



Case Study Briefing

Youth Guarantee and One-Stop Guidance Center



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Contents

- 01 Overview
- 02 Key policy implications
- 03 Context
- 04 Sources of evidence
- 05 Main findings
- 06 Impact & Implications

1. Overview

The Youth Guarantee and the One-Stop Guidance Center as a social innovation and a policy implementation tool

This case study is a diagnosis of the Finnish One-Stop Guidance Center (OSG). Under the Youth Guarantee, the government should ensure that within four months of leaving school or losing a job, young people under the age of 25 can either find a good-quality job suited to their education, skills and experience or acquire the education, skills and experience required to find a job in the future through an apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education. Diagnosing the regulation and the implementation of the system means getting a grip on what sort of system YG/OSG is, how it works, who holds the power, where innovations are needed and where are the key leverage points.

2. Key policy implications

One-Stop Guidance Centers as a Youth Guarantee implementation tool cover the whole of Finland. They contribute to the reduction of unemployment of young people and empowerment of young adults.

- In January, there were 15 OSG Centers in Finland and by December 2015 the number had increased to 30. The quantitative goals of the local Turku OSG Center have been positively exceeded.
- On the local level, in Turku, the number of unemployed young people has diminished during 2015 compared to all unemployed people. In the other five biggest cities of Finland the rate has remained at the same level or risen slightly.
- After the project co-financed by ESF, the financing of the OSG Center should be covered by the City of Turku. Project-based funding does not guarantee the success of social investment.

3. Context

The aim of the Youth Guarantee case study was *to evaluate* the YG programme and OSG Center as an innovative and strategic approach to social welfare reform at the regional and local level in Finland.

The aim was also *to evaluate the distribution of the YG policy, the social and managerial roles* between public, private and third sectors, *the legal framework used, the interaction and complementarity with broader social welfare policies* in medium to long term, *the social outcomes, social returns and effectiveness of interventions* for the various actors, contributors and *beneficiaries* concerned as well as the social and psychological impact of the Youth Guarantee and OSG Center on individuals and communities, within the limits of available evaluation material added with some interviews on the local level.

The beneficiaries of the Youth Guarantee programme are mainly unemployed, young adults. Their need is primarily to be employed and to improve their access to education and jobs. The OSG Centers offer services also to other groups: pupils and students.

Youth Guarantee is a national and regional policy related to EU policies. It is implemented by authorities on national, regional and local levels. The Youth Guarantee programme involves collaborating agencies from the top of the governance hierarchy to the local level administration as well as professionals from various fields. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health represent the top government and governance institutions. Employment offices (TE offices) offer labour market services and the Social Insurance Institution (KELA) offers youth rehabilitation services. Local authorities include educational institutions, social and health care authorities, culture authorities, youth authorities as well as third sector organizations and communities.

The One-Stop-Guidance center as a Youth Guarantee implementation tool gives young adults tools with which to improve their social situation, e.g. improves access to education and jobs. It can be considered as a social innovation as it creates in a new way a public–private–people partnership with young people actively shaping their own future. OSG Centres invest in young people’s social capital.

The One-Stop-Guidance Center as an implementation tool represents pioneering practice, which demonstrates a new way of doing things in the public–private–people partnership. The OSG Center has a versatile set of services: e.g. guidance to the right service, personal guidance, educational and work counselling, outreach youth service, TE services, economic and development services, KELA services, mental health care and crisis services, multicultural youth services, workshop services and entrepreneurship services. The Youth Guarantee is both a structural reform to drastically improve school-to-work transitions and a measure to support employment of young people. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the guarantee of education and training, the young adults’ skills programme, the youth workshops and outreach youth work. The YG project is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Local authorities are responsible for student counselling during basic education.

The centers have institutional representation from municipal, education, social and health authorities so that young people can find the services or combinations of services they need in one physical location. In the OSG model, young people are active participants in shaping their own future. Customer perspective is at the core of the OSG Centers’ operative model: the aim was to offer low-threshold services gathered in one-stop guidance centers, cooperation should be added between actors and levels, and the aim was to make the employment and economic development offices’ (TE offices) services more individual. Also the information flow in multi-sector cooperation was supposed to be improved. The role of employers should be improved by offering more information on the youth guarantee and by making the support for employers easier to get. The role of different associations should be developed in tackling the unemployment of young people.

4. Sources of evidence

The evaluation team collected and analyzed administrative data and documents, research reports and materials. Specifically evaluation information of the national 'Meeting Site' (Kohtaamo) project about the experiences from the One-Stop-Guidance Centers was valuable. Interviews with the OSG Center Turku employers, network actors and young persons were conducted and 'User Voice stories' were collected. User voice stories represent young adults' personal stories about their life.

5. Main findings

The One-Stop Guidance Centers are based on the knowledge, advisory and guidance services of various organizations as well as on the complementary skills and co-operation between social and health care providers. The center staff provides face-to-face complementary support to the national telephone helpline. The operating model requires strong partnerships between the various actors and will develop new operating practices and skills in multi-sector management. Learning experiences and best practices have been distributed via the Meeting Site project.

The first Centers were established in early 2010 before the current national project. By May 2016, there are 36 regional pilot Centers providing services for young people. The OSG Center network is spread all over Finland and new centers have been opened. Our findings demonstrate that on the national and local level the One-Stop Service Center services are considered very necessary and useful. An interesting comment from a young person reveals the difference between ‘the old and new service model’s’ mentality: “I did not feel guilty when I visited the OSG Center. In the employment office this was a normal feeling as well as when visiting the Social Insurance Office”. Barriers between different public sector actors and private sector actors have been moved and co-operation between them is improved.

Every young person has individual needs and challenges that need to be taken care of. Communication between different administrative organizations is still a challenge because of the regulatory bottlenecks like ‘personal data protection’. Also officials in different administrative branches interpreted the problem of social exclusion of a young person in different ways and they also had a different understanding of how that exclusion can be prevented and what kind of interventions should be used. Lifelong guidance is a shared policy and administrative responsibility of several ministries at national and regional levels. The challenge is how to establish a consistent co-operation model with other sectors and service providers.

On the national level, the feedback of young people from the OSG Centers’ service contents and quality was graded 9.16 (scale 4–10) and their service experiences were very positive. OSG Centers have succeeded to be ‘low-level threshold’ service centers. As an integrated model with face-to-face and online services, the Centers strengthen and simplify services for young people and eliminate the duplication of activities.

Some development ideas were received as well: the activities could be extended and diversified. Guidance from the contents of different welfare benefits and services could be more clear and preferably in literal form. More information about the services was suggested. There are also service users who speak other languages than the official Finnish languages, which poses additional challenges.

6. Impact & Implications

Social Investment occurs against a background of the Finnish national government extending the roles and responsibilities of municipalities or sub-regions. Project based funding has become the main source for the YG programme and One-Stop-Guidance Centers' operations. However, it does not support the long-term outcomes of the YG programme. It is 'sponsors from the political level' who ensure continuity and funding.

Turku OSG Center has achieved its goal of empowering young people by taking them along to cooperate from the very beginning of the OSG Center project and also during the implementation of it. This has been taken into account by giving each young person individual service and by giving preference to the young person's needs. Co-operation between employers has become easier than before as they are in the same facility.

On the local level, all workers in the OSG Center have the same kind of service-oriented mentality which creates a flexible and in every way good working environment. One need not think about the administrative boundaries during the day.

Diverse outcomes should be taken into account. The outcomes may also need defining more holistically through focusing on the outcomes for the person rather than, or in addition to, the success of a treatment or intervention. For some young persons the simple issue to get information from one place or get help in filling documents may be such a relief that he or she feels empowered and confident. Some services support young persons to manage their lives, health and care.

Service delivery has improved as all service providers are in the same place. The fundamental idea of the operation of the Center is that the professionals working at a Center work as employees of their host organizations (e.g. municipality, career and education guidance, educational institution, the Kela benefits service, etc.), but are based at the common Center premises. The professionals' input in a Center's operation can vary from full-time to collaborative, periodic on-duty sessions.

In Finland the state has increased the freedom of municipalities to organize the implementation of local services for unemployed youth. In the YG programme, costs of the subsidy are transferred from the state to municipalities for multi-sectoral service cooperation. Project-based funding from the European Social Fund continues until 2020.

The Centers will be developed with the support of the European Social Fund as a national development project 2015–2020. A long-term goal is to develop an integrated career guidance model with parallel face-to-face and multi-channelled online services.

7. Further information

For further information on InnoSI: Innovation in Social Investment: approaches to social investment from the scientific perspective, visit our website at <http://innosi.eu/>

To view the Community Reporting video with personal experiences of the case study please follow the links below

<https://communityreporter.net/story/my-story-about-finding-job>

<https://communityreporter.net/story/working-jokipaja-workshop>

<https://communityreporter.net/story/my-story-about-finding-job>

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