan. A national youth strategy was in place from 2014-20, covering areas such as education, employment, health, participation and entrepreneurship. The government is also preparing an updated plan to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee, which will replace the existing implementation plan from 2014.
Slovenia	A national youth strategy for 2013-22 is in place, and at the beginning of 2020, the government adopted an implementation plan for this strategy for 2020 and 2021.
Spain	The national youth strategy expired in 2020, and there has been no new national strategy since. A Youth Employment Strategy for 2019-21 still remains in place. A national plan for the Youth Guarantee to be implemented from 2021-27 has been adopted on 25 June 2021.
Sweden	A new action plan for youth policy for 2021-24 was set out in March 2021 to implement the principles of the 2014 government bill titled 'With Youth in Focus' for the coming years. The priorities for 2021-24 include young people's mental well-being, social and labour market inclusion of young people, leisure activities for young people, and youth participation in society.
Switzerland	Cantons and other sub-national governments lead youth policy. The federal government has a Conference for Childhood and Youth Policy which co-ordinates policies of cantons with the strategy of the federal government. The canton of Graubünden, for example, released its cross-departmental youth policy for 2020-22 in May 2021.
Turkey	The National Youth and Sports Strategy from 2012 outlines cross-sectoral policy areas such as education and lifelong learning, family, employment, health, participation, culture and art, and science and technology. High-level priorities are set out in the National Employment Action Plan for 2014-23, which identifies young people as a priority group in labour market interventions, with addressing youth unemployment outlined as a key objective. Building on these priorities set out in the National Employment Action Plan, the government is currently preparing a youth-specific employment strategy.
United Kingdom	There is no youth strategy that encompasses all of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland has an operational cross-cutting youth strategy, having released its Children and Young People's Strategy for 2020-30 in January 2021. Scotland is producing a draft youth strategy for 2021-26 with a view to conducting a consultation in 2021. England has no cross-sectoral youth strategy, and Wales has a strategy for the youth work sector, but not for youth policy more broadly.
United States	The Pathways for Youth: Strategic Plan for Federal Collaboration from 2016 sets out a strategic plan bringing together federal departments and agencies working on matters concerning young people aged 10-24. The development of the plan included a public consultation, including through listening sessions with young people. Implementation of policy primarily takes place at the federal level.

## Income support

Annex Table 2 includes descriptions of measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to support the incomes of young people. Descriptions primarily refer to emergency and temporary income



support designed to alleviate financial insecurity during the pandemic, but also include specific reforms to strengthen and provide additional income support for young people during the pandemic and beyond. These measures include interventions to increase accessibility to benefits (such as unemployment insurance) for young people, financial aid targeted at young people who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 crisis, and measures to reduce debt repayments or the financial burden of tuition fees. Increases in child and family benefits or allowances are not included in the table, as these forms of income support are primarily provided to parents and not to young people directly. Countries that have put in place any of these youth-specific measures since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, which vary in scale and form, are marked with a check symbol (✓) in the dashboard of policy responses.

## Annex Table 2. Extending income support measures for young people to cushion the impact of the crisis

Australia	The Youth Allowance provides income support for 16-21 year-olds looking for full-time work, studying part-time and looking for work or temporarily unable to work. The government also paid a Coronavirus Supplement to eligible recipients, including those on the Youth Allowance. The supplement rate was set at AUD 550 per fortnight until September 2020, and as conditions improved, the rate was slowly reduced to AUD 250 then AUD 150, before being phased out in March 2021.
Austria	The earnings limit for recipients of the education allowance (Schülerbeihilfe) that supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from tenth grade onwards to support them in completing their education and the study grant (Studienbeihilfe) have been increased to provide greater financial flexibility for young people.
Belgium	EUR 24 million was provided to local welfare officers so that they can support students and young people, including those who have lost their student jobs. For students working in care or education, the maximum quota of 475 hours per year of work per student has been lifted, and exceptional tax arrangements have been made so that the incomes of working students do not count under certain conditions for if they are eligible for child benefits. In Flanders, there are pre-existing integration allowances for young people who have left school, completed a 12-month professional integration period, and not been able to find work. Such young people receive this allowance as they are not eligible for unemployment benefits, which are only accessible for people who have worked before. Integration allowances usually decline over time, but these conditions have been made looser during the COVID-19 crisis.
Canada	The Canada Emergency Student Benefit provides financial support to post-secondary students as well as recent post-secondary and high-school graduates who were unable to find work due to the COVID-19 crisis. Between May and August 2020, applicants received CAD 1 250 every four weeks for a maximum period of 16 weeks. Applicants with dependants or disabilities were also eligible to get an extra CAD 750 for each four-week period.
Chile	No new measures. A Youth Employment Subsidy, which provides a cash benefit to 18-24 year-olds belonging to the most vulnerable 40% of the population, existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Colombia	The Jóvenes en Acción [Youth in Action] programme provides conditional cash transfers to 14-26 year-olds who are living in a situation of poverty or vulnerability, and in 2020, almost 300 000 people benefitted from the programme. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the government provided five additional extraordinary payments to participants totalling COP 356 000 per recipient. ICETEX, which is the entity in charge of granting educational credits and loans to promote higher education, have made temporary adjustments to terms of financial support and loans to support 130 000 recipients of educational credits and loans. This has included deferrals of loan payments and suspension of interest generation to support young people in continuing their education.
Czech Republic	.
Denmark	In April 2020, the government amended legislation on the State Education Grant (SU) to increase financial support available for young people in education, many of whom are reliant on part-time work to finance their living. An additional loan has also been made available for young people who have already exhausted their educational grant. This temporary exception has been extended throughout the COVID-19 crisis and will remain in place until at least June 2021.
Estonia	.
Finland	.
France	One-off income support of EUR 200 was provided in June 2020 to nearly 800 000 people under the age of 25 experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis, with these funds primarily targeted at young people who are not in education and who receive housing assistance. This was followed by two decrees in December 2020, which established monthly allowances for previous recipients of higher education scholarships under the age of 30 who are looking for a job, and for young jobseekers under the age of 26 who are registered with employment services. In the event of serious financial difficulties, university and post-secondary students can also apply for one-off emergency aid worth up to EUR 500, and since January 2021, all students have been eligible to apply for EUR 1 meals at university canteens.
Germany	Domestic and international students in post-secondary education can receive between EUR 100 and 500 in aid provided they can show evidence of pandemic-related financial hardship.
Greece	Income support was extended, including one-off payments to hard-hit sectors, but measures have not specifically targeted



	young people.
Hungary	In April 2021, a bill was introduced exempting employees under the age of 25 from paying personal income tax from 2022 onwards. The cost of the measure is expected to be around HUF 150 billion.
Iceland	
Ireland	The government expanded eligibility to the Pandemic Unemployment Payment to students aged over 18 working part-time to ensure younger age groups were also supported. The payment will continue through to June 2021.
Israel	Unemployment insurance were temporarily amended during the COVID-19 crisis, allowing jobseekers under the age of 28 to receive comparable unemployment benefits to older age group until June 2021. The increased level of unemployment benefits available during the crisis was an exception to the routine levels, under which young people receive considerably lower levels of unemployment benefits.
Italy	
Japan	An Emergency Student Support Handout for Continuing Studies was set up in May 2020. Japanese people attending universities and other post-secondary educational institutions can apply for JPY 100 000 or JPY 200 000 income support if they experiencing financial hardship due to heavy reductions in household income or income from part-time work due to the impact of COVID-19. The handout is designed to support young people to continue their education. In some cases, students experiencing financial hardship may be eligible for an exemption of reduction in tuition fees paid to universities and post-secondary education institutions. Students who are forced to take leave from work due to the impact of COVID-19 are able to apply to receive 60% to 80% of lost wages in income support. The Ministry of Education provided supplementary funding to national universities (JPY 4.9 billion), private universities (JPY 9.7 billion), and national colleges of technology (JPY 230 million) in 2020 to be distributed by educational institutions to support students experiencing financial hardship.
Korea	From 2019 to 2020, a Youth Job Search Promotion Subsidy was available, which offered KRW 500 000 per month for up to six months for young jobseekers engaging in job search, and in light of the COVID-19 crisis, a Special Youth Job Search Promotion Subsidy was put in to place extending the duration of subsidies available for those who could not find a job previously. The programme was completed in 2020.
Latvia	A new allowance was introduced for unemployed jobseekers with recently acquired higher education, which can be paid for up to four months until June 2021. The allowance provides EUR 500 in each of the first two months, and EUR 375 in the last two months, and is expected to cost around EUR 6.6 million.
Lithuania	
Luxembourg	
Mexico	The monthly allowance paid to 18-29 year-old participants of the Youth Building the Future Program was increased from MXN 3 748 (around USD 190) to MXN 4 310 (around USD 218) in 2021 to reduce the impact of the pandemic on youth unemployment (see Employment Services)
Netherlands	Rules on access to social assistance for young people under the age of 27 were relaxed in November 2020, including access to reintegration instruments to support return-to-work, and will remain in place until July 2021. From March 2020, municipalities were given the authority to loosen the requirement for the mandatory search period of four weeks for 18-27 year-olds before receiving social assistance, and this option has since been extended to July 2021. Emergency one-off income support was also made available to students in vocational education and tertiary education to compensate for delays to studies and support young people in completing education ranging from EUR 800 to EUR 2000. A bill is currently being discussed in the Senate which would lead to a 50% reduction in tuition and course fees for students in post-secondary education for 2021-22, including in vocational education centres and universities.
New Zealand	In the 2021 budget, the government increased social benefits, including for young people. Among the benefits that will increase are the Youth Payment for 16-17 year-olds and the Young Parent Payment for 16-18 year-olds. This is not an emergency measure but instead a policy reform that will increase benefits even beyond the COVID-19 crisis. The Training Incentive Allowance for higher-level study was also reinstated for 2021-25, and will give sole parents on benefits access to financial support to pursue degree-level studies.
Norway	Students receiving financial support from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund who lost income from March to June 2020 could apply for an additional loan of NOK 26 000, of which around 30% could be converted into grants. Around 20% of students applied for this loan. A similar measures was put into place again in 2021. In January 2021, students who have lost income in the period from June 2020 to June 2021 could apply for a further additional loan of NOK 26 000, of which 40% is supplied as a scholarship.
Poland	
Portugal	
Slovak Republic	
Slovenia	
Spain	
Sweden	
Switzerland	
Turkey	For the period from April to June 2020, loans for higher education were postponed and late fees and interest accumulation were suspended.



United Kingdom	
United States	The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund has been providing emergency financial aid to students during the COVID-19 crisis. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of March 2020 allocated more than USD 6 billion in funding to student financial aid. The American Rescue Plan of March 2021 allocated a further USD 18 billion to student financial aid to prevent hunger, homelessness and hardship resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. Earned Income Tax Credit eligibility was also widened, meaning unaccompanied homeless young people and young people from foster care without children will now be able to claim EITC even if they are full-time students or working. Until this change was made in March 2021, the law prohibited full-time students from claiming tax credit. The age from which young people can claim EITC has also been lowered to 18 for young people from foster care and homeless young people, and to 19 for all other young adults.

## Hiring subsidies

Annex Table 3 includes descriptions of hiring subsidies and financial incentives for employers to recruit young people in full-time or long-term positions and standard forms of employment. For this category, measures that were in place before the crisis are also included, and for such measures, a comment is provided on whether the measures have been extended or adapted in response to the pandemic, or whether they have been left unchanged. Further insights into which countries put in place new schemes, and which countries have not adjusted measures can be gleaned from the accompanying policy brief. Countries that have hiring subsidies or financial incentives in place for employers to recruit young people, regardless of whether these existed before the crisis or not, are marked with a check symbol (✓) in the dashboard of policy responses.

### Annex Table 3. Hiring subsidies to stimulate job creation for young people

Australia	The JobMaker Hiring Credit, which was established in response to the COVID-19 crisis, provides a payment of up to AUD 200 per week for 12 months to employers for each eligible additional employee they hire between October 2020 and October 2021. The payment is AUD 200 for employees aged 16-29 and AUD 100 for employees aged 30-35. New employees must have qualified for income support payment for a significant proportion of time in the months prior to starting employment. Employees may also be able to receive hiring subsidies for hiring employees aged 15-29 through employment services.
Austria	An integration subsidy ( <i>Eingliederungsbeihilfe</i> ) existed prior to the crisis which subsidises wage costs for employers recruiting people who have been long-term unemployed or threatened by long-term unemployment. One of the three target groups for the subsidy is young people up to the age of 25 who have been unemployed for at least six months. The subsidy covers up to two-thirds of the gross monthly salary and half of non-wage labour costs with an upper limit for a period of up to three years.
Belgium	In Brussels, an additional employment incentive was created called Phoenix.brussels. Employers in Brussels can apply for wage subsidies of up to EUR 800 per month for a maximum of six months for hiring jobseekers without tertiary education (all ages), and up to EUR 500 per month for a maximum of six months for jobseekers aged 18-30 with tertiary education. Actiris, the employment service in Brussels, is also subsidising around 1 200 jobs in the social economy, with the subsidies targeted specifically to get young NEETs into employment. Some regions already had targeted hiring subsidies for young people in place. In Flanders, employers can apply for exemption to social security contributions for hiring low-skilled workers under the age of 25 for up to two years. In the Walloon region, under certain conditions, jobseekers under the age of 25 can receive a work allowance for up to three years, with this allowance being deducted from the salary, thus effectively functioning as a wage subsidy.
Canada	
Chile	Employment subsidies targeting young workers were introduced in September 2020 and available until March 2021. Companies newly hiring 18-24 year-olds, women, or people with disabilities from disadvantaged backgrounds could receive a subsidy of up to 60% of the monthly remuneration of the employee – compared to 50% for other workers. The subsidy was capped at CLP 270 000 per month and was available for up to six months, provided the employer could prove that the new hire expanded the number of employees compared to levels in July 2020.
Colombia	A decree was passed in May 2021 to introduce a hiring subsidy for employers who formally hire 18-28 year-olds starting on 1 July 2021. The subsidy is equivalent to 25% of the minimum wage over an initial one-year period, and is estimated to cost around COP 90 billion (Colombian pesos).
Czech Republic	From before the crisis, partial wage subsidies were available up to a maximum of 24 months for employers who hire unemployed young people with certain conditions. No changes have been made in response to the pandemic.
Denmark	



Estonia	From prior to the crisis, there were two forms of hiring subsidies for young people. The “My First Job” scheme provides a wage subsidy to employers and compensates them for training costs when they hire a worker aged 16-29 who has been registered as unemployed and have not worked for the past three months, and with no or limited work experience. The public employment service also offers a wage subsidy to support young people who have been unemployed for over six months into work. No changes have been made to respond to the pandemic yet.
Finland	
France	Since August 2020, all companies can receive a subsidy of up to EUR 4 000 for newly hiring an employee under the age of 26 over a period of at least three months. The subsidy available is adjusted to working time and to the duration of the employment period. Employers are able to apply for hiring subsidies for both full-time and part-time positions. The scheme was initially until January 2021, but has been extended until end-May 2021.
Germany	
Greece	In July 2020, a new hiring subsidy was introduced, offering 75% of subsidies for monthly salary and non-salary costs to a maximum limit of EUR 750 per month for a period of ten months for businesses hiring unemployed university graduates aged 22-29, with the aim of benefitting 3 500 jobseekers. A pre-existing hiring subsidy scheme for 18-29 year-old unemployed jobseekers was also scaled-up in July 2020, with the aim of benefitting a further 8 000 jobseekers. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, subsidies were limited to 50% of costs and capped at EUR 500 monthly, but since July 2020, employers can receive up to 75% of costs up to a ceiling of EUR 750 monthly.
Hungary	From May to August 2020, a hiring subsidy was available for employers hiring jobseekers for nine months or longer. During this period, the target group was narrowed to only include jobseekers unemployed for more than six months and jobseekers under the age of 25. A new scheme was introduced in October 2020 providing support for employers of low-skilled and young jobseekers. The subsidy covers up to 50% of wage and social contributions with a ceiling of HUF 100 000 per month for no longer than five months, and until the end of May 2021, had contributed to the employment of 5 600 young people. The scheme has been modified and from June 2021, is providing support for a broader group (jobseekers registered for at least one month and young people under 25) for a slightly longer time period (6 months instead of the previous 5 months).
Iceland	
Ireland	A hiring subsidy known as JobsPlus was already in place prior to the COVID-19 crisis to encourage employers to recruit young jobseekers. Before the crisis, employers could receive a grant ranging from EUR 7 500 to EUR 10 000 over a two-year period when they employed a jobseeker under the age of 25 who has been unemployed for at least four months. In August 2020, access to the scheme was extended to jobseekers up to the age of 30.
Israel	
Italy	A hiring subsidy was already in place as part of achieving the Youth Guarantee. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, subsidies were limited to 50% and capped at EUR 3 000, and employers could only claim subsidies for people aged under 31. Employers can now receive hiring subsidies that contribute up to 100% (maximum EUR 6 000 per year) over a period of three years when they hire anyone not in employment, education or training aged under 36 on a permanent basis.
Japan	
Korea	
Latvia	Hiring subsidies were available from before the COVID-19 crisis for young unemployed jobseekers as part of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Up to 50% of wage costs can be covered, with a ceiling of the minimum wage of EUR 500, with a higher ceiling when hiring young persons with disabilities. No changes have been made to this measure in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
Lithuania	Hiring subsidies are available for young jobseekers under the age of 30 who have been referred by the employment services, with employers receiving remuneration up to 50% of the wage for up to six months. No changes have been made in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
Luxembourg	Hiring subsidies were available from before the COVID-19 crisis for jobseekers under 30 who have been registered with the public employment service for at least three months. Employers can receive subsidies covering 50% to 65% of the base salary and exemption from employer contributions to social security contributions when they hire jobseekers for year-long contracts, provided they also develop a training plan to promote professional development. No changes have been made to take into account the COVID-19 crisis.
Mexico	
Netherlands	
New Zealand	From before the crisis, as part of the Mana in Mahi programme, employers could receive wage subsidies when hiring young workers from disadvantaged backgrounds for permanent full-time or part-time positions. Employers can receive subsidies up to NZD 16 000 in the first year of employment and NZD 8 000 in the second year, and a further NZD 8 000 each year for industry training courses. While age eligibility requirements to participate in Mana in Mahi were loosened during the COVID-19 crisis to allow people of all ages who may benefit long-term to participate, participants are still primarily young people. Eligibility to the Flexi Wage scheme, which supports the employment of disadvantaged jobseekers through employer subsidies, has also been expanded to include 16 and 17-year-olds. Prior to the crisis, only jobseekers aged 18 and above were eligible.
Norway	Hiring subsidies to support young people into indefinite employment is currently being formulated.





Poland	Since 2015, there has been an initiative offering hiring subsidies to employers hiring young unemployed persons aged under 29 as part of the European Social Fund operational programme on knowledge, education, and development. More than 150 000 young people have been covered through initiatives launched during the COVID-19 crisis.
Portugal	A broad hiring subsidy (INCENTIVO ATIVAR.PT) was introduced for employers hiring jobseekers who have been long-term unemployed and registered with the employment service for permanent contracts or fixed-term contracts lasting a year or longer. Hiring subsidies are capped at 50% of wages and a ceiling of the minimum wage. Employers can only apply for the subsidy when hiring jobseekers who have been unemployed for six months or longer, but this is reduced to two months for young people, and subsidies can be more generous when hiring young people under certain conditions.
Slovak Republic	Targeted hiring subsidies existed prior to the crisis but have not been amended. When hiring young people registered with employment services with no history of work experience, employers can receive subsidies for wage costs, with generosity and conditions differing from region to region. Subsidies are also available for employers hiring mothers who have difficulty finding a job after having children, with beneficiaries often being young women.
Slovenia	Wage subsidies were already in place from before the COVID-19 crisis. Employers receive a monthly subsidy of EUR 208 when hiring a young unemployed person under 30 years of age who is registered with the Employment Service of Slovenia for employment of 40 hours per week. The subsidy is paid for a maximum of 24 months. The employment contract must be for an indefinite period.
Spain	
Sweden	In 2020, the government set out in its budget announcement that employer contributions to social security for young people (born between 1998 and 2002) will be reduced for two years from 2021 to 2023 to cushion the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on young people's employment prospects.
Switzerland	
Turkey	Hiring subsidies were available from before the crisis. For employers recruiting young people, women or holders of vocational qualifications, monthly social security premiums could be reimbursed by the employment service for between 24 to 54 months, with the monthly subsidy accounting for between TRY 733 and TRY 5 500 per month. This scheme has not been amended in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
United Kingdom	The Kickstart Scheme, launched in September 2020, is a GBP 2 billion scheme which seeks to create new job placements for 16-24 year-olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment through hiring subsidies. If employers are able to show evidence that the jobs created are additional and that relevant employability support will be available, they are able to claim up to 100% of the National Minimum Wage for 25 hours per week for a period of six months for placements beginning before December 2021, and GBP 1 500 to cover costs of employability support to the employee.
United States	

## Work-based learning

Annex Table 4 includes descriptions of measures taken by countries in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to support, adjust or strengthen work-based learning opportunities for young people, which can include apprenticeships, informal on-the-job learning, internships and work placements. For this category, descriptions of measures to financially incentivise the recruitment of apprentices or cases where the apprenticeship system is supported by public expenditure are also included. In cases where measures existed before the crisis, a comment is provided on whether the measures have been extended or adapted in response to the pandemic, or whether they have been left unchanged. Countries that have strengthened their apprenticeship system or other work-based learning schemes since the start of the COVID-19 crisis are marked with a check symbol (✓) in the dashboard of policy responses.

### Annex Table 4. Promoting work-based learning for young people at a time of crisis

Australia	A number of initiatives to financially incentivise firms to take on apprentices existed prior to the crisis, including the Skilling Australian Fund which seeks to increase apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities in areas where jobs are in demand, and the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program, which includes targeted financial incentives for industries with skills shortages. Wage subsidies were also introduced in March 2020 for SMEs that already employed apprentices and trainees (Supporting Apprentices and Trainees). Under this scheme, employers are able to apply for a subsidy of up to 50% of an apprentice or trainees' wages in arrears for the period from January 2020 to March 2021. In October 2020, a further scheme (Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements) was set up to provide a 50% subsidy for all businesses that take on new apprentices over the period October 2020 to March 2021.
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Austria	Through the Apprenticeship Bonus, employers could receive a bonus of EUR 2000 for each newly hired apprentice from March to October 2020, with a higher bonus for micro and small enterprises in the period from March to October 2020. Enterprises with up to 9 employees received an additional EUR 1 000, and small enterprises with up to 49 employees could receive an additional EUR 500. The Just2Job initiative set up in August 2020, and which will be in place until the end of 2024, also provides low-qualified 20-30 year-olds with the opportunity to experience shortened apprenticeship training in cases where their past vocational training may no longer be relevant or appropriate. As of October 2020, around 1 000 shortened apprenticeship placements had been taken up under this initiative. Additional funds were also made available to increase the number of positions in supra-company apprenticeships (Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung ÜBA) by 3 000 to 14 500 places, to accommodate students who are unable to find work placements. A short-time work scheme designed specifically for apprentices was also put in place to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, and in 2020, around 50% of all apprentices were on short-time work schemes. The scheme was in place until the end of March 2021.
Belgium	In Flanders, employers could already benefit from a stagebonus (apprenticeship fee) when offering work-based learning experience of at least three months under 18 years old, with employer receiving subsidies of EUR 500 to 750 per year per apprentice. For the period September 2020 and August 2021, the fee was temporarily increased by EUR 1 000 per year. In Brussels, students and tutors can extend their apprenticeships for up to three months if they were disrupted by containment measures related to COVID-19. Various other measures have been put in place to increase the flexibility of dual-track vocational education and training to account for disruptions to work-based learning opportunities.
Canada	The Summer Jobs programme, which provides wage subsidies to SMEs to hiring young people for quality work experience has been adapted in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Wage subsidies have been increased from 50% of the minimum wage to 75%, part-time placements are now eligible, and job placements year-round have been made eligible until spring 2022. The Student Work Placement Program also supports partnership to bring employers and post-secondary institutions together to create work-integrated learning opportunities through measures such as wage subsidies to employers offering quality student work placements. The SWP programme received additional funding of CAD 266 million for 2020-21 in light of the COVID-19 crisis and the threats this would place on student work placements, which allowed for the wage subsidy to be increased from 50% to 75% to a maximum of CAD 7 500 per placement until May 2021. The Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit also incentivises employers to hire apprenticeships by providing a tax credit of 10% of the wages payable to eligible apprentices in the first two years.
Chile	Tax breaks for employers with apprentices existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. These have not been changed. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, students in vocational secondary education were required to conduct at least 450 hours of work-based learning. A modification was made in July 2020 to reduce the minimum number of apprenticeship hours to 180. Modifications have also been made to accommodate work-based learning in remote settings.
Colombia	A decree in June 2021 was issued that states that internships and other forms of work-based learning must be certified as work experience. This aims to facilitate the employment of recent graduates into the labour market and support them into finding their first jobs by ensuring that internships and traineeships completed during studies or as part of formal curricula are properly recognised as a form of work experience.
Czech Republic	From before the crisis, tax deductions were able for employers who provide students with the opportunity for practical training. No changes have been made in response to the pandemic, although practical training can be replaced by school-based training in cases where work-based learning opportunities are unavailable.
Denmark	A tripartite agreement was signed in May 2020 allocating around DKK 5.4 billion (around EUR 725 million) to exceptional financial assistance to support trainees and apprentices through funds from the Employers' Educational Grant. The agreement included a wage subsidy scheme that was in place from May to December 2020 for private companies that retained or looked to recruit apprentices. Companies were covered for 75% of the salaries of apprentices they retained.
Estonia	Vocational schools have reorganised studies, allowing students postpone or delay work-based elements of the curricula, and bringing forward classes that can be more easily taught in a school setting.
Finland	Employers could already apply for a subsidy from the local employment office when they accepted an unemployed young person into apprenticeship training. Since there is no minimum or maximum amount of time apprentices have to spend in work-based learning, there is flexibility to shift work-based learning to school-based learning as necessary. A pilot of a new apprenticeship model is also being tested.
France	For the first year of apprenticeship, provided the contract was signed between July 2020 and December 2021, employers can receive a subsidy of up to EUR 5 000 for an apprentice under 18 years of age or up to EUR 8 000 for an older apprentice. The scheme has no conditions for SMEs and some restrictions for other employers.
Germany	In July 2020, the federal government set up a "secure apprenticeships" scheme to financially support small and medium-sized employers that were hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis, and incentivise them to maintain training for apprentices. The scheme also rewards SMEs that take on trainees where they have been working for companies made insolvent due to the COVID-19 crisis. As the scale of the challenge facing apprentices and the apprenticeship system has become clear, the federal government has continued and scaled up the scheme. As of March 2021, the scheme has been expanded to 2021/2022 and will receive EUR 500 million in funding for the remainder of 2021.
Greece	In late-2020, the government passed a law to update the apprenticeship and vocational education and training system, with a view to strengthening the role that these systems can play in supporting the school-to-work transition. Apprenticeships were co-financed before the crisis, with post-secondary apprentices paid a salary equal to 75% of the minimum wage of an unskilled worker for a year of work-based learning. Around a third of contributions came from the employer, with the remainder financed by an ongoing social insurance programme. To adapt to the COVID-19 crisis, during periods where work-based training had to be suspended, wages of apprentices were entirely covered by the public employment service



	and a special grant was made available from March to May 2020.
Hungary	Financial incentives for employers to offer traineeships, apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning existed prior to the crisis. SMEs were already eligible to apply for wage subsidies lasting nine months when employing trainees for nine months, with a further four-and-a-half months of training provided at the cost of the employer. Applications for these incentives could be submitted until May 2020 through projects that are currently being implemented. The government is also seeking to re-introduce incentives.
Iceland	The government dedicated ISK 2.2 billion to create 3 000 temporary summer jobs for students aged over 18 over the summer of 2020. The campaign was renewed in March 2021, resulting in the creation of a further 2 500 jobs.
Ireland	The Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme (AIS), which was introduced in July 2020, provides employers with a grant of EUR 3 000 per new apprentice registered between March 2020 and June 2021 over a period of two years. A separate grant of EUR 2000 is also available for employers who recruit female craft apprentices. Traineeships are also available as an alternative and shorter form of work-based learning to apprenticeships.
Israel	Government support for apprenticeships was already in place before the crisis, and targeted at specific groups such as the Ultra-Orthodox community, Israeli Arabs, people with disabilities and young people at risk of long-term unemployment. Under the Fast-Track training programme, for example, employers receive funding on the condition that a certain proportion of trainees are hired upon graduation. A budget was assigned specifically to strengthen existing training programmes during the COVID-19 crisis. The government also temporarily suspended regulation that states that unemployment benefits automatically decrease by 30% for jobseekers participating in vocational training during the COVID-19 crisis.
Italy	Existing schemes have been amended to increase financial incentives for employers to take on apprentices. For example, the employer contribution rate has been reduced from 24% to 10%. For employers with less than ten employees, apprenticeships for vocational qualifications at upper-secondary or post-secondary level can also now be fully reimbursed.
Japan	
Korea	Financial incentives to hire apprentices and students for work-based learning existed before the COVID-19 crisis, with employers able to receive up to KRW 200 000 per month per learner, but this has been doubled since to KRW 400 000 per month. Eligibility for work-based learning has also been expanded, with jobseekers with up to two years of work experience now able to apply (previously the limit was one year).
Latvia	From before the crisis, unemployed 18-29 year-olds could gain work experience in associations, foundations or NGOs for a period of two to six months and receive a daily stipend along with other non-financial support as part of the First Work Experience for Youth programme. The stipend was increased from EUR 5 to EUR 10 in 2020. From prior to the crisis, apprenticeships were co-financed, with the government providing monthly contributions of up to EUR 350 for no longer than three months when an unemployed jobseeker is provided with work-based learning.
Lithuania	Financial incentives for employers to recruit apprentices existed prior to the crisis, but have been supplemented by emergency and new measures. Since March 2020, in cases where apprenticeship or internships have to be suspended, the government provides a training grant equal to around 40% of the minimum wage. In April 2020, new funding was allocated from the European Structural and Investment Funds to strengthen apprenticeships.
Luxembourg	Existing financial incentives to recruit apprentices have been supplemented by new measures. From before the crisis, employers could be reimbursed 27% to 40% of the wage when recruiting apprentices on an initial apprenticeship contract, while other incentives were in place when recruiting adult apprentices. This was supplemented by the provision of a lump-sum subsidy in July 2020 to employers with apprentices, including for continuing to hire apprentices, newly recruiting apprentices, and for resuming an apprenticeship that had to be terminated due to the COVID-19 crisis. The lump-sum subsidy provided to employers ranges from EUR 1 500 to EUR 5 000 per apprentice. Students in vocational education and training who could not secure apprenticeships were able to receive practical training and assistance in finding an employer, and the deadline for signing an apprenticeship contract was pushed back by two months from October to December 2020, to give students more time to secure an apprenticeship.
Mexico	
Netherlands	Employers cover most costs of recruiting apprentices but they are partly compensated through the Practical Learning Subsidy Scheme, which existed prior to the COVID-19 crisis. In May 2020, the subsidy scheme received additional funding for 2020-21 and 2021-22, with funding targeted at specific sectors to promote recruitment of apprentices. A Healthcare Fund is also available for care institutions offering internships to students pursuing a nursing, care, or social welfare course.
New Zealand	Employers of first and second year apprentices can apply for Apprenticeship Boost, a scheme that will run from August 2020 to August 2022. Employers are eligible up to receive NZD 1 000 per month for first year apprentices, and up to NZD 500 per month for second year apprentices. Employers can receive a maximum of NZD 16 000 for each apprentice they employ for a maximum period of 20 months. The government also allocated NZD 40 million from the Provincial Growth Fund to launch a Regional Apprentices Initiative in June 2020, which aims to support up to 1 000 new regional apprenticeship placements, with an initial focus on displaced workers and Māori and Pacific peoples.
Norway	From prior to the COVID-19 crisis, employers could receive a grant of around EUR 670 a month per apprentice for a two-year training period. In response to the crisis, in July, the employer grant was increased by EUR 70 per month, and additional funding has also been allocated to municipalities to support apprenticeships in continuing their work-based learning in hard-hit industries. From prior to the crisis, municipalities were responsible for ensuring students who cannot



	secure an apprenticeship can complete requirements for vocational education through school-based programmes. The government also announced in January 2021 that it will be investing NOK 200 million to create student jobs to compensate for the lack of hiring and vacancies in sectors where students are typically employed. A new subsidy is currently being established to incentivise employers to hire young people between the ages of 16 and 29, who have been assessed by Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration that they need work-oriented assistance for month-long summer jobs in 2021.
Poland	From prior to the crisis, employers could receive reimbursements for salaries paid to students in vocational education, provided they operated in occupations where there is demand in the labour market. No changes have been made since the onset of the pandemic, other than to accommodate flexibility when it comes to requirements for work-based learning.
Portugal	A new scheme (ESTÁGIO ATIVAR.PT) to promote nine-month long internships was introduced to support young people's transition into the labour market. The scheme was introduced for the first time in 2020 and repeated in 2021. The allowance paid by the employment service to young people is pre-determined and based on qualification levels, and employers can also be reimbursed for costs associated with hiring. If the intern is hired for an open-ended or fixed-term contract at the end of the internship, the employer can apply for further financial incentives. A scheme that existed from before the crisis also offers allowances and remuneration to young people from low educational backgrounds who join a six-month programme of work-based learning. No financial incentives are in place for employers to recruit apprentices.
Slovak Republic	
Slovenia	
Spain	Financial incentives to hire apprentices and trainees existed before the COVID-19 crisis. When employers hire 16-24 year-olds in an apprenticeship and training contract lasting one to three years, they are eligible for reductions in social security contributions and subsidies for training. Regulation was also put into place in September 2020 to account for potential disruptions to work-based learning components resulting from the pandemic. The work-based learning component can be reduced to the minimum amount of hours permitted by law, and can also be replaced by taught modules that seek to replicate the benefits from work-based learning.
Sweden	The government set aside SEK 280 million in 2020 for municipalities to fund summer jobs for young people. From before the crisis, employers could benefit from local grants for taking on apprentices and providing work-based learning, and additional grants were available where mentors of apprentices had taken a specific training course provided (or approved) by the education agency. In the 2021 budget, the government also proposed an increase in subsidies for employers providing vocational education for adults, and it is expected that this could result in a further 15 500 state-funded training places for vocational education for adults.
Switzerland	A special COVID-19 apprenticeship taskforce funded by the government was set up in May 2020, which helped prevent any potential decrease in the number of apprenticeships enrolled for 2020 compared to previous years. Policies on apprenticeships and work-based learning are largely conducted at the canton level. In Geneva, a four-pronged approach including 14 measures was introduced in May 2020, including a lump-sum payment of CHF 3 000 for any new company recruiting an apprentice, the option to apply for three months' reimbursement for each apprentice hired in case of economic difficulties, and a bonus grant of CHF 10 000 for establishing a new network of employers recruiting apprentices.
Turkey	The Presidential Office of Human Resources launched an Internship Mobilisation Programme in July 2020 to compensate for the reduction in number of internships available during the COVID-19 crisis. The programme provides a platform to help match final-year university students, for whom internships are often a compulsory component of curricula, with public institutions and employers in the voluntary sector. More than 300 000 young people have registered to the platform since its launch.
United Kingdom	A new hiring incentive for employers to recruit apprentices was available to employers from August 2020 to March 2021. The government also introduced special support for apprentices who were made redundant before October 2020 for a maximum period of 12 weeks.
United States	The Department of Labour provides grants to states and workforce intermediaries to support the development of apprenticeship programmes. Since grants are provided to high-growth industries and sectors where there are labour force shortages, available grants reflect priorities for workforce development during the COVID-19 crisis. In 2021, for example, a H1-B Rural Healthcare Grant Programme was announced that will provide USD 40 million in grants for apprenticeships in health care in rural areas. In 2020, the Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grants provided funds that can be used to account for the costs of on-the-job learning for newly hired apprentices. Tax credits are also in place at the state level. The Department of Labor released a circular providing guidance on delivering work-based learning virtually in December 2020, as well as an online guide on virtual apprenticeships. These measures have facilitated employers in shifting provision of work-based learning to virtual settings.

## Employment services

Annex Table 5 includes descriptions of measures taken to strengthen public and private employment services for young people in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with consideration for measures taken at the regional or sub-national level. This overview encompasses both measures to increase outreach and visibility of services to young people as well as the development or enhancement of training and job search



programmes for young people. Only measures specific to young people, or where young people have been clearly identified as a target group, are included. For example, shifts to provision of employment services from in-person to virtual settings are not included in the descriptions below, unless these measures are targeted specifically at young people, given that this adjustment applies to all age groups. Countries that have strengthened the employment services provided to young people since the start of the COVID-19 crisis are marked with a check symbol (✓) in the dashboard of policy responses.

**Annex Table 5. Strengthening employment services for young people**

Australia	Youth employment programs which support young people are demand-driven, and include jobactive (including online employment services), Youth Jobs PaTH (Prepare, Trial, Hire) and Transition to Work. The amount of time that young people can spend on Transition to Work service, which specifically targets 15-24 year-olds, was expanded from 12 to 18 months in July 2020. The waiting period for early school leavers who are not in receipt of income support to access the specialist youth Transition to Work service was also reduced. The Youth Jobs PaTH (Prepare, Trial, Hire) programme helps young people gain skills and work experience needed to gain a job. The “prepare” element equips young people with skills through training, and shifted from face-to-face to virtual delivery during 2020 in response to COVID-19. The “trial” element gives young people an opportunity to gain valuable work experience. The “hire” element is the Youth Bonus wage subsidy, payable to employers who hire eligible young job seekers in ongoing work.
Austria	The Corona Job Offensive includes measures to provide unemployed 20-25 year-olds with the opportunity to train and reskill through public employment services. EUR 700 million was allocated to the public employment service to equip people with skills by the end of 2021, with one focus group being early school leavers. Low-threshold offers in employment services for young people such as youth coaching and Training Fit ( <i>AusbildungsFit</i> ) have also been strengthened in 2021.
Belgium	
Canada	
Chile	
Colombia	The Youth Employability Strategy is being implemented which is designed to strengthen visibility of public employment services and the role they can play in supporting young people into work.
Czech Republic	13 regional projects are being implemented by regional branches of the Labour Office in 2021 relating to youth employment. These projects seek to provide comprehensive support for young people, including employment support.
Denmark	An existing trainee scheme targeted at unemployed graduates with higher education has been extended until 2022 through additional funding. The trainee scheme combines practical work training at public or private employers with targeted CV-guidance and qualification courses, while also ensuring access to unemployment benefits.
Estonia	
Finland	Funding available to employment services for youth was increased by EUR 45 million in 2020 to respond to rising needs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2021, local government pilots covering 25 areas and 118 municipalities were also launched to strengthen the role of local governments to organise employment services, and increase co-ordination between the national and local governments. One-stop youth centres known as Ohjaamo centres are also being expanded to increase multidisciplinary support available to young people under the age of 30, and to lower barriers to enter the labour market for young people. Employment services also received additional funding to maintain free training available to new entrepreneurs.
France	16-29 year-olds can benefit from intensive job search support from the main public employment service. The number of places has been doubled. New employment-training pathways for NEETs under 25 years old (European Youth Guarantee scheme) provided by local employment and social services specialised in youth support have also been created. A four-month programme for 16-18 year-old early school leavers was also launched in 2020 in the public employment service to support young people into work. Around 35 000 young people are expected to be supported through this programme by the end of 2021. 100 000 additional qualifying training places are planned to be made available in the public employment service for 18-29 year-olds. Courses are geared towards priority sectors in the COVID-19 recovery plan including digital sector, ecological transition sector and the health care sector.
Germany	In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Federal Employment Agency began providing virtual career orientation services in schools, and to ensure accessibility, the agency is also organising open-air career orientation events and counselling discussion in parks. When it comes to youth policies, the main priority of the employment service is to improve the visibility of services to unemployed individuals.
Greece	Numerous projects are being implemented to support young people, with initiatives often sector-specific. Specialist counselling support, training and certification has been made available for young people in the food industry, which was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis, as well as to support young people into sustainable jobs such as in the ocean conservation sector and renewable energy. The government is also strengthening digital skilling opportunities and the public employment service has partnered with Google to provide online certified training on digital skills to 3 000 unemployed young people.
Hungary	
Iceland	In October 2020, the “Learning is an opportunity” campaign was launched to reach out to jobseekers who have been on the



	unemployment register for six consecutive months or longer, providing them with the opportunity to participate in studies for a semester while receiving unemployment benefits. The measure is available for all age groups in the spring and autumn semesters of 2021, and in the spring semester of 2022. The objective is to reach out to 10 000 people and for 3 000 places to be offered through the initiative.
Ireland	In July 2020, the government announced it would make over 35 000 new education and training places available for those currently unemployed, including 19 000 full and part-time student placements through the Skills to Compete programme, to provide unemployed individuals with the opportunities to reskill in areas of sustainable employment such as health care, software development and e-commerce. 3 300 postgraduate courses will also be made available at a cost of only 10% to the student. While there is no age specification, a large proportion of beneficiaries will be young people. There is also a Youthreach programme that was in place from before the crisis which provides young people who have left school without formal qualifications increased access to basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience over a period of one to two years.
Israel	The Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Affairs initiated a programme for young people that are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and for young people living in rural areas, or in Israel's social or geographical periphery. The new programme is expected to be carried out in the near future, and builds on existing platforms and services offered in the Ministry's employment centres.
Italy	
Japan	Special consultation services were made available in April 2020 at 56 locations of New Graduates Public Employment Service Offices. The services are specifically targeted at young people who have had their job offers withdrawn due to the COVID-19 crisis, and includes counselling, job-matching and mental health support. In the financial year for 2021, the government is going to hire 240 additional staff (than the initial budget of FY 2020) to strengthen the support service for new graduates' recruitment.
Korea	The National Employment Support System is being strengthened to provide targeted support for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including by scaling up existing service channels such as college job centres and youth centres to support young NEETs into training or work. The Youth Employment Success Package Program, which provides tailored employment support for low-income workers, including young people, reached 50 000 persons in 2020, up by around 40 000 from 2019. The number of beneficiaries from the Digital Jobs Program for the Youth is also being more than doubled from 50 000 to 110 000.
Latvia	The employment service has expanded access to online learning and vocational training, including to Massive Open Online Courses in February 2021 and to online modules of vocational education and training. The "Know and Do!" national project that focuses on outreach to NEETs has also been extended to 2022.
Lithuania	
Luxembourg	The employment service has increased eligibility to the professional training internship opportunities to jobseekers under the age of 30 from July 2020 to December 2021 to take into account the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 crisis. The initiative aims to encourage employers to provide young jobseekers with an internship lasting six to nine weeks, which gives trainees the chance to show their capacity to work and find employment, while also receiving a daily allowance from the employment service.
Mexico	The Youth Building the Future Program implemented in 2019 already provided 18-29 year-olds NEETs with 12 months of training in workplaces, combined with a monthly allowance and social security coverage. In 2021, the monthly allowance was increased from MXN 3 748 (around USD 190) to MXN 4 310 (around USD 218) to reduce the impact of the pandemic on youth unemployment. The employment service also developed new software to improve job matching and profiling to ensure programme members can be connected to jobs more quickly than before the crisis.
Netherlands	Regional Mobility Teams were established in November 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The role of these multidisciplinary teams is to reach out people who are at risk of losing their job, or have recently lost their job due to the COVID-19 crisis, and to connect them to employment services. Although the teams reach out to people of all ages, youth is one of the priority target groups.
New Zealand	The Mana in Mahi programme, which existed prior to the crisis, is designed to help people 16 years and older who need additional support to gain a foothold in the labour market and a formal industry qualification. The programme involves matching employers with jobseekers, allowances for training before and during employment, and wage subsidies to promote hiring by employers. In August 2020, an extra NZD 30 million in funding was provided to the programme.
Norway	Significant funding has been allocated to labour market measures and staffing at public employment services. In the budget for 2020, funding was increased by NOK 730 million, and then by a further NOK 440 million in January 2021. This will allow for increase in places available for employment support from 56 000 in 2020 to 63 000 in 2021. The funding will be key to meeting the Youth Effort and much of the investment will go into skills-enhancing measures for young people.
Poland	Regional labour offices have launched various measures addressed to the youth. The support provided under the projects assumes assistance to young people (under the age of 29), in particular to people who lost employment as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, but also to those who are in the most difficult situation on the labour market (young people belonging to the NEET category, persons with disabilities, with low qualifications, women, immigrants and returnees). Participants receive comprehensive support in the field of professional activation that prepares young people to improve their life situation by acquiring new competences necessary on the labour market. Over 16 000 young people will benefit from the support, while the overall value of this support will amount to over PLN 411 million.
Portugal	A Reinforced Support Program for Employment and Vocational Training (ATIVAR.PT) was adopted in August 2020, which



	aims to support the integration of young people into the labour market through providing professional training, work-based learning opportunities, and hiring and apprenticeship subsidies. The public employment service also adopted a Digital Transition Plan in 2020 which emphasises the need for digital skills and qualifications for the future of work, and which includes measures to promote digital skill acquisition among young people with secondary or higher education qualifications. The Young + Digital Programme launched in 2020 provides training for unemployed young people over 18 and under 35 with secondary education or higher with the opportunity to develop digital skills. As part of the Support Program for the Emergency Strengthening of Social and Health Equipment, which aims to increase capacity of health and care sector, training is provided to jobseekers in related areas, and eligibility to be part of the programme includes young students who are 18 years or older.
Slovak Republic	
Slovenia	
Spain	
Sweden	Employment services received SEK 25 million in funding in 2021 to support the employment prospects of young people and newly arrived migrants.
Switzerland	
Turkey	
United Kingdom	The implementation of the Youth Offer for 18-24 year-olds started in September 2020 to replace the existing Youth Obligation Support Programme. The Youth Offer targets young people in the intensive work search group in employment services and provides them with wrap-around support to help them into employment. The Youth Offer consists of a 13-week Youth Employment Programme, individualised support available through Youth Hubs, and Youth Employability Coaches that provide support for young people with complex needs and barriers, including up to six weeks of in-work support once employment has been secured.
United States	

## Mental health services

Annex Table 6 includes descriptions of measures taken by countries in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase the provision of mental health services of young people, to raise awareness of mental health among young people, or where allocation of funding specifically for young people can be identified. Only measures specific to young people, or where young people have been clearly identified as a target group, are included. For example, the expansion of mental health services or the setup of new mental health or crisis hotlines are not included in the descriptions, unless these measures are specific to young people. Measures to strengthen child and adolescent mental health services are also considered youth-specific. Only countries where explicit measures have been taken to increase access to mental health services for young people or financing has been allocated to support young people's mental health since the start of the COVID-19 crisis are marked with a check symbol (✓) in the dashboard of policy responses.

### Annex Table 6. Expanding mental health services, funding and supports for young people

Australia	Financial commitments to improve access to and availability of mental health support for young people were put in place in response to the COVID-19 crisis. This included AUD 4 million for Kids Helpline to increase capacity and support an unprecedented surge in call volumes, and AUD 5 million for headspace services in Victoria to increase outreach services to young people in the community who are in severe distress, particularly Year 11 and 12 students, tertiary students and young people who have lost their jobs. AUD 550 000 is also being allocated over two years from 2019-20 to the Satellite Foundation in partnership with Emerging Minds to enable expansion of support programs to children and young people who have a parent or guardian with a mental illness.
Austria	A new project call by the Austrian Health Promotion Fund (FGÖ) for health promotion projects to strengthen the psychosocial health of children, adolescents and young adults was launched in 2020. Three universities in Styria, Tyrol and Vienna were awarded funding in 2020, and applicants will continue to be able to submit applications in 2021. The <i>RatAufDraht</i> (Advice on the Wire) emergency hotline for children and young people was provided additional funding by the Vienna Government in March 2021, allowing it to increase availability and access to confidential support and advice. In Vienna, a new model of Home Treatment was established by the Clinic for Child and Youth Psychiatry (Medical University of Vienna) together with the outpatient social psychiatric service of the city of Vienna (PSD Wien) with the aim of providing psychosocial care that can be delivered in home settings at an intensity comparable to that which can be provided in inpatient settings with less disruption to day-to-day living. The service was launched in February 2021, and has been available since March 2021. An online suicide-prevention programme for young migrants was also rolled out. In June 2021, the Federal Ministry of Education also announced an increase in the number of school psychologists by 205 in light of increased pressures on mental health of young



	people during the COVID-19 crisis.
Belgium	Flanders put in place a mental well-being plan in response to the COVID-19 crisis which targets specific groups including young people. EUR 45 000 was also provided to the Flemish Association of Students to look into the mental well-being of students in Flanders and Brussels amidst the COVID-19 crisis.
Canada	As part of the Youth Employment Strategy, the government allocated CAD 700 000 to the Canadian Mental Health Association in response to the COVID-19 crisis to offer support for up to 90 young people.
Chile	<i>Hablemos de to-do</i> [Let's talk about everything], a cross-sectoral online platform led by the National Institute of Youth was set up to provide information to young people on self-care and mental well-being in a non-stigmatising manner. The platform has an online chat function to get in touch with psychologists that provide assistance, psychosocial support and guidance, and in the trial period, around 2 000 individuals registered for consultations.
Colombia	The Ministry of Health and Social Protection published guidelines on mental health directed at young people in March 2020. Virtual conversations designed to prevent and limit suicidal behaviour have also been organised in consultation with youth stakeholders since the onset of the pandemic. (A mental health hotline was established in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and between April 2020 and March 2021, around a third of callers have been 15-29 year-olds).
Czech Republic	Online education for teacher and school counsellors in mental health has been increased.
Denmark	In April 2020, the government allocated funding to assist vulnerable groups, including young people experiencing mental health issues. Within this agreement, around DKK 5 million was set aside for students at risk of dissatisfaction and despair during the COVID-19 crisis. In November 2020, government set aside DKK 100 million in 2020-22 to be distributed to 37 municipalities to promote easier treatment and support for children and young people experiencing mental health issues.
Estonia	The government is conducting a population survey to monitor mental health, including of young people, and counselling and support will be targeted based on the results.
Finland	The Ministry of Employment has provided additional funding to the Onni project, which provides low-threshold psychological support and services that are integrated into Ohjaamo youth centres, which act as one-stop youth centres that provide guidance and integrated support for young people under 30. Originally a pilot, the government decided to formalise the Onni project into a permanent support available through Ohjaamo centres, and to scale up support, new employees were hired in January 2021. The government also launched a project in August 2020 to engage young people in inclusive art activities to promote well-being and personal empowerment.
France	The government has increased the capacity of integrated mental health and education support available to university students through university psychological help offices (BAPU), and is accelerating the rollout of mental health first aid programmes in universities. A "chèque psy" scheme was also introduced in February 2021, which allows university students to receive up to three consultations with a mental health specialist for free.
Germany	Digital and telephone counselling services for young people are being expanded, including specific counselling and crisis services for young people at risk of suicide. At the onset of the pandemic, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSJ) expanded the counselling services offered by <i>Nummer gegen kummer</i> (number against grief – NgK), a non-profit providing anonymous and free counselling for children and young people. The federal government has provided additional funding of EUR 577 000 in 2020 and 2021 to NgK to extend the consultation times available for young people, ensure counselling services can be maintained, and to assist with public relations work. The federal government provided additional funding of EUR 343 000 over the course of 2020 and 2021 to the bke counselling service, which provides advice and counselling to young people aged 14 to 21 and parents with children under the age of 21. The government also allocated additional funding to <i>JugendNotmail</i> (youth emergency mail), which provides individualised support for young people aged up to 19, including for psychosocial issues. The federal government also launched a Mental Health Offensive in October 2020 which aims to increase self-awareness of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and strengthen the network of prevention projects and measures such as NgK.
Greece	
Hungary	
Iceland	New funding worth ISK 150 million was provided in April 2021 to strengthen mental health services in upper secondary schools, colleges and universities.
Ireland	The 2021 budget saw a EUR 50 million increase in funding for mental health, including EUR 38 million for new measures, and EUR 12 million to meet existing needs. A significant proportion of this will be allocated to enhancing child and adolescent mental health services.
Israel	
Italy	
Japan	The management guidelines for COVID-19 infections in school released in February 2021 includes information and guidance on school based mental health prevention. Mental health literacy is also being reintroduced to educational curricula in secondary schools in 2022.
Korea	A Mental Health Improvement Program was put in place to increase access to and promote mental health for 15-34 year-olds, including through publicity campaigns and mental health check-ups provided jointly by universities and mental health welfare centres. (more information needed for Korea)





Latvia	The government diverted EUR 7.12 million in funding to improve population mental health in January 2021, including to strengthen access to child and adolescent mental health services. In April to May 2021, a further EUR 3 million was allocated to support young people through the pandemic by supporting activities such as youth summer camps, local pupil council initiatives, as well as local and regional youth organisation initiatives that are aimed to improve youth mental well-being
Lithuania	In July 2020, the government released a plan to address the potential long-term mental health impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. As part of this, around 40 additional psychologists were allocated to provide additional services in youth centres, open youth centres and schools, and funding was allocated to supporting students experiencing mental health issues with their education.
Luxembourg	
Mexico	
Netherlands	In December 2020, EUR 3.5 million was allocated to supporting mental health of young people. One example of an initiative that received additional funding is Join Us, which works with municipalities and regions to tackle loneliness amongst young people. In February 2021, a further EUR 200 million was allocated to promote mental well-being and healthy lifestyles, and this package includes initiatives to promote youth welfare including expansion of low-threshold psychosocial assistance and a campaign to raise awareness of mental health among young people.
New Zealand	
Norway	In the 2021 National Budget, NOK 170 million was allocated to the Norwegian Government's action plan and children and young people's mental health. The budget also allocated funding for a pilot individual placement and support (IPS) programme for young people under the age of 30, which aims to support young people with mental health issues into work through integrated support offered by multidisciplinary teams that include both mental health professionals and welfare and employment services. In February 2021, NOK 2 billion was allocated to measures aimed at students, children and young people, to reduce negative consequences of the pandemic and infection control measures. From this, NOK 100 million was allocated to strengthen the services in the child and adolescent psychiatric outpatient clinics. NOK 110 million was allocated to municipal health services for people with mental health or substance abuse problems. 28.5 million of funding was provided for low-threshold and mental health supports provided through student organisations, and NOK 1.5 million was allocated to financing the student telephone line, which provides anonymous low-threshold support students and pupils. Many other telephone lines and chat lines has also received additional funding through the pandemic.
Poland	Reform of the mental health care system for children and adolescents was underway prior to the crisis. New psychological and psychotherapeutic centres for children and adolescents were opened in April 2020. In January 2021, the government also announced a new mental health programme with funding of PLN 220 million to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on children and adolescents. This is being used to launch a 24-hour hotline, extend existing child and adolescent services, and offer digital addiction treatment programmes.
Portugal	An awareness-raising campaign is being run by the Directorate General for health to inform citizens about resources available, with specific material targeted at children and young people.
Slovak Republic	
Slovenia	
Spain	
Sweden	Funding worth SEK 2.2 billion has been allocated to strengthen mental health services and suicide prevention in 2021, reflecting the priority that the government is placing on young people's mental health. Initiatives to promote mental health will be run at the regional level, and some of the funding has been specifically allocated to shorten waiting times for mental health services for children and young people. The government has also increased funding for civil society organisations that promote and raise awareness of mental health, especially for children and young people. A new national strategy for mental health and suicide prevention is currently in development, in which children and young people will be a key target group, and the plan is set to be finalised no later than September 2023.
Switzerland	
Turkey	
United Kingdom	As part of a Mental Health Recovery Action Plan launched in March 2021, GBP 13 million in funding was dedicated to provide tailored mental health services for 18 to 25-year-olds that bridge the gap between child and adolescent mental health services and adult mental health services and to support young adults through the pandemic. A further GBP 17 million of funding was announced in May 2021 to improve mental health and well-being support in schools, colleges and education settings. A Suicide Safer Universities Framework is also currently in development to better support the students in higher education experiencing mental health issues.
United States	The American Rescue Plan Act of March 2021 allocated USD 20 million to the Department of Health and Services for awarding of grants and co-operative agreements to protect young people against suicide.

## Housing measures

Annex Table 7 includes descriptions of measures taken by countries in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to support young people in staying in their homes through measures such as rent deferrals and



freezing of utility bills, as well as measures to accommodate homeless young people into safe housing. Since emergency housing measures taken by countries have rarely targeted young people as explained in the accompanying policy brief, no column for housing measures was included in the dashboard.

### Annex Table 7. Emergency housing measures for young people

Australia	
Austria	
Belgium	
Canada	
Chile	
Colombia	None targeted at young people yet. The government is planning on issuing a decree on housing for young people.
Czech Republic	
Denmark	
Estonia	
Finland	
France	Rents for university residences which are usually revalued each year have been frozen. Since February 2021, young workers under the age of 25 who have been employed for less than 18 months can benefit from financial installation allowance of EUR 1 000 to support payments for housing. To be eligible, employees also have to prove it is their first home and earn a salary of less than EUR 1 400 per month.
Germany	
Greece	
Hungary	
Iceland	An Equity Loan was implemented in 2020 that aids first-time buyers from low-income backgrounds, with the aim of supporting people to buy housing for the first time buy bridging the equity gap. The policy was planned prior to the COVID-19 crisis, but came into implementation during the pandemic.
Ireland	
Israel	
Italy	
Japan	
Korea	
Latvia	
Lithuania	
Luxembourg	
Mexico	
Netherlands	A Youth Homelessness Action Plan was already in place for 2019-21, which aims to ensure that no young person stays in shelter for longer than three months by the end of 2021. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, a EUR 200 million investment was made for 2020 to 2021 to reduce homelessness, including through the building of 10 000 extra residences to accommodate homeless people, including young people. Specific measures to eliminate youth homelessness have also been scaled up during the COVID-19 crisis at the regional level.
New Zealand	
Norway	No new measures targeted at young people, although funding for start-up loans have been made more generous to support first-time buyers, among whom young people are heavily represented.
Poland	
Portugal	The country's COVID recovery and resilience plan, which has been endorsed by the European Commission, sets out EUR 375 million to be invested in accommodation at affordable costs for students. The <i>Porta 65 – Joven</i> programme, which existed prior to the crisis, provides young people aged 18 to 30 with low incomes with support for housing costs for up to 36 months. Funding for the programme has continued throughout the crisis.
Slovak Republic	
Slovenia	
Spain	
Sweden	



Switzerland	
Turkey	Since March 2020, when universities suspended face-to-face education and training, students have been refunded the fees for the days they did not stay in state dormitories. This has students have been only charged for housing if they continued to stay in state dormitories.
United Kingdom	
United States	The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 features housing funding targeted at young people. USD 20 million was allocated to new incremental voucher assistance to support rental payments for young people who were formerly in foster care.

## Contact

Stefano SCARPETTA (✉ [stefano.scarpetta@oecd.org](mailto:stefano.scarpetta@oecd.org))

Monika QUEISSER (✉ [monika.queisser@oecd.org](mailto:monika.queisser@oecd.org))

Veerle MIRANDA (✉ [veerle.miranda@oecd.org](mailto:veerle.miranda@oecd.org))

Shunta TAKINO (✉ [shunta.takino@oecd.org](mailto:shunta.takino@oecd.org))

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