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WP6 – A.6.1.1 Mapping of Policy Frameworks Spain Report European Institute of the Mediterranean

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Table of Content

Introduction and Methodology	2
Employment Landscape	4
Policy Framework and Responses	7
Main Challenges	11
Approaches Going Forward	13

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Introduction and Methodology

The report is the result of the activities relating to the project Output 6.1 (A.6.1.1 - *Mapping of Policy Frameworks*), implemented within Work Package number 6 (*Raising awareness of public authorities to create supportive environment for employment*).

This report is therefore the result of several different actions carried out by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) in coordination with the WP6 leader (General Agency for Regional Development, PP7), the Project Coordinator and all the project partners (PPs), namely: design and translation of the consultation for mapping policy frameworks related to fostering employability of youth and women; conduction of the consultation with public authorities and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs); and analysis of the feedback received complemented by desk research. This consultation and the elaboration of the report lasted for two months (October – November 2022).

The questions tackled the employment landscape in each project targeted country/region in the context of COVID-19, in addition to addressing the challenges of NEETs in accessing the labour market and the role of public institutions in combating their exclusion. The consultation also refers to the level of trust young people have in public institutions and the synergies that already exist between the government and external employment initiatives. This specific set of questions was designed by PP7 with the input and comments of all other PPs and the Project Coordinator.

The first step was to find enough material for the specific questions at hand. Most of the material was consulted through internet searches, with sufficient sources to be found overall. Particular attention was paid to consulting official documents and resources, such as data and information coming from Spanish ministries, international organisations or EU institutions.

One source that has been consulted for the topic of Spanish Youth Policies is the National Policies Platform and the Youthwiki for Spain of the EU Agency EACEA¹. For data related to the NEETs, Eurydice España - rediE² was used, where two information networks converge. European Eurydice promotes European cooperation and was created in 1980 by the European Commission. Since then, it has been used for the exchange of descriptive information on the organisation and functioning of education systems and national education policies. RediE operates as a territorial cooperation mechanism at the service of national education administrations for the same purpose as Eurydice.

¹ https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

² <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/mc/redie-eurydice/inicio.html>.

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It was created in 2010 by the Ministry of Education, which had already had the Spanish Eurydice Unit for many years.

For more details on the NEETs in Spain, the paper "Examining NEET situations in Spain: Labour Market, Discourses and Policies", which can be found in the Journal of Applied Youth Studies, was used.

Finally, to find more details on the economic situation in Spain, EURES³, a European cooperation network of employment services, was consulted. Furthermore, the report got information from the "Economic forecast for Spain" of the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs of the European Commission and the OECD data for Spain.

For labour data in the Spanish context, the websites and information of SEPE (Servicio Publico del Empleo Estatal) and the European Centre for the development of vocational training, which is one of the decentralised agencies of the EU, were used.

The field research included in this report was conducted through online interviews. To do so, the IEMed contacted representatives from several public institutions to conduct a 45-minute online interview to understand from their perspective the current policy landscape of the country. Out of the potential participants contacted, we had three interviews:

- 19 October 2022: Mr. Miguel Carrión Molina, Head of the Youth Employment Area, Employment Service of Catalonia (SOC), Government of Catalonia.
- 31 October 2022: Ms. Carmen Menéndez González-Palenzuela, Deputy General Director of Active Employment Policies, SEPE.
- 1 December 2022: Mr. Jesús Moral Castrillo, Deputy Director General of Innovation and Training, Government of Catalonia.

Mr. Carrión, Ms. Menéndez and Mr. Moral were chosen because they cover what CLUSTER believes to be the pillars of this project. From a geographical point of view, the team interviewed national and local representatives that provided a comprehensive insight of how the different layers of the Spanish and Catalan administrations work in addressing social exclusion and unemployment. Thanks to the different areas of expertise of each interviewee, IEMed was able to learn in depth about the efforts being made for young people, especially for women, to ensure their wellbeing and their social inclusion. Overall, even though it was not easy to arrange these series of interviews due to the tight agenda of the interviewees and our own time limitations, they provided a valuable insight that has allowed to produce a much more complete landscape of the design of the policy frameworks related to fostering employability of youth and women. It is important to note that SOC,

³ https://eures.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

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one of the CLUSTER Project Associate Partners, assisted the IEMed in the mapping of relevant stakeholders to be interviewed as part of its consultation exercise.

The desk research took about 20 hours to be completed. As for the consultations, each lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. The most challenging part, which took the longest to complete, was to combine all the information gathered and structure it in a comprehensive way for the reader to be understood.

Employment Landscape

Spain had a population of 47,432,805 people in 2022 of whom 7,362,914 are considered youth, representing around 15.52%. Spanish politics and public organisations consider those between the ages of 15 and 29 as young people (National Statistical Institute, 2020).⁴ The Spanish equivalent of the NEET category (Not in Employment, Education or Training) are the "NINIS", young people up to the age of 25 who are not working, studying or in any other training.⁵ It is worth pointing out that in 2018 Spain was the second country in Europe with the highest percentage of 18–24-year-olds who have dropped out of education and training early, neither studied nor worked. In 2021, the national rate of the population aged 15-29 who are neither studying nor working reached 14.1%. In this case, Catalonia is above average with 15.1%. In terms of gender, the national average is 14.4% for men and 13.8% for women. Again, in Catalonia, women aged 15-29 who are neither studying nor working exceed the national average at 15.2%. At the other extreme, Cantabria (7.1%), followed by the Basque Country (9.1%), has the lowest proportion of women aged 15-29 who are neither studying nor working.

The statistics available from Eurydice España - rediE allow an overview of trends in national averages to be read between 2002 and 2021. From 2002-2007 there were fewer NEETs every year, a total of 2.4%. However, due to the global financial crisis, the increase between 2007 and 2013 is 9.7%. It has since declined again by an overall 7.6% and the latest changes to an increase can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw an increase of 2.4% between 2019-2020 and 3.2% between 2020-2021.⁶

Due to the increase in immigration (from EU countries and non-EU regions such as South America and Africa), in 2020 the registered population grew for the fourth year in a row, thus compensating for a natural population decline. In the Eurozone, the Spanish economy is the fourth largest in terms of nominal gross domestic product (GDP), fifth largest in the European Union and fourteenth in the

⁴ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/spain/1-youth-policy-governance>.

⁵ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/spain/31-general-context>.

⁶ <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/mc/redie-eurydice/sistemas-educativos/contexto/tasa-NINIs.html>.

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world. The past six years have seen significant growth in GDP rates, driven by domestic demand and exports. At the beginning of 2020, Spain's growth exceeded the European average. As everywhere in the world, the public health measures taken during the COVID-19 crisis and the restrictions on movement and economic activity had an impact. This effect was strongest in the leisure-related sectors: tourism, hotels, gastronomy, culture and certain groups of workers, especially temporary jobs for the low-skilled and youth and the self-employed.

The independence and maturity of young people in Spain depends a lot on how difficult it is to enter the labor market. Especially in Spain and increasingly, the differences in the employment situation between those who still live at home and those who have already been able to move out of the family home are very wide. Because young people are made almost impossible to find their independence unless they are in full-time, permanent employment. This means that the situation on the labor market influences whether young people can become independent. From the point of view of employment policy, the corporate structure in Spain is highly fragmented into small units. Eight out of ten companies in Spain have fewer than three employees. The largest proportion of small businesses can be found in the service sector, particularly in retail and wholesale. In contrast, the majority of large companies are concentrated in the industrial sector. In addition, a significant number of large companies are major international players in sectors related to infrastructure development, renewable energy, tourism, banking, insurance, textiles, healthcare technology, aerospace, agri-food and automotive.⁷

In order for Spain to really recover from the COVID-19 crisis, productivity growth needs to be improved, including by promoting digitalization, innovation, and investment, and creating qualitative jobs by confronting structural problems in the labor markets. For the creation of additional jobs, obstacles to entrepreneurial growth should first be dealt with by means of a necessary market unity law. This is because regional differences in regulation create obstacles to the achievement of a genuine internal market and slow down business growth, hampering productivity and job creation.

Turning to 2022, the war in Ukraine is affecting the Spanish economy through higher energy prices, disruptions in production chains and greater uncertainty, as direct trade and financial risks vis-à-vis Russia and Ukraine are limited.⁸ In Q1, real GDP growth slowed abruptly (0.2% qoq) as supply disruptions and inflationary pressures mounted. As a result, however, private consumption shrank. As households are likely to adjust their consumption choices to the higher prices and economic uncertainty and the Omicron variant, the inflation and the war in Ukraine led to such a slowdown in

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/living-and-working/labour-market-information/labour-market-information-spain_en.

⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/economy/spain-economic-snapshot/>.

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GDP growth, it is projected to grow by 4.1% in 2022 and 2.2% in 2023, remaining 3.5% below pre-pandemic levels.⁹ Domestic demand is being supported by household savings accumulated during the pandemic, tax packages to help with the aftermath of the war and EU Next Generation funds including a recovery in employment and tourism.¹⁰

Through the interviews, it became clear that a paradoxical situation is taking place in Catalonia. On the one hand, there are approximately 350,000 people looking for a job, 120,000 of which are under 30, and on the other hand, there are companies dedicated to specific sectors that are constantly looking for staff. The fields that seem to have difficulties finding personnel are: the digital sector, facilities maintenance, industrial maintenance, mechanics, healthcare and public transport. Therefore, Catalonia faces a mismatch situation where the labor supply does not match the labour market demands. Mr. Carrión argues that this is due to two issues: on the one hand, working conditions in some of the sectors are not optimal, either due to remuneration issues or because they are unattractive to individuals. On the other hand, these sectors require intermediate professional training that only represents 20% of the total education offer provided in Spain. Therefore, it is concluded that if professional training applied to some sectors was increased, a significant number of people could be employed. SOC¹¹ states that one of its main missions is the professionalization of the Catalan population through these training courses.

From a labor point of view, the measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive impact according to Ms. Menéndez since they served as a social protection shield for those workers who were in ERTE, which is a Spanish term that refers to temporary employment regulation due to extraordinary circumstances. It is estimated that through the measures implemented, 4.5 million jobs were saved that have been able to maintain their activity after the ease of the pandemic. In addition to the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, the war in Ukraine and the problems that derive from it such as the inflation experienced or the increase of energy prices are compromising the future of the Spanish economic activity. According to the statements by Ms. Menéndez, the social shield that was created in the COVID-19 context, together with the Labor Reform, has made it possible to overcome the anomaly that characterised the labor market in Spain, and which is allowing us to have a much more favorable situation than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁹ https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-economies/spai/economic-forecast-spain_en.

¹⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/economy/spain-economic-snapshot/>.

¹¹ <https://serveiocupacio.gencat.cat/es/inici/index.html>.

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Policy Framework and Responses

The Ministry of Labor and Social Economy is responsible for designing and implementing youth employment and entrepreneurship policies. It also sets up and controls the youth guarantee system (Sistema de Garantía Juvenil).¹² The Youth Guarantee is a European initiative aimed at facilitating young people's access to the labor market. The objective is that all young people who are not employed or integrated into the education or training systems can receive an offer of employment, education or training, including an apprenticeship or a traineeship, after completing formal education or unemployment. The idea is that every young person can receive an offer within four months of registering. Young people can register on a voluntary basis, after which companies can contact the people on this list.

The Youth Employment Emergency Plan 2019-2021 was created to address the quality of employment and to ultimately reduce youth unemployment. It addresses people under the age of 30 without employment or training. It concentrates on the implementation of the ORIENTAJOVEN-Program¹³. As it can be financed from the budgets of the Public Employment Service and the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the package of measures does not entail any increase in spending. Due to the particularly critical situation in youth unemployment, the Action Plan for Youth employment (Plan de Choque por el Empleo Joven 2019-2021¹⁴) was created in addition to the other plans. This was drawn up in consultation with the Autonomous Communities, various interest groups and trade unions and approved by the Council of Ministers in 2018.¹⁵ The implementation of the measures is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security, which promotes strategic support measures for applied innovation in specific sectors or branches. This should improve the competitiveness and added value of the Spanish production structure and increase the commitment to comprehensive training and qualification of young people. The plan aims to develop initiatives to support return to school and specific skills, promote employment rights and youth entrepreneurship.¹⁶ Formally, this document is divided into 6 topics (career guidance, education, job opportunities, equal access to employment and improvement of the institutional framework) and contains 50 measures. This plan is a milestone in youth policy in the

¹² <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil.html>.

¹³ <https://cisslaboral.ciss.es/Content/Documento.aspx?params=H4sIAAAAAAAAAEAMtMSBf1jTAAAKNjSwszA7Wy1KLizPw8WyMDQwtDIOOwQGZapUt-ckhlQaptWmJOCapabmJJSWqRrU9iUn5RYg6U651aaevrGOIa5OKIAGKyngVWAAAAWKE>.

¹⁴ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/publicaciones/publicaciones-oficiales/listado-pub-empleo/plan-choque-empleo-joven.html>.

¹⁵ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/spain/3-employment-entrepreneurship>.

¹⁶ <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/plan-de-choque-empleo-joven-2019-2021.html>.

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sense that it is intended to create a legal framework around the topics of internships and apprenticeships, it should cost 2 million euros and involve 2000 careers advisers.¹⁷

The "Youth Guarantee Plan Plus 2021-2027 for Decent Work for Young People"¹⁸ is used as a reference in the current period 2021-2027, through which the funds from the EU are also released. The plan aims to upgrade young people's skills to meet labor market needs. It is part of the Youth Advance Strategic Plan, which brings together measures with a budget of 4,950 million, the largest ever for youth employment measures. It is also a fundamental tool to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 8 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda.

Every year, in April, all the Member States of the EU have to submit their National Reform Programs and Stability Programs to the European Commission. The aim is to coordinate national economic policies and achieve the objectives set for the EU as a whole. These programs are submitted to the Council of Ministers of EU and to the European Commission together with Spain's stability program. The submission is made in compliance with European obligations.¹⁹ They aim to boost employment and are largely financed from the budget of the Spanish government. Hence, the most recent one is the National Reform Program 2022.²⁰

The decision of the Secretary of SEPE of 26 April 2022, approving the Annual Employment Policy 2022, pursuant to Article 11.2 of the Consolidated Text of the Labor Code, was published by Royal Decree-Law 3/2015 of October 23. The coordination instruments of the National Employment System are the Spanish Employment Activation Strategy, the Annual Employment Policy Plans and the information system of the Public Employment Services. The 2022 Annual Employment Policy Plan is divided into a number of sections, including the analysis of the current labor market situation, the strategic framework, the structure and objectives of the plan, the preparatory criteria, the services and policy programs for employment activation, financing and evaluation the same. The 2022 plan sets out the goals to be achieved throughout Spain and in each of the different autonomous communities this year. The Annual Employment Plan 2022 is part of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan "New Public Measures for a Dynamic, Resilient and Inclusive Labor Market". The same also includes the Youth Guarantee Plan Plus 2021-2027. It also highlights the creation of a tool to help employment counselors called Send@.²¹

¹⁷ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/spain/3-employment-entrepreneurship>.

¹⁸ <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/councilministers/Paginas/2021/20210608council.aspx>.

¹⁹ <https://www.hacienda.gob.es/CDI/ProgramaNacionaldeReformas/PNR2022.pdf>.

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/nationalreformprogramme2022revspain_es.pdf.

²¹ <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/noticias/detalle-noticia.html?folder=/2022/Mayo/&detail=Publicado-el-Plan-Anual-de-Politica-de-Empleo-2022>.

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One of the action lines (23 “New Public Policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labor market”) of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan²² wants to reduce structural unemployment and youth unemployment, reduce temporary employment and correct the duality of the labor market, increase investment in human capital, modernize collective bargaining instruments and increase the effectiveness of public employment policies and with that promote inclusive and sustainable growth from the economic and social point of view. Since the second quarter of 2021, SEPE,²³ as a body dependent on the Ministry of Labor and Social Economy, actively participates in the development and implementation of this component. It has called for numerous grants focusing on Investment 1 of "Youth Employment" aimed at people between 16 and 29 years of age, a group especially affected by the financial and health crisis. Also noteworthy are those related to the TándEM Program²⁴, the First Professional Experience Program and the Research Program. Calls addressed to Investment 2 aim to promote gender balance: "Women's Employment and Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policies to Support Activation for Employment".²⁵ The program aims to provide support for women's training and employment in rural and urban areas.²⁶

Another measure taken to fight against youth and long-term unemployment is the so-called "Cheque NINI". The intention is for companies to hire young people who are not employed and who do not study as it will be cheaper for them and the employed under 30 will receive 430 euros for a maximum of 18 months. The help for unemployed young people or "Cheque NINI" was approved by the Council of Minister in order to help young people who do not have jobs or study and seek to enter the labor market. More than 600,000 unemployed young people are in this situation and this measure is intended to counteract the so-called "NINI generation". The requirements for the NINI check are being between 16 and 30 years of age, having Spanish or EU nationality or possessing the Spanish residence card and being registered in Spain. Also, you cannot be studying or working before the day of the application. Lastly, you need to be registered as a job seeker in the Youth Guarantee Plan.²⁷

It is important to know that the Autonomous Regions have a fundamental role in planning, defining, implementing, and managing public policies related to youth employment and entrepreneurship, as

²² <https://planderecuperacion.gob.es/>.

²³ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/que-es-el-sepe/que-es-el-sepe/organigrama/SG-Politic-Activas-Empleo.html>.

²⁴ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/plan-recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia/empleo-joven/empleo-joven-tandem.html>.

²⁵ <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/plan-recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia/empleo-mujer.html>.

²⁶ <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/noticias/detalle-noticia.html?folder=/2021/Diciembre/&detail=El-SEPE-fomenta-el-empleo-de-jovenes-y-mujeres-a-traves-de-las-inversiones-del-Plan-de-Recuperacion-Transformacion-y-Resiliencia>.

²⁷ <https://alcer.org/empleo/ayuda-de-430-euros-para-jovenes-desempleada-os/>.

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well as playing a major role in youth policy. In Catalonia there is also an allowance for self-employment for young people. The package of measures to promote the self-employment of young people between the ages of 18 and 29 offers an allowance of 13,510 euros per young person, provided they remain self-employed for at least one year. The requirement is to register as a job seeker with the Catalan employment office SOC or with the youth guarantee program.²⁸

One of the most worrying situations in the Spanish context is the irregular situation of some people residing in the country. In this case, legislative regulation plays a very relevant role and the amendments added to immigration laws try to correct this situation without much success. One of the reforms that has had positive consequences is the one that refers to immigration law for young people under tutelage. Before, when minors reached the age of majority, they were in an irregular situation that implied a direct expulsion from the labor market. Now, when they come of age, they can apply for a work permit, but that still does not solve the problem for people who are not under tutelage.

Beyond immigration, the current education system in Spain focuses on the obtention of knowledge for people who are capable of acquiring a high volume of content. Spain leads the school dropout rate at European level with a rate of 18% (like previously mentioned in chapter “Employment Landscape”), and in the case of men 25%. In some Catalan neighborhoods these figures skyrocket. Mr. Carrión considers that this data gives room for improvement if the educational model is diversified, adapting it to people who might not be able to retain high volumes of information or are more skill-focused trainings. By doing this, these people would become an active asset for society, instead of being perceived as a burden.

Ms. Menéndez underlines the importance of the Labor Reform, which structurally modifies situations of job insecurity. Hiring changes have been introduced that entail positive adjustments resulting in indefinite contracts that fundamentally affect young people and women. Statistics related to these topics reflect that now one out of two contracts in Spain is permanent, when this country was characterized by a culture of instability and precariousness.

Mr. Carrión, Head of the Youth Employment Department of the Government of Catalonia²⁹, proclaims that his institution helps people to find quality work with decent conditions and stresses that special attention is paid to groups with an added difficulty such as young people without experience or women in certain sectors. The New Opportunities³⁰ program reflects this priority and aims to help young people who have dropped out of school so that they can find their vocation and

²⁸ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/spain-vet-revolution#group-links>.

²⁹ <https://web.gencat.cat/ca/inici>.

³⁰ <https://serveiocupacio.gencat.cat/ca/soc/ocupacio-juvenil>.

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reconcile with learning. The promotion of dual vocational training is another pillar of the Government of Catalonia because it serves as an instrument to respond to the paradox that has been mentioned in the first section of the report.

The SEPE has a leading and coordinating role within the national employment system because in Spain the execution of active employment policies is an autonomous competence. SEPE also promotes reforms and influences the regulatory framework, and analyses and monitors current policies. The entity has specific execution programs within its sphere of competence and has a pivotal role in the fight against the exclusion of young people from the labor market through the Youth Guarantee Plan Plus 2021-2027 of Decent Work for Young People (see page 10)³¹, which contains 69 measures in six high-priority axes that are: guidance, training, employment opportunities, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship, improvement of institutional frameworks and governance of youth guarantee systems (previously mentioned in this report). Based on the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience³² plan, Spain focused on women in the rural world, women victims of gender violence and human trafficking. A very innovative and highly strategic program has also been launched, which consists of carrying out a diagnosis that serves as a tool through which the impact of active employment policies is promoted. There are project lines:

1. Tandem³³: it is a program aimed at young people with low qualifications.
2. First Professional Experiences in Public Administrations³⁴: the hiring for one year of young people is financed so that they can obtain their first professional experience in a public administration.
3. Investigo³⁵: promotes the participation and funding of researchers.

Main Challenges

Both the representatives of the Government of Catalonia and the Deputy Director General of Active Employment Policies of the SEPE agreed that in some cases looking for a job is not the biggest problem of unemployed people. Those who are at risk of exclusion usually have other problems that prevent them from advancing in other areas of their lives, such as precarious housing, domestic violence or being a single parent. Another point to take into account is that there seems to be a

³¹ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil/plan-garantia-juvenil-plus.html>.

³² https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/spains-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en.

³³ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/plan-recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia/empleo-joven/empleo-joven-tandem.html>.

³⁴ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/plan-recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia/empleo-joven/primera-experiencia-profesional-administraciones-publicas.html>.

³⁵ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/plan-recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia/empleo-joven/programa-investigo.html>.

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direct relationship between the circumstances of exclusion and the low degree of qualifications and/or level of digitalization. Therefore, one of the great challenges is to expand the level of digitalization and articulate programs and policies that encourage new technology, especially for elder generations.

The representative of the Department of Innovation and Training at the Government of Catalonia mentioned their three action lines in this regard. One of the strategic lines of action of the Department of Education of the Government of Catalonia for some years now has been to promote vocational training at the intermediate and higher levels and, more recently, the initial level in the last stages of basic training. The wide range of training cycles in different professional areas allows young people to have access to quality training focused on the professional skills required for today's jobs. The Catalan business sector favors internships in companies for the young people with the possibility for them to have their first work experience in these environments. Along the same lines as mentioned above, the Department of Education has made a great effort to bring the labor qualifications and professional skills of people in active employment into line with the qualifications required. In this sense, the creation of the Agència Pública de Formació i Qualificació Professionals de Catalunya (FPCAT) brings together the needs of the productive sector with the training offers in Catalonia. Thirdly, the deployment of the Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la Ley Orgánica de Educación (LOMLOE) has required a new basic training curriculum that focuses on the transversal elements for the education of our children and young people, with the six vectors of the curriculum. But it also focuses on the creation of relevant and real learning situations in the classroom, which are closely related to issues in the immediate environment of boys and girls, as well as to the challenges we face as humanity in relation to the SDGs for 2030.

In the case of the public service, out of the 120,000 young people who do not have a job, only 35,000 are registered in the employment portals, which implies that not even a quarter of the young unemployed have public services to help them. According to Mr. Carrión, there are programs whose effectiveness is highly questionable, such as those that promote hiring unless they are very well designed. In very specific contexts such as during COVID-19, they can be positive because companies were subsidized so that they could stay afloat, but these initiatives do not represent a long-term solution for job creation. On the other hand, there are other programs such as the one mentioned earlier about new opportunities for young people under tutelage, which is a pragmatic solution with a very positive impact, as indicated by the SOC evaluations.³⁶

The SEPE highlighted that it is essential to make a greater dissemination of all the programs that are underway to make them known to young people. There is a program that is derived from the shock

³⁶ <https://serveiocupacio.gencat.cat/es/soc/transparencia-bon-govern/avaluacio-estudis/model-davaluacio-del-soc/>.

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plan for youth employment called *Orienta Joven*³⁷ (also mentioned in the chapter “Policy Framework and Responses), which promotes a professional network within the public services that accompany and advise young people so that they can feel supported when making decisions that facilitate their labor incorporation.

In general terms, during the interviews, it was identified that the current autonomic competency system can represent an added difficulty since it requires a high level of coordination and sometimes a duplicated deployment of resources. Even within Catalonia there are different levels of employment policy implementation including the local level (Barcelona City Council)³⁸, the regional level (Government of Catalonia³⁹ and SOC⁴⁰) and nationally (SEPE⁴¹ and the Ministry of Labor and Social Economy⁴²) that could be more effective if they are properly coordinated or maximized. Mr. Carrión argues that employment policies are in a moment of reconciliation and Catalan priority is to make policies with a bottom-up approach that illustrate the needs of the people. Also the representative from the General Directorate of Innovation and Training at the Government of Catalonia mentioned the different policy agendas on how to generate employment opportunities for unemployed youth. They coincide in purpose and aim, but not in what to prioritise or how to carry out the proposed initiatives. Furthermore, similar and matching initiatives are implemented by different organisations and/or administrations that duplicate the provision of services with the same objective. Rarely are administrations (state, region, province, county and municipality) able to together to provide training services to promote youth employment. Lastly, there is an excessive bureaucratisation of the processes involved in implementing the initiatives of the different administrations. This situation means that the processes are not very agile.

Ms. Menéndez mentioned that there is an Annual Employment Policy Plan (as mentioned earlier) that is trying to better organise the categories of the upcoming programs, integrating the autonomous communities and thus improving governance.

Approaches Going Forward

According to the Employment Service of Catalonia, its greatest strength relies on its bottom-up approach and the ownership of data and systems that can be exploited. Through this data, a lot of indicators can be extracted such as the sectors that are booming, the needs that are being

³⁷ <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil.html>.

³⁸ <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/en/>.

³⁹ <https://web.gencat.cat/ca/inici>.

⁴⁰ <https://serveiocupacio.gencat.cat/es/inici/index.html>.

⁴¹ <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/que-es-el-sepe/que-es-el-sepe/organigrama/SG-Politic-Activas-Empleo.html>.

⁴² <https://www.mites.gob.es/en/index.htm>.

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demanded, etc. Therefore, one element that could lead to a substantial improvement would be to have a team dedicated exclusively to analyzing data to enhance this information.

The second point covered was the need to simplify contracting systems so that they are more accessible to the entire population and foster employability.

Mr. Carrión also stresses that a holistic approach needs to be followed in a way that stakeholders have a single intervention window.

The Employment Law Project, which is currently under parliamentary debate, contains significant qualitative advances, such as the possible creation of the Spanish Employment Agency, which will allow greater flexibility in the management and innovation of employment policies. It represents a substantial improvement since guaranteed services will be established through a common portfolio under the national employment system both in terms of guidance and in terms of training and opportunities. This service is intended to be given not only to the unemployed but also to companies to create better interconnections. The services focused on the unemployed offer a personalized itinerary and individualized tutoring for those who request them and the possibility of opting for at least one training cycle suggested by the job counselors. The fact that they are guaranteed if the Employment Law is approved implies that any unemployed individual, regardless of the territory of residence, will have this public service at his disposal.

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