1. Introduction

The evolution of a European layer of employment policy, especially via the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) launched at the end of the nineties, has given birth to analytical questions connected to the overall role that European institutions can play in setting an agenda and formulating and adopting innovative social policies which could help member states better address common social challenges. Among these challenges one of the most striking problems has been the overall diffusion of high youth unemployment rates since the early eighties. By adopting the classification of unemployment policy regimes by Gallie and Paugam (2000), the paper will focus on the evolution of (youth) unemployment policy at the EU level and see if a policy model has emerged as a result of continuous steering of EU institutions, or if due to the fragmentation of domestic youth employment policy regimes no shared consensus over one specific youth employment policy model has emerged. For this purpose, several questions will be answered. Is youth unemployment considered to be a specific problem awaiting targeted policy measures and how is it defined? Which are the specific objectives, instruments and measures adopted? And is a coherent strategy or policy regime on youth unemployment emerging?

2. Theoretical framework and methods

2.1. Welfare and employment regimes in Europe

An analysis of the European Union’s policy approach towards youth unemployment can greatly benefit from the comparative analysis of welfare regimes, following Esping-Anderson’s (1990) seminal work and its subsequent adaptations to the specific field of labour market policies (e.g. Muffels and Fouarge 2001; Heidenreich 2004) and, in particular, to the realm of unemployment regulations (Gallie and Paugam 2000; Giugni and Cinalli 2010). However, this research cannot be applied unconditionally to the topic under analysis here because the EU does not conform to a ‘welfare regime’ in strict terms. This is due to the fact that the EU lacks proper competencies in the field of social and labour market policies and thus also the legal, political and administrative structures of an established welfare state. As we will see, its main regulatory instruments are primarily of a ‘soft governance’ type, such as the Open Method of Coordination (de la Porte, Pochet and Room 2001; Zeitlin and Pochet 2005). In this area, the EU has invested a considerable amount of political energy in pro-
moting a more coordinated approach amongst member states in the field of employment, for instance by means of the Lisbon Strategy and the current Strategy 2020. Following the principles of the Open Method of Coordination, member states commit themselves to specific policy objectives stipulated in these employment strategies, but remain flexible in the policies and measures they might choose to reach these goals. Hence, we need to consider that the EU’s policy approach is not governed by a strict and clear-cut policy, but aims to be open enough in order to be compatible with several of them.

In spite of these observations, we argue that the analysis of (un)employment welfare regimes helps to better understand and assess the EU’s regulatory attempts in the realm of youth unemployment. On the one hand, the study of welfare regimes has been interested in uncovering the guiding goals, ideas, principles and rules that govern public policies, regulatory measures, administrative competencies and financial provisions in the various member states. Research on the Open Method of Coordination has demonstrated that the EU’s attempts in coordinating employment policies are most effective on this ‘cognitive’ level (Heidenreich and Bischoff 2008; Graziano, Jacquot and Palier 2011). Consequently, the research on welfare regimes will be of great help in order to highlight the ‘ideational’ foundations of the European Union’s Employment Strategies. On the other hand, while it is true that the EU’s Employment Strategies have always tried to conform to various regulatory paradigms established within different member states, evidence suggests that the EU’s open approach does follow a more limited policy agenda with specific priorities, objectives and principles that tend to match better with certain policy options and national welfare regimes. The studies on welfare regimes will help to clarify whether the EU’s own approach does indeed tend to conform to a specific policy approach or regime type, thus potentially putting more pressure on specific member state regulations (Conter 2004) and leading to policy adaptation or transformation (see also Graziano 2011).

The scholarly writing on welfare regimes is extensive (e.g., Esping-Anderson 1996; Sainsbury 1999; Pierson 1995; Castels 2004), but more limited when issues of unemployment are at the centre of attention. In this regard, the work of Gallie and Paugam (2000) has laid the ground for a comparative analysis of national unemployment policies by analysing the main types of regulatory approaches within the EU that try to provide protection against misfortune on the labour market. For this purpose, they focus on three indicators: on the degree of coverage, on the level of compensation, and on the amount of expenditure on active employment policies. On these grounds, they identify four unemployment welfare regimes: a sub-protective regime with a very limited coverage and compensation, with weak activation policies, which is characterized by a lack of organized public policies (e.g. Greece and Italy); a liberal regime that provides a somewhat higher level of protection and support on all three dimensions while staying strongly devoted to maintaining market dynamics (e.g. UK and Ireland); an employment centred regime that grants considerable passive and active support to individuals which, however, depends on previous employment, thus distinguishing strongly between insiders and outsiders and between various employment status groups (e.g. France and Germany); and finally a universalistic regime that provides protection to all citizens on the basis of individualized rights and has established a generalized obligation to labour market participation (e.g. Denmark and Sweden).

This typology is very helpful to analyse the EU strategies on (youth) unemployment, although it needs further specifications because Gallie and Paugam centre mainly on the dimension of social
protection within national unemployment regimes while putting less emphasis on the dimension of labour market policies. Within the EU’s own ‘flexicurity’ approach, however, this latter aspect is much more prominent. For this purpose, it is helpful to integrate specific recommendations from other typologies. On the one hand, we need to consider which basic priorities are established within national labour market policies. Following Heidenreich (2004) and Muffels and Fourage (2001) we can distinguish between the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries, which put an emphasis on high employment rates by means of inclusive and flexible labour markets, and the continental and south European countries that are marked by lower levels of labour force participation, more rigid labour markets and a greater concern for labour stability, thus being more exclusive in regard to vulnerable groups such as the young, elderly, women, and migrants. Finally, Giugni and Cinalli (2011) develop a typology that combines the two dimensions described so far (i.e. the inclusiveness of social protection provisions and the rigidity of labour market regulations). On this basis, they identify four different types of unemployment regimes: a system of extensive protection for employees that regulates labour markets rather strongly and grants high levels of compensation to the unemployed; a flexicurity-regime that combines a strong flexibilization of labour markets with high levels of social protection to those excluded; a regime of precarious protection that provides a weak system of social provisions and stresses labour market inclusion by high rates of flexibilization; and finally a regime of labour market centred protection that discriminates between labour market insiders and outsiders by combining a rigid labour market regulation with weak social policies.

2.2. Research Strategy and Methods

These typologies converge in identifying four different regimes with specific characteristics and will thus allow us to better describe, analyse and assess the EU’s own regulatory approach towards youth unemployment, both in regard to social protection and labour market policies. Since this article is an exploratory attempt to detect the existence of a specific European youth unemployment policy regime, we do not have sophisticated research hypotheses to test. Therefore, the research strategy is aimed at producing an in-depth description of the relevant EU policy developments in the past 20 years and at labelling the EU policy. More specifically, by adopting and developing Gallie-Paugam’s analytical lenses, we will try to scrutinise the evolution of the EU youth employment policies in order to assess the kind of regime supported. The data sources for this article are based on several documents, reports, and interviews from different European institutions. The following section gives an overview of the development of youth policy at the EU level and illustrates the process of the implementation. It concentrates on measures and initiatives related to youth (un)employment that are outlined in the European employment guidelines. The main focus lies on the period from 1997, when the first employment guidelines were established, to the current European Strategy 2020. The purpose of the following document analysis is to highlight the progress of youth policy and describes its enlargement in line with the Lisbon Strategy and the follow up Strategy Europe 2020. Especially employment, education, and training are the most prioritized policy fields, which are increasingly merged into a hybrid objective.
3. Development of Youth Employment and Social Inclusion Policy and its Role within the European Employment Strategy

In the last decade, European Union institutions focused more explicitly on youth employment and social inclusion policy and attributed this field of action as a high priority within the European Employment Strategy. Since 2002 the European Commission has developed a lot of activities in youth policy fields and an open method of co-ordination was applied to the youth area by the European Institutions in order to take the youth dimension more into account when developing other major social policies. In 2005, the Commission pointed out the need to support young people with regard to Lisbon goals for more growth and better jobs, particularly in relation to young people’s access to the labour market. Therefore, in 2005, the European Youth Pact was adopted by the European Council. It should be used as a political instrument as part of the revised Lisbon Strategy. The member states were called to improve the education, training, and social inclusion within the framework of the European Employment Strategy and the Social Inclusion Strategy. In consequence of the economic crisis of 2008, along with high unemployment among young people, the Commission and Council of the European Union called for stronger policy action on the European and the national level. While active citizenship, social inclusion, and solidarity of young people have already been objectives of the framework of European cooperation policy areas, in particular education, employment, and social inclusion are becoming more important. Over the years following the crisis, the Commission has published various communications in order to foster a better integration of young people into the labour market. The next part deals with an overview of youth policy at EU level, by focusing on special policy measures for young people within the EES.

3.1. First Steps of Youth Policy and Policy Measures Regarding Youth Employment within the EES

Since the first years of the EES (1997–2000), the employment guidelines proposed to tackle youth unemployment and preventing long-term unemployment (Goetschy, 1999); young people, however, belong to the general group of unemployed and have not been seen as a separate group with specific solutions because the employment guidelines put forward to develop preventive and employability-oriented strategies refer to both groups (youth and long-term unemployment). The only difference is that every unemployed young person is promised a new start before reaching six months of unemployment, and unemployed adults within twelve months. The activation policy tends to prioritize initiatives to prevent young unemployed from becoming long-term unemployed by activation measures in form of training, re-training, and work experience. Therefore, the main focus is primarily on the reintegration of young long-term unemployed into the labour market after a period of absence. In the following years (2001–2003), the Council decided to update the employment guidelines by developing “comprehensive and coherent strategies for Lifelong Learning, in order to help people

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3 [Official Journal C 168 of 13.7.2002]
2 [COM (2005) 206]
3 [Council (2005) C 292/03].
4 Framework of European cooperation in the youth field is based on principals of the OMC, which is used to establish common objectives for the four priorities of the White Paper on Youth: “participation”, “information”, “voluntary activities” and “a greater understanding and knowledge of youth”. It is directed by the European Commission’s Education and Culture Directorate-General.
acquire and update the skills needed to cope with economic and social changes throughout the entire life cycle.”

Active and preventative measures for unemployed were specified, in the sense not only to offer stopgap measures, but also ensuring that all jobseekers benefit from services such as advice and guidance and job search assistance. In 2005 demographic change, the relevant number of early school leavers, and the overall high youth unemployment became more important. The Commission released the Green paper, which focused on the implications of these changes for Europe, with a particular emphasis on young people. Moreover, the Commission carried out a mid-term evaluation of the Lisbon strategy (five years after its launch) and points out the disappointing outcomes, particularly with regard to employment and slowed Job creation. In consequence of its results and findings, the Commission proposed a simplified coordination procedure and greater focus on the national action plans (NAP) in order to give the strategy some fresh momentum by setting medium- and short-term objectives. This communication gives a signal for relaunching policy priorities, particularly with regard to growth and employment. In addition, the Commission proposed a new social policy agenda for the period from 2005 to 2010 by emphasizing “a social Europe in the global economy: jobs and opportunities for all.” Clearly, there is a strong need to develop a social integration approach by linking fields of education and employment. The result was the proposal to follow a comprehensive social and professional integration of young people. Therefore the European Council adopted the European Youth Pact in March 2005, so that youth issues got a significant boost. In fact, it has been seen as a cause of the revised Lisbon Strategy focussing on growth and jobs and of the recognition that it is essential to integrate young people in society and working life to ensure a return to sustained and sustainable growth in Europe. At this stage the European Youth Pact represents the first significant change within youth policy at the EU level. With regard to growth and employment, youth policy has turned into a political issue. The measures and actions proposed in this pact should be fully incorporated into the European strategies for employment, the Social Inclusion Strategy and the “Education and Training 2010” work programme. Member states included all relevant measures for the employment, integration, and social advancement of young people in the “Integrated guidelines for growth and employment” (2005–2008) which reflects the renewed Lisbon priorities. As a matter of fact, it was the first impulse for a better incorporation of the youth factor into sectoral policies. Although youth had received stronger attention at the European level, critics have suggested that the EU institutions promoted youth policy primarily in a rhetorical and symbolic manner. For instance, the Bureau of European Policy Advisers released a comprehensive strategic report in April 2007 which highly recommended empowering youth strategy by effective invest-

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9 The integrated guidelines (2005–2008) imply the employment and the broad economic policy guidelines in a single document. These guidelines will thus simultaneously cover macroeconomic policies, employment and structural reforms and present the principal policy instrument for developing and implementing the Lisbon Strategy.
10 The mission of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) is to provide timely, informed policy and political advice to the President and Commission.
11 BEPA (2007).
ment in apprenticeship and activation policies. Especially to “reinforce the coordination between education and training institutions and employment” and to strengthen “apprenticeship schemes, diversify pathways to enter the labour market.”\textsuperscript{12} The recommendations refer to the need to facilitate the entry into the labour market and to ensure conditionality benefits by mentioning good practices on national levels. A few months later, in September 2007, the European Commission released the communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions on “Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society”\textsuperscript{13}, which strongly stressed the need for a cross sectoral youth policy within the EU. This communication points out that the policy framework set up by the European Youth Pact in 2005 is not enough to help young people to deal with the difficulties they face. Therefore, the Commission demanded to take youth policy more into account and asks for a stronger focus on youth policies related to the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. Hence, the member states were called upon to “develop mobility and the opportunity for young people to look for a job abroad” and to “establish flexicurity strategies with a view to career security and better employment conditions for young people in the next cycle of the Lisbon Strategy [...] and to give greater attention to youth in the National Reform Programmes”\textsuperscript{14}. Furthermore, the Commission pointed out that member states are supposed to use EU funds (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, etc.) to support young people’s transition to employment. As a result of that, the most recent integrated guidelines (2008–2010)\textsuperscript{15} encourage to take the European Youth Pact more into account. Especially transitions from education to work are underlined. Nevertheless, all recommendations and guidelines formulate a generalized approach for the working and unemployed population. Hence, youth was still not seen as an independent group with specific solutions, but rather as one of many other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, such as older workers, women, migrants and people with handicaps. In this sense, all member states should “promote the social and labour market integration of the most disadvantaged”\textsuperscript{16}. The only change is that every young person who left school should be offered a job, apprenticeship or additional training within no more than four months instead of the previously specified six months. Another point is the explicit recommendation that skills and competences have to be more strongly adapted to the needs of the labour market. It is particularly noticeable that the policy fields of labour market and education increasingly merged into a hybrid objective. In 2008, the Commission mandated an independent agency\textsuperscript{17} to conduct an evaluation of the EU cooperation in the youth policy area as it has been since 2001. All EU member states had to evaluate the strategy on youth with the involvement of national authorities, youth organizations and other stakeholders. The extensive consultation exercise supported the Commission to adopt a renewed youth strategy\textsuperscript{18}.

\textsuperscript{12} ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} EUROPA. Summaries of EU legislation. Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society [http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/youth/c11103_en.htm].
\textsuperscript{15} [COM(2007) 803 final].
\textsuperscript{16} ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} ECOTEC Research & Consulting. UK.
\textsuperscript{18} This report provides an overview of the views and findings presented by Member States in their national reports, in relation to the past cycle of cooperation in youth policy. Each country was asked six questions, and this report is structured according to the questions.
3.2. EU Youth Strategy

In April 2009, the Commission presented a Communication entitled “An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities”\(^{19}\). The concept and course of action (i.e. activation and integration into the labour market) have remained the same and leaned on the idea of the Youth Pact 2005, but the achievement consists of improving the instruments of the OMC in order to renew the open method of coordination. Therefore, the strategy calls for a more research and evidence-based youth policy and invites all member states to organise a permanent and “Structured Dialogue”\(^{20}\) between member states and young people. In November 2009, the EU Council adopted a resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field for the next decade (2010–2018) which is based on the Commission’s Communication above.

The idea of a cross-sectoral approach was completely accepted, so that eight fields of action were established. Each field has their own overall objectives and priorities which had to be outlined in separate cooperation frameworks and strategies. The fields ‘employment and entrepreneurship’ and ‘education and training’ present the most important actions within the EES, with related initiatives as increasing and improving “investments in the provision of suitable skills for those jobs in demand on the labour market with better matching in the short term and better anticipation in the longer term of the skills needed” or taking “the specific situation of young people into account when devising flexicurity strategies”\(^{21}\), which have to be integrated into the guidelines. It is noteworthy to highlight that the Council proposes a total of 74 different initiatives and has specified eleven initiatives in the field of action in employment and entrepreneurship alone. Although more objectives and priorities of the eight fields of action identify young people as a policy target, and although the overall strategy introduces a youth perspective into different policy fields, it is obvious that the huge number of different initiatives in various areas of action has reached a level which creates monitoring and implementation problems. As a matter of fact, the many initiatives are nothing else than proposals that could be adopted by the member states, but it is not mandatory due to the principle of subsidiarity.

In 2010 the European Parliament and European youth organizations issued a strong warning in regard to youth policy. They urged for the need to “turn Generation Lost to Generation Hope”\(^{22}\) by putting youth at the top of the agenda. The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the EU Parliament urged the Commission and the member states to take a rights-based approach to youth and employment, as labour standards related to the quality of work, such as working time, the minimum wage, social security, and occupational health and safety. In their Draft Report “on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship, and apprenticeship status.


\(^{20}\) The structured dialogue with young people and youth organizations, which serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field, should be pursued and developed.


youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status\textsuperscript{23} (March 2010), the Council and the Commission are called “to define a job strategy for the EU that combines financial instruments and employment policies in order to avoid ‘jobless growth’, and entails setting ambitious benchmarks for the employment of young people\textsuperscript{24}. Additionally, the Parliament called on all member states “to establish inclusive and targeted labour market policies that secure the respectful inclusion and meaningful occupation of young people, e.g. through the setting-up of inspirational networks, trainee arrangements, international career centres and youth centres for individual guidance\textsuperscript{25}. In the entire report the Parliament suggests an improvement of EU youth policy and a better monitoring system, like new binding youth benchmarks, and new improved governance tools for the work on youth employment within the OMC. With regard to strategies and governance tools at EU level the Parliament suggests “that the Council and the Commission come forward with a European Youth Guarantee securing the right of every young person in the EU to be offered a job, an apprenticeship, additional training or combined work and training after a maximum period of 6 months’ unemployment” and invites the Commission to “evaluate existing youth benchmarks and the Youth Guarantee every year in order to deliver results and progress”.\textsuperscript{26} This shows that the Commission and the Council have realized that the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) may fail because of the huge numbers of initiatives which could not be implemented by all member states into national targets. Moreover the cross sectoral approaches have been conceptualized in a very vague and obscure phrasing, so that it is not clear who takes responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the Youth Strategy. It seems that different initiatives are divided in different OMCs, i.e. the social OMC or the training and education or employment OMC, so that youth related issues are discussed in different contexts. This results in many coexisting measures and does not correspond to a holistic approach as proposed by the EU Parliament within their Draft Report on promoting youth access to the labour market by strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status.\textsuperscript{27}

In May 2010 the European Council adopted the resolution “on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty”\textsuperscript{28} and agreed that active inclusion of young people should focus mainly on two specific fields of action: that of education and training and that of employment and entrepreneurship. In this respect, the current EU youth policy regarding employment focuses on social integration by promoting transition pathways from education to employment and concentrating education and skills on the labour market requirements. The renewed youth policy approach was implemented in the guidelines for employment policies (Oct. 2010). The initiatives and advices are transferred into the coming up EU Strategy 2020 and structure the new flagships initiatives.

\textsuperscript{23} ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} [2009/2221(INI)] European Parliament. Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (2010). Amendments 1-152. Draft report on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status.
\textsuperscript{28} [2010/C 137/01] European Council. Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty.
3.3. EU Strategy 2020 and youth related flagship initiatives

The European Strategy 2020 is a follow up strategy of the Lisbon Strategy for the next decade, proposed by the Commission to come out stronger from the crisis and turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The new strategy consists of five EU headline targets for 2020 which are followed by seven flagship initiatives to catalyse the progress. In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Employment Strategy now encompasses three main policy fields of job creation, of skills, and of combating poverty. Therefore the EU 2020 strategy is established institutionally in a smaller set of integrated ‘Europe 2020’ guidelines (integrating employment and broad economic policy guidelines) with the result that it takes up only a few youth specific suggestions within the current Draft Joint Employment report (2011)\(^29\). More explicit references to youth (un)employment are made within the Commission’s flagship initiatives, which should boost ‘inclusive growth’ and meet the headline targets of the EES. With regard to youth related employment policy the flagship initiatives ‘Agenda for New Skills and Jobs ’ and ‘Youth on the Move’ are the most relevant.

3.3.1. ‘An agenda for New Skills and Jobs’

The flagship initiative ‘Agenda for New Skills and Jobs’ aims to modernise labour markets and empower people by developing their own skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including labour mobility. The flagship ‘New Skills for New Jobs’ takes up a previous initiative launched in 2008\(^30\) by the Commission’s agenda for better skills upgrading, anticipation and matching. This flagship is directly linked with the headline targets of the EES and has just as little to do with specified solutions regarding youth. Again, youth is not explicitly mentioned as an own group, but rather as a part of a vulnerable group like women or older workers, so that all key priorities pertain to women, older workers and young people as one group. Only a few specific targets focus especially on young people, such as more targeted job-search assistance and career guidance, whereby training and job experience programmes have to be tailored to the special needs of the labour market. Therefore member states are asked to introduce new benchmarks on education for employability to stimulate a new focus on preparing young people for the transition to the labour market.

This agenda for new skills and jobs complements the Commission’s ‘Youth on the Move’ flagship, which aims to help young people to gain the knowledge, skills and experience they need to make their first job a reality.

3.3.2. ‘Youth on the Move’

The “Youth on the Move” Flagship initiative is a continuation of the ongoing youth strategy and presents a specific framework for youth employment, launched in 2010\(^31\). It is designed as a compre-
hensive package of policy initiatives on education and employment for young people in Europe and is monitored by the “existing arrangements for the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in Education and Training (‘ET 2020’), the European Employment Strategy and the EU youth strategy. The main idea is still to make it easier for young workers to move and work within the Union and acquire new skills and competencies. This should be supported by more transparency and information on available jobs for young jobseekers by developing a system on labour and skills demand all over Europe. For instance, ‘Your First EURES Job’ as a pilot project and the ‘European Vacancy Monitor’ are new mobility instruments which should be managed by EURES, the European job mobility network of Public Employment Services. The allocation of responsibilities has remained the same, so that the employment guidelines are the framework for coordinated policy actions by which member states are responsible for the implementation at the national level. At the same time the Commission supports member states in the “design and implementation of actions through funding and the open methods of coordination, notably through reinforced mutual learning and peer reviews with national governments, regional and local policy makers and other stakeholders and practitioners, as well as through regular monitoring of, and co-operation on, ESF programmes”32. The initiative consists of three headline targets such as Help to get the first job and start a career, support youth at risk, and provide adequate social safety nets for young people.

As mentioned before, public employment services are identified as important players, especially in searching for jobs and facilitating the entrance into the labour market. In this respect the Commission strengthens a bilateral and regional policy dialogue on youth employment and is committed to establish a new mutual learning programme for European public employment services. Further the communication stresses to modernize social security systems, so that young people must receive an appropriate access to social benefits, even if they are not entitled to benefits. However, it should be ensured that benefits are only awarded to young people if they are engaged in active job search or in further education or training. A further aspect dealt with the “wage arrangements and non-wage labour costs that should not contribute to precariousness” 33. To prevent the situation of a segmented labour market, where many young workers experience a sequence of temporary jobs alternating with unemployment, it should move to a more stable, open-ended contract and should address incomplete contributions to pension provisions. After identifying the general objectives and priorities, ‘Youth on the Move’ presents the first concrete framework for youth employment that focuses on ensuring “that all young people are in a job, further that education or activation measures are provided within four months of leaving school, and providing this as a ‘Youth Guarantee’”34. In the next part we would like to discuss the development of youth related policies and the current progress on initiatives and present our findings.

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Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union.

32 ibid. p.21.
33 ibid. p.16.
34 ibid. p.18.
4. Discussion and Conclusion

Youth unemployment has been taken into account by EU institutions since the last decade, thus different initiatives have been adopted to take steps against youth unemployment in order to avoid social exclusion among young people. In result of that, the discussions about youth and employment have had a strong influence on the knowledge-based discourse about the situation of young people in the labour market. The EU institutions, especially the EES, play a significant role here as a promoter of ideological ideas and concepts, they shape the terms in which the problem of unemployment is discussed and set indicators to quantify and monitor youth at the EU level. Since 2005, the Commission has been consistently improving the situation of young people in the labour market by collecting statistic data and organizing peer review seminars and mutual learning programmes. In spite of these public policies, youth unemployment is on the increase. Since the economic recession youth unemployment started to rise significantly, so that in most member states youth unemployment rates are two or three times higher than adult unemployment rates. Although youth unemployment is one of the most striking problems since the early eighties, it is still a problem awaiting a coordinated solution within the EU. Indeed, European policy measures related to youth do not achieve their objectives, even despite the fact that some of these policies are explicitly targeted at youth, as, for instance, the current initiative “Youth on the Move”. This paper argues that these attempts distract from the fact that there is no coherent strategy against youth unemployment at the EU level. In fact, our analysis has demonstrated that a) youth is a fairly new target of EU policies and that b) the various policies dealing with youth lack a coherent coordination. Furthermore the EU strategy is underpinned by a vague and weak concept, so that c) there is no well-defined youth unemployment regime at the EU level. However, while there is no coherent strategy or regime, d) the disjoint initiatives and policies tend to follow a specific model, corresponding with a regime of labour market centred protection that discriminates between labour market insiders and outsiders by combining a rigid labour market regulation with weak social policies. In the following I would like to discuss the results:

Youth is a fairly new target of EU policies

Youth unemployment was not always seen as a main problem at the EU level. Only when youth unemployment rates rose as a consequence of the economic crisis of spring 2008, this issue caught attention at the EU level and turned into a serious problem. In 2009, the EU Parliament promoted the slogan “Let’s turn Generation Lost to Generation Hope”. In the course of the EU 2020 Strategy, “youth unemployment has gained a lot of importance with regard to the problem of unemployment.” In the course of the EU 2020 Strategy, “youth unemployment has been recognized

38 European Parliament. Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (2010). Draft Opinion on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship, and apprenticeship status [[(2009/2221(INI))].
39 Interview: European Youth Forum.

[11]
by fairly high decision makers and policy makers\textsuperscript{40} as an important policy topic, and is becoming more important with regard to growth and employment. In line with the Lisbon Strategy and the follow up EU Strategy 2020 specific fields of action (such as education and employment) have been highly prioritized and increasingly emerged into a package of joint objectives. Following these objectives, the current EU initiatives “Youth on the Move” and “New Skills for New Jobs” proclaim the need to promote a high mobile youth generation, whose skills and qualifications have to be strongly adapted to the needs of the labour market within the European Union. The objective is to make it easier for young workers to move and work within the Union and acquire new skills and competences which are requested by the labour market.

The various policies dealing with youth lack a coherent coordination.

Even though the problem of youth (un)employment is recognized as an important issue, youth-related solutions and policy proposals have not been clarified. At the political level, more clarity is needed on who takes the responsibility of coordinating and implementing the initiatives. On the one hand, the coordination of youth employment at the EU level is not sorted out because the youth OMC does not focus explicitly on employment and the EES has no specific policies related to youth – with the consequence that both OMCs work separately. On the other hand, the initiative “Youth on the Move” is above all a “desire of the Commission”\textsuperscript{41}, and thus not well adapted to the societal reality at the level of member states. While it presents proactive ideas to fight against youth unemployment, the initiative is confronted with language barriers and problems of a limited access to national labour markets and social security systems, with the result that job mobility across borders remains a huge challenge for young people. Moreover, the challenge is not only a political one, but also a financial one. Apart from the European Social Funds, there are no other alternative funding schemes proposed by the Commission. Finally, all responsibilities are related to the member states with their country specific labour market and employment policy. This leads to the conclusion that the EU communications are underpinned by a vague and weak concept, implying general headlines and recommendations which can be interpreted in various ways.

There is no well-defined youth unemployment regime at the EU level.

This problem is reflected especially within the employment guidelines and annual recommendations of the EES. Despite the fact that the Commission gives country specific recommendations to member states (e.g. the advice to focus on issues like facilitating the transition into employment, more effective employment services, integration of migrants, quality and efficiency of education, and tackling segmentation in the labour market\textsuperscript{42}), all existing recommendations and employment guidelines formulate a generalized approach for the working and unemployed population. Youth is not seen as an independent group with specific solutions, but rather as one of many other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, such as older workers, women, migrants and people with handicaps\textsuperscript{43}. The only

\textsuperscript{40} Interview: European Youth Forum.
\textsuperscript{41} Interview with EMCO Member of Germany.
measure specifically for this target group consists of a job guarantee, i.e. every unemployed young person is supposed to be offered a new start before reaching four months of unemployment, as compared to twelve months for unemployed adults. Hence, the guidelines within the EES have a broader scope and include different target groups. Consequently, the youth employment strategy is part of a generalized strategy of labour market inclusion and activation, which implies that no youth specific solutions or specified policies are developed. At this stage it is not possible to clarify which type of unemployment regime is being established at the EU level, because there is no coherent strategy, and possible changes might occur in the future. However, a closer look at particular elements of the European initiatives, such as “Youth on the Move” and “New Skills for New Jobs”, allow us to identify a specific path which these disjointed initiatives and policies seem to follow.

The disjointed initiatives and policies tend to prioritize specific areas and follow a specific path.

The current strategy for youth (un)employment can be outlined with a few guiding keywords: education, matched skills by training, and integration into the labour market. Within this discourse, one core idea circulates: “the better equipped you are, the more training you have, the easiest it’s going to be to find a job”\textsuperscript{44}. All policy responses at the EU level to the current crisis related to youth unemployment are committed to this objective. Therefore, the only specific recommendation related to youth entails ensuring that young people graduating from secondary and tertiary education possess the skills and competences needed to make a rapid and successful transition to employment\textsuperscript{45}. Priority is placed on the need to acquire and develop the necessary mix of knowledge, skills, and aptitudes in order to succeed in the labour. With this in mind, it is obvious that the aim is so improve the personal situation of young people by matching their qualifications and expectations in regard to the labour market. Hence, labour market inclusion is the dominant objective of the EU’s strategy to combat youth unemployment. Less emphasis is put on social security. The Commission stresses the need to modernize social security systems in order to “address the precarious situation of young people”\textsuperscript{46} by establishing an access to social benefits. However, any regulation should stipulate a conditionality to ensure that benefits are only awarded to young person who are engaged in active job search or in further education or training\textsuperscript{47}. Consequently, activation is the primary objective of any policy measure regulating the access to social security systems and the general participation in society. This result leads us to the assumption that the current EU youth unemployment strategy overlaps with certain parts of a regime of precarious protection that provide a weak system of social provisions and stresses labour market inclusion by high rates of flexibilization.

\textsuperscript{44} Interview with EAPN.
\textsuperscript{46} [COM(2010) 477 final] European Commission - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 17–18.
5. References