



Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023-2025 Albania

*As per the approved decision of the council of ministers Nr. 173, date 24.3.2023, amended by
DCM nr. 68, date 29.01.2025*

Progress report 2024

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Abbreviation

ALMPs	Active Labour Market Policies
AQF	Albanian Qualifications Framework
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
EIP	Economic and Investment Plan
EU	European Union
EU4SI	EU for Social Inclusion
EU4LMI	EU for Labour Market Inclusion
EWS	Early Warning Systems
ICT	Information and Communication
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INSTAT	Albanian Institute of Statistics
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MoECI	Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation
MoEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoSYCh	Ministry of State for Youth and Children
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NESS	National Employment and Skills Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NYA	National Youth Agency
PES	Public Employment Services
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YG	Youth Guarantee
YGIP	Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

Executive summary

The 2024 progress report highlights the main achievements of the second year of implementation of **the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023-2025 (YGIP)** through the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 173, dated 24.03.2023, as an Annex to the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030. The YGIP outlines a comprehensive framework for large-scale reforms and measures across multiple policy areas, aiming to enhance youth employment and inclusion efforts. The YGIP serves as a framework for the initial **pilot phase**, which was **launched on 27 October 2023** in the three pilot municipalities of Tirana, Shkodra, and Vlora. These municipalities were selected based on their service delivery capacity and socio-economic factors, ensuring an effective and scalable implementation before the plan's regional and nationwide expansion.

To allow for the full completion of the reforms and measures outlined in the YGIP, **the implementation period was extended until the end of 2025** through the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 68, dated 29.01.2025. This extension provides additional time to strengthen institutional frameworks, improve outreach efforts, and enhance service delivery in preparation for the regional and nationwide expansion. The expansion will be supported by the **Operational Programme EU for Youth Employment 2024-2027**, a €63.48 million program funded through IPA III, with €50 million contributed by the EU and €13.48 million from the Albanian Government, reinforcing Albania's commitment to youth employment and economic inclusion.

This progress report has been prepared by the **Ministry of Economy and Innovation (MEI)**, as the **National Coordinator of the Youth Guarantee**, with the technical support of the **National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES)**, as the **national executive coordinator**, with input from all the relevant institutions, the Ministry of Education (MA), Ministry of Health and Social Protection, State Minister for Youth and Children, the National Youth Agency (NYA), and INSTAT, with the support of the EU4Youth project, financed by the European Union and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF. This progress report summarises the implementation progress of initiatives and reforms for the period 2023–2024, reflecting the results reported by the implementing institutions. An overview of the situation is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOUR PHASES OF THE YOUTH GUARANTEE PLAN IN ALBANIA, 2023–2024

Phases of the Youth Guarantee	Total Number of planned reforms and initiatives	Completed	In Progress	Not initiated
Mapping	11	5	6	0
Outreach	6	2	4	0
Preparatory	9	6	3	0
Offer	20	12	7	1
Total	46	25	20	1

Out of a total of 46 planned initiatives and reforms, 25 have been completed, 20 are ongoing, and 1 has not yet started. The European Commission has suggested starting the tracking in 2025 for young people who were integrated into the Youth Guarantee in 2024. This makes sense given the overall implementation timeline, as only a small number of young people reach the initial six-month EMCO monitoring point within the same year. As a result, tracking outcomes at this stage would not yet provide a reliable or representative picture.

Section 1: Introduction to the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023-2025

1.1. Updated NEET profile in Albania

The recent evolution of the labour market in Albania has been positive, including with regard to the age group 15–29 covered by the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP). **The youth labour market participation rate strengthened by 2.8 percentage points** between 2020 and 2024, the employment rate also increased by 3.2 percentage points to 44.4%, and the unemployment rate fell from 21% to 18.9% (Table 1). The long-term unemployment rate among young people stood at 12.8% in 2024. However, despite the progress achieved, the **low level of youth participation in the labour market and high unemployment remain structural problems** that require increased attention from public policies aimed at youth.

Table 1 – Labour market indicators for the 15–29 age group

15 – 29	2020	2023	2024
Labor force participation rate	52%	53,5%	54,8%
Employment rate	41,2%	41,9%	44,4%
Unemployment rate	21%	21,7%	18,9%

Source of information: Labour Force Survey, 2020, 2023, 2024

The labour market activity rate and the employment rate reveal significant inequality between men and women in the 15–29 age group. Labor market participation is 11.7 percentage points lower for women, and the employment rate is also 9.6 percentage points lower for women. Gender inequality in the youth labour market is a problem of considerable magnitude that active employment policies must address.

In 2024, **the NEET youth rate stood at 22.2%, falling significantly compared to the 27.9% recorded in 2020**. The breakdown by gender shows a difference of 5 percentage points between men (19.7%) and women (24.7%). In 2020, this difference was 6%, highlighting a slight reduction in this inequality. Thus, although the percentage of NEET youth has evolved very favourably over the past five years, the rate remains high and continues to penalize women significantly more.

In 2024, the exercise of characterizing NEET youth that supported the development of the initial YGIP was updated. The characterization now developed is based on the Census 2023 data for the total population of the 15–29 age group and the existing NEET rate. There is a total of 105,861 young NEETs in Albania, of which 49,966 are young men and 55,895 are young women.

In 2023, **48.9 percent of young NEETs were unemployed for a total of 51,766¹. The remaining 51.1 percent are outside of the labour force for a total of 54,095.** From those outside of the labour force, 2.0 percent are discouraged workers, 13.4 percent are inactive due to family care responsibilities, and 24 percent are in the group of other inactive. In 2020, inactive NEETs accounted for 65%. The table below shows the division of the NEET population by group and its evolution since 2021.

Table 2 – Division of the young NEET population in subgroups

15 – 29	2023
Unemployed	49%
Short-term unemployed	15%
Long-term unemployed	34%
Re-entrants	7%
Inactive due to family responsibilities	13%
Illness and disability	5%
Discouraged workers	2%
Other inactive	24%
<i>Source of information: Labour Force Survey, 2023</i>	

Compared to the data from the profiling exercise carried out in 2021, there has been a **significant reduction in the share of inactive NEETs** (-13.9 percentage points) and, consequently, within this group, in the share of discouraged workers, which fell from 15.2% to 2%. **The share of inactive NEETs due to family responsibilities has remained relatively stable**, decreasing by 2.2 percentage points between the 2020 data and the 2023 data. NEETs included in the “other inactive” category remain high, although they have declined by 4.6 percentage points.

The analysis carried out allows us to highlight the following:

- The unemployment rate among young NEETs has increased by 13.9 percentage points during the period 2020-2023 reducing inactivity rates by the same percentage.

¹ The absolute numbers are estimates using the total number of the population 15-29 years from Census 2023, applying the NEET rates calculated by the LFS, and the labour market rates calculated by the LFS.

- The unemployment rate for young men NEETs is 60.9 percent compared to 39.0 percent of young women NEETs. Although the unemployment rate of young women NEETs is considerably below that of young men NEETs, the opposite is true for inactivity rates.
- The share of long-term unemployment among unemployed NEETs has increased over the period 2020–2023. In 2023, long-term unemployed represent 68.6 per cent of unemployed NEETs, compared with 58.2 per cent in 2020.
- The rates of young, discouraged NEETs show a decreasing trend (from 40.1 percent in 2021 to 35.5 percent in 2022).
- The rate of young NEETs that are inactive due to family responsibilities remains high. Gender differences show startling differences due to inactivity as a result of family care responsibilities. Young women NEETs are inactive due to family care responsibilities at a rate of 25.3 percent compared to 0.2 percent of young men NEETs.
- The rates of re-entrants are very low at 0.1 per cent in 2023 down from 0.4 per cent in 2022 and 2021.

The educational attainment of young NEETs shows that in 2023, 35% percent have basic education, 44% percent have secondary education, while 21% percent have higher education. Since 2020, the proportion of NEETs with secondary education at most has increased by **2 percentage points**.

Table 3 – Educational attainment of young NEETs

15 – 29	2023
Mandatory Education	35%
Secondary Education	44%
Higher Education	21%

Gender differences show that young women NEETs have greater educational attainment compared young men NEETs. Data on educational attainment shows that 28 percent for young women NEETs have higher education compared to 12 percent for young men NEETs. The rates of secondary education show an 8-percentage points gap between young men NEETs and young women NEETs. 46% of young men NEETs have secondary education compared to 38 percent of young women NEETs. The rates of basic education are the same for young men and women NEETs (34 percent).

Although the recent evolution of the labour market shows a positive trend, structural problems affecting the younger age group persist. The labour force participation rate for the 15–29 age group stood at 53.5% in 2023 compared to 52% in 2020. Compared to 2018, the youth labour force participation rate has increased by 3.4 percentage points, averaging about 0.5 percentage point over the past six years. The employment rate was 44% in 2023 compared to 41.2% in 2020. The employment rate for the 15–29 age group has increased by 5.5 percentage points since 2018. Youth unemployment remains the highest of all, standing at 21.7% in 2023 compared to 21% in 2020 and 23.1% in 2018.

1.2. Youth Guarantee in Albania

The European Commission's 2022 Report on Albania recognizes the government's commitment to establishing a youth guarantee scheme, reflected in the adoption of the Brdo Declaration on ensuring sustainable labour market integration for young people on 8 July 2021. In line with this commitment, Albania aims to gradually implement the Youth Guarantee scheme, as outlined in the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030 (NESS). This strategy specifically targets young people “Not in Education, Employment, or Training” (NEET), and is in line with the objectives of the Western Balkans Youth Guarantee, as part of the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) Flagship no. 10.

The main objective of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) is to provide unemployed and inactive young people, registered at employment offices, with a quality employment, training, or education opportunities within a period of four months from the date of registration. The programme will primarily focus on the NEET population aged 15-29, given their high unemployment and inactivity rates. By addressing the challenges faced by youth in accessing suitable jobs and acquiring relevant skills for the labour market, the Youth Guarantee aims to alleviate the lack of future prospects that often leads to an increased need to emigrate. To facilitate the successful implementation of the Youth Guarantee, Albania has adopted the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023-2024 (YGIP).

The key phases outlined in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Albania are:

Mapping. The mapping phase will consolidate reforms and initiatives aimed at improving the availability and systematic use of data on young NEETs, alongside early intervention measures designed to prevent young people from becoming NEET. This phase will focus on strengthening the knowledge base as a foundation for improved policies and more effective action, addressing the need for a broader and more systematic set of data to better characterize young NEETs in Albania. To this end, this part of the Plan includes the reform of information-gathering strategies to ensure a regular and systematic approach. In addition, an integrated approach is envisaged, building on piloted methodologies to prevent students from leaving secondary education early and becoming NEET.

Outreach. The outreach phase prioritizes a localized approach to identifying and registering inactive NEETs, which is central to the long-term success of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Albania. A key area of reform under this phase is the establishment and activation of local cooperation networks, alongside the engagement of new partners in the implementation of employment and training policies. This phase aims to address the significant levels of inactivity among young people aged 15–29 by strengthening institutional outreach, particularly through municipalities and NGOs. Achieving this will require reforms that build the capacity of local actors and support the implementation of coordinated outreach strategies at local level. The outreach phase also includes the development of a communication strategy to support the effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Preparation. The reforms under the preparation phase are intended to strengthen the implementation of the preparatory measures and offers of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. In this context, particular emphasis is placed on building capacity to deliver quality offers and to enhance counselling and guidance services, in order to better respond to individual needs and expectations. Effective activation of young NEETs requires targeted and responsive interventions. Counselling and guidance—both educational and professional—are widely recognized as gaps in the implementation of employment, education, and training policies at various levels. Reforms in this

phase will therefore also address the adjustments required within the NAES structure, as well as capacity-building needs of the entities involved in implementation, including public agencies and private-sector actors that currently lack sufficient experience and human resources.

Offer. The final phase of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan brings together the key programmes to be mobilized to support young people in re-entering education and training or transitioning into employment. In the area of employment policies, the primary focus is on strengthening and consolidating recently adopted policy instruments, with particular attention to their effective targeting toward Youth Guarantee priority groups through improved procedures and the empowerment of implementing actors. To this end, the phase also considers the diversification of initial and continuing education and training pathways, alongside the planned development of an apprenticeship system, with the aim of strengthening links with employers and better aligning skills development with labour market needs.

The approved YGIP 2023-2025 is in line with the strategic frameworks described above and provides for policy interventions in the following areas:

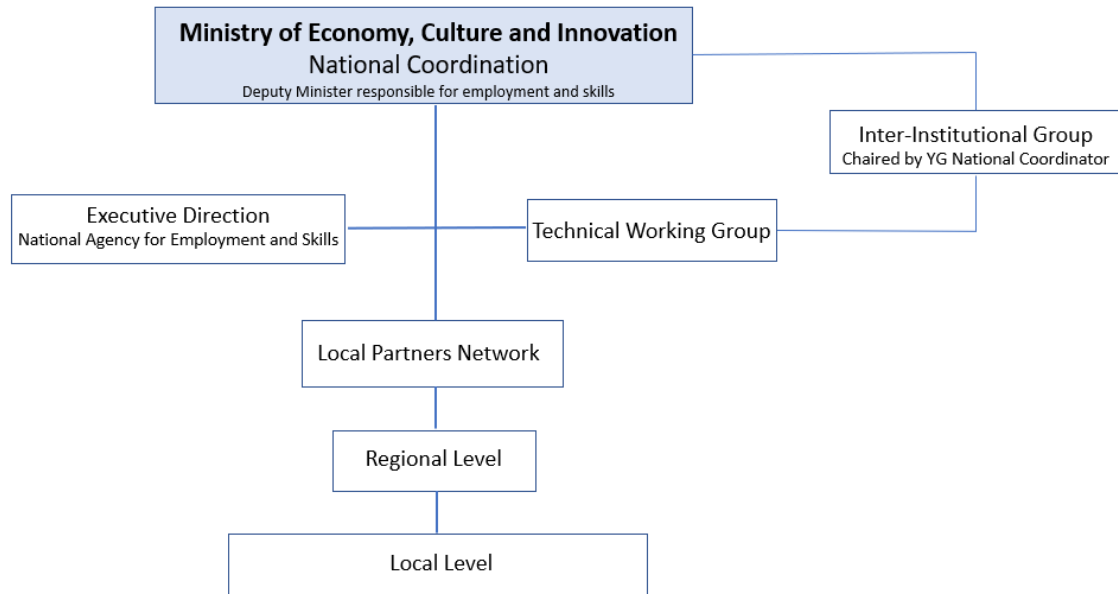
- (1) promoting information and activation strategies for young NEETs supported by local partnerships that are open to institutional diversity and value proximity to young people;
- (2) strengthening the role of school and vocational guidance and counselling in the mediation processes that govern access to employment and education and training programmes, as well as in matching job seekers with job opportunities;
- (3) consolidate the portfolio of Active Labour Market Policies and considering making reforms concerning this policy area;
- (4) strengthen the link between education and training on the one hand and labour market dynamics on the other; and
- (5) create incentives and strengthen further continuous training opportunities that offer young people the possibility of a second qualification.

This plan is guiding the initial pilot phase, which was launched on 27 October 2023 in selected municipalities before expanding nationwide. These municipalities were chosen based on their capacity for efficient service delivery and socio-economic factors. The pilot municipalities are: Shkodra (North), Tirana (Central), Vlora (South). The target groups include individuals with varying skill levels, such as graduates, youth with limited qualifications, and unemployed youth, using a “first come, first served” approach. It encompasses new registrants and currently registered unemployed jobseekers who wish to participate in the Youth Guarantee programme. An extended pilot, would also include other adjacent municipalities, which are part of the same regions.

1.3. Institutional Framework

The YGIP proposed governance model is under the coordination of Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation as the government institution in charge of employment and vocational training policies, as well as coordinates a broad set of institutions from the employment, vocational training, education and youth fields. The implementing arrangements will also involve the participation of multi-level players, as municipalities, and mobilize a strong contribution of NGOs, mainly those in the field of supporting youth (particularly those in vulnerable situation). Additionally, institutional arrangements in the YGIP, foresee the functioning of a coordination and monitoring platform (Monitoring Committee) which provides for the integration of the different relevant policy sectors.

YOUTH GUARANTEE GOVERNANCE MODEL



National Coordinator

Overall coordination of the Youth Guarantee rests with the Minister of Economy, Culture and Innovation. The Deputy Minister responsible for employment and skills serves as the National Youth Guarantee Coordinator. In this role, the National Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Plan, providing strategic guidance to NAES (through the Executive Director), ensuring monitoring and reporting to the Prime Minister and the European Commission on progress achieved under the Youth Guarantee, overseeing the monitoring and evaluation system, and chairing meetings of both the inter-institutional group and the technical working group.

Executive Coordination

The executive coordination of the Youth Guarantee Plan is assumed by the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), and the Executive Coordinator of the Plan is the General Director of the Agency. The Executive Coordinator is responsible for managing the Plan, coordinating the implementation of the instruments included therein, and ensuring the overall coordination of the local approach.

Inter-institutional Group

The inter-institutional working group is mainly a consultancy body and brings together all the government sectors that play a relevant role in youth policies. It is responsible for providing guidance and supervising the implementation of the Youth Guarantee scheme in Albania. The inter-institutional working group also plays a role in monitoring the implementation of the YGIP and reviews any changes that may be made to this plan.

Technical Working Group

The executive steering function of the program is supported by a working group of a technical nature that brings together representatives of the entities with responsibility for implementing the policy measures included in the plan. Its main responsibilities are:

- Ensure the implementation of the measures under its responsibility
- Produce information required for the monitoring and evaluation of the measures under the responsibility of the member entities
- Report to the National Coordinator and the Monitoring Committee on information required by the Youth Guarantee monitoring system and any evaluation exercises undertaken
- Make adjustments to the portfolio of measures under its responsibility in line with guidelines defined at the coordination and monitoring levels
- Supervise the functioning of the Local Partnership Networks

The Technical Working Group operates at two levels of intervention: the policy coordination level, where political priorities are discussed, negotiated, and agreed; and the technical level, where reforms and initiatives are designed and implementation aspects are addressed. The Technical Working Group (TWG) plays a key role in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP). Its role is defined by a Prime Minister's Order, which stipulates that the Technical Working Group:

- Supervises the implementation of the Plan and prepares updates and developments for submission to the Inter-institutional Working Group for review.
- Is responsible for implementing the policy measures included in the Plan and proposes periodic adjustments to support the progress of implementation.
- Reports to the National Coordinator and the Inter-institutional Working Group on all information required by the Youth Guarantee monitoring system.

In addition, the TWG has responsibilities related to the supervision and monitoring of the activities of local networks. As implementation progresses, the role of the TWG will further expand, particularly in supporting updates to the implementation approach, refining tools, and contributing to the development of new instruments.

Section 2. Detailed Progress report

This section of the report provides detailed information on the progress of implementation of the planned reforms and initiatives, categorised by the phases of YG implementation.

2.1. Mapping

Key results during the reporting period

a. **Improved statistical profiling of NEET youth.** INSTAT has initiated the preparation of an annual profile of NEET youth aged 15–29. Going forward, there is a need to further strengthen this profiling by integrating additional indicators into the Labour Force Survey. In 2024, INSTAT processed annual NEET data for the period 2021–2023, based on the Labour Force Survey and in line with the formal requests addressed to the institution. Calculations were carried out using the base population from the 2011 Population Census. These data will be updated in line with the results of the 2023

Census once the relevant Labour Force Survey indicators are finalised. (Initiative No. 1 and Reform No. 1)

b. **Establishment of the Youth Guarantee pilot framework and monitoring system.** In 2023, NAES prepared the Initial Action Plan for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee pilot phase, identifying three pilot municipalities: Tirana, Shkodra, and Vlora. An Operational Document for the piloting of the Youth Guarantee was also developed, including monitoring standards in line with EMCO requirements. In 2024, as part of the assessment of NAES's information system for Youth Guarantee implementation and monitoring, a Monitoring Framework was developed and EMCO indicators were generated on a regular basis. A dedicated Youth Guarantee module was created within the IT system. In addition, on 27 December 2024, the methodological guideline for service delivery under the Youth Guarantee was formally approved. (Reform No. 3)

c. **Implementation and expansion of the Early Warning System for school dropout prevention.** During the period 2023–2024, the Early Warning System (EWS) was implemented in 14 vocational education schools and 84 general education schools across several regions, with the aim of preventing early school leaving. In this context, 75 teachers, 836 school staff members, and 166 secondary school principals were trained. A practical guide for school leaders and teachers was developed on integrating social and emotional learning into the nine-year education cycle, through collaboration between National Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education and UNICEF. In 2024, the EWS was further expanded to 12 public vocational education and training providers in the Tirana, Shkodra, and Vlora regions. NAES developed curricula, training manuals, and implementation guidelines for the system, as well as tools to promote social and emotional learning. Quality assurance and self-monitoring instruments were also prepared to support implementation in VET institutions. More than 200 vocational school staff members, including teachers of general and vocational subjects, development unit representatives, psychologists, and social workers, were trained and mentored. In addition, over 150 VET students were mentored to develop project ideas focused on dropout prevention and peer-based activities. Six NAES staff members were also trained to monitor EWS implementation and the social-emotional learning component. (Initiative No. 6 and Reform No. 7)

d. **Enhanced financial support for vocational education students.** In 2023, following a proposal by NAES, DCM No. 666 of 10 October 2019 was amended to increase financial support for students in vocational education. The amendments expanded the scope of support to include transport scholarships for distances over 5 km, performance-based support, a dedicated 50 percent scholarship for girls in VET, a 100 percent scholarship for girls enrolled in non-traditional fields, and an expanded list of VET programmes eligible for scholarships. In parallel, the Ministry of Education and Sports continued its efforts to reduce educational disadvantage by expanding scholarship schemes in line with the amended decision. (Initiative No. 8)

e. **Strengthening career guidance and quality assurance in schools.** For the 2024–2025 school year, dedicated coordinators for career guidance and quality assurance were appointed to support teaching staff and students. These coordinator roles are formal positions with a specific reduced teaching load. To support the transition of Grade 9 students into upper secondary and vocational education, National Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education, in cooperation with National Agency of Pre-university education, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Sports, developed support materials for use within the Education Management Information System (EMIS). These materials support the completion of student orientation forms. In this context, 56 coordinators from Regional and Local Education Directorates were trained and subsequently trained class teachers and school leaders nationwide. The tools developed include student interest and

aptitude forms, an orientation form for upper secondary education, and an information letter for parents. These instruments have contributed to more structured information for students and parents and have supported informed decision-making on post-compulsory education pathways.

f. **Institutionalisation of career guidance services.** The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education developed two dedicated guides to support career guidance coordinators, one for lower secondary education and one for upper secondary education. Informative sessions were also organised to support planning and implementation of career orientation activities across all levels of pre-university education. At system level, the Ministry of Education and Sports strengthened career guidance services by establishing dedicated committees in primary and secondary schools, organising awareness-raising activities, and piloting the “Career Education” programme in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana. This process was further reinforced through the approval of the national career guidance guideline (Order No. 600, dated 19 October 2023). (Initiatives No. 9 and 10)

g. **Establishment of Development Units in VET institutions.** In line with Instruction No. 14 of 27 May 2021 issued by the Ministry of Finance and Economy, Development Units were established in vocational education and training institutions to provide career guidance and counselling services. In cooperation with UNICEF, a network of professionals was created and activated in three priority economic sectors: Information and Communication Technology, Agriculture, and Hospitality and Tourism. In pre-university education, the Ministry of Education and Sports continued to improve career guidance services through the establishment of school-based committees, the organisation of orientation activities, and the piloting of programmes such as “Career Education” in partnership with the Municipality of Tirana. Within this framework, UNICEF supported the development of functional and social-emotional skills for 486 VET students. In addition, 245 lower secondary students participated in promotional activities delivered by VET students, fostering peer interaction and positive role modelling. (Initiatives No. 9 and 10)

h. **Strengthening career guidance coordination and labour market linkages.** Following Instruction No. 759/2024 of the Ministry of Finance and Economy, all VET institutions established Development Units with a dedicated career guidance coordinator. This coordinator ensures that students, trainees, parents, and the wider community have access to up-to-date information on vocational qualifications, labour market developments, and career opportunities. The coordinator also supports students in selecting appropriate profiles and integrating career education into the curriculum. NAES, in cooperation with the National Agency for VET and Qualifications (NAVETQ), developed a dedicated career guidance guideline defining the roles and functions of Development Units and coordinators, as well as their link to institutional strategic planning. To further strengthen the link between vocational education and labour market needs, NAES initiated the creation of professional networks in ICT, Agriculture, and Hospitality and Tourism through the AFPro initiative in selected VET schools. (Initiatives No. 9 and 10)

i. **Medium-term planning in VET provision.** In 2023, NAES organised a series of regional meetings on medium-term planning of vocational education and training provision, aiming to better align educational offerings with current and projected labour market needs. As a result, vocational schools reviewed their programmes and opened new courses for the 2023–2024 school year in line with regional demand. NAES is currently preparing a guideline to support schools in aligning education planning with labour market needs. (Initiative No. 11)

j. **Skills Needs Analysis and Labour Market Observatory** In 2024, MECI and NAES launched the national Skills Needs Analysis process, aimed at identifying current and future skills demand. The analysis will support closer alignment between education and training provision and employer needs,

contributing directly to workforce preparation and effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee. In parallel, an impact evaluation of employment promotion programmes implemented during 2021–2024 was initiated. These products are being developed as part of the Labour Market Observatory, a system designed to collect, process, and analyse administrative data from relevant institutions, including the General Tax Directorate and INSTAT. The Observatory will provide in-depth analysis of key labour market and skills indicators by occupation, gender, and region, with a planned launch in 2025. (Reform No. 2)

Reforms and initiatives of the Mapping phase that require further attention

The following reforms and initiatives have not yet started or require increased attention going forward:

- a. The preparation of a periodic national report mapping the situation of youth in Albania by official data producers remains necessary. (Reform No. 1)
- b. The Early Warning System needs to be fully institutionalised and supported with concrete resources, including budget and staff. Pre-university education providers should generate detailed reports on students at risk of dropout and design targeted programmes for these young people, potentially delivered by civil society organisations at local level. (Initiatives No. 6 and 7)
- c. A clear activation and referral system is needed to define how local actors identify and refer young people to the Youth Guarantee scheme.
- d. The youth and youth organisations database foreseen by the Youth Law is currently under conceptual development but still needs to be fully developed and operationalised. (Initiative No. 5)

Overview of the current status of reforms and initiatives

Nr	Name of the reform/initiative	Completed	Initiated	Not initiated
Planned Reforms				
1	Including additional indicators into the LFS to better characterize young NEET to be included in the LFS		√	
2	Develop a system to assess labour market trends (1)		√	
3	Summary assessment of NAES Information System (PES)	√		
Planned Initiatives				
4	Develop an annual basis assessment of the NEET profile in Albania		√	
5	Develop an open NEET pre-registration system allowing to collect (on a volunteer basis) additional information about the young NEET. This will be based in an online YG dedicated portal. The pre-registration system should be integrated with the NEET platform. This initiative can be supported on the database foreseen in the Law on Youth which according to the MSYC-being developed.	√		
6	Scale up the piloted Early Warning System already developed and tested. This monitoring system will allow		√	

Nr	Name of the reform/initiative	Completed	Initiated	Not initiated
	to assess the risk of failure and dropout after compulsory education. (2)			
7	Offer learning programmes aiming to help flagged students.		√	
8	Assessment of the Implementation of social support measures to reduce disadvantage to access the education and training system. To extend the student at risk scholarships through using a funding that MOES provides to Municipalities.		√	
9	Reinforcement of counselling and guidance in VET (mainly after compulsory education)	√		
10	Capacity building for career guidance in education. This initiative is designed with the aim of reducing early school leaving	√		
11	Pilot an integrated implementation of several assessment tools to identify labour market needs concerning qualifications and job opportunities	√		

2.2. Outreach

Key results during the reporting period

a. **Establishment and capacity-building of Local Youth Councils.** In March 2023 and 2024, all 61 Local Youth Councils were formally established. Targeted efforts were undertaken to strengthen their capacities through technical assistance and the development of guidance manuals. Local Youth Councils and Municipal Youth Focal Points were systematically informed about the Youth Guarantee and its programmes, including the Youth Guarantee portal and registration processes. Outreach activities were carried out through a summer camp, in-person and online meetings with 53 Local Youth Councils and municipal youth workers, as well as four education, training, and employment fairs organised in the municipalities of Dibër, Gjirokastër, Fier, and Berat. The National Youth Organisation has not yet been established. (Reform No. 2)

b. **Broad consultations on amendments to the Law on Youth.** Throughout 2024, the Minister of State for Youth and Children led an extensive consultation process involving more than 80 representatives from central and local public institutions, civil society organisations, the National Youth Council, Local Youth Councils, umbrella youth organisations, student councils, donors and development partners active in the youth sector, as well as youth experts and researchers. The consultations aimed to identify the need for amendments to Law No. 75/2019 “On Youth” and were conducted through structured meetings across 11 municipalities, supported by the dedicated working group, as well as through a three-day thematic bootcamp. In addition, written consultations were carried out via email and through the National Youth Network during the period 27 November to 25 December 2024, enabling civil society actors to submit formal proposals.

c. **Proposed amendments to the Youth Law.** The proposed amendments to the Youth Law aim to strengthen institutional mechanisms, introduce a legal definition of NEET youth, expand the mandates of youth councils to explicitly include vulnerable groups, recognise informal youth groups

as eligible for funding, and formally mandate multifunctional youth centres and national programmes in employment, entrepreneurship, culture, and civic engagement. These changes are designed to align the national youth governance framework more closely with European Union standards.

d. **Development of the Youth Guarantee Outreach Model.** A key milestone in 2024 was the development of the Youth Guarantee Outreach Model, which introduces a coordinated, proximity-based approach to service delivery through the establishment of a Local Partnership Network. This network brings together municipalities, education and social institutions, youth organisations, local employment services, and social partners. NAES and NYA jointly developed the framework of the model, defining its core intervention pillars, the roles of involved actors, the structure of the local partnership network, and approaches to securing financial resources. The process included three inclusive consultations with local stakeholders in Vlora, Tirana, and Shkodra, involving municipal institutions, civil society organisations, Local Youth Councils, and social partners, with the objective of identifying effective cooperation mechanisms. The model also introduces the new role of the “Youth Mediator” within youth organisations, acting as a bridge between NEET young people and available services. The model was presented and discussed at a national workshop on 7 November 2024 with the participation of local stakeholders and international experts from ETF, Slovenia and Estonia. Following further consultations with NAES and NYA, the model was presented to the Youth Guarantee Technical Working Group on 3 December 2024. Operational guidelines for the Local Partnership Network are currently under development.

e. **Intervention pillars of the Outreach Model.** The Outreach Model is structured around three complementary areas of intervention:

- i. **Early prevention**, aimed at reducing school dropout and strengthening educational success;
- ii. **Identification and activation**, through follow-up systems, data exchange, and partnerships with youth organisations;
- iii. **Counselling and guidance**, offering personalised services, motivational support, and referrals to specialised employment and social services.

f. **Grant mechanisms supporting youth outreach.** With regard to grant mechanisms supporting the outreach phase, the National Youth Agency implements a grant scheme for youth organisations and young people. To date, four calls for proposals have been launched. These calls have primarily supported youth organisations in outreach, information provision, and youth engagement activities. While these projects are not directly designed to implement the Youth Guarantee, they contribute to the identification and engagement of NEET youth and to linking young people with the labour market. The Ministry of State for Youth and Children and NYA will assess the possibility of including the Youth Guarantee, with a specific focus on the outreach phase, among the priorities of the fifth call for proposals.

g. **Development of youth and Youth Guarantee digital platforms.** NAES has designed the “For Youth” portal, which will be officially launched and promoted alongside the national roll-out of the Youth Guarantee. In parallel, during 2024, the Youth Guarantee Portal was developed and populated with structured information on available services and offers for young people under the scheme. (Initiatives No. 3 and 4)

h. **National communication campaign for the Youth Guarantee.** NAES designed and implemented a national communication campaign for the Youth Guarantee, aimed at promoting participant success stories and strengthening outreach to young people in need of support. This intervention significantly increased the visibility of the scheme at both national and local levels.

Through official communication channels and social media, 29 success stories were published and four promotional videos were produced to raise awareness and motivate young people to engage with the Youth Guarantee. In addition, NAES organised four regional meetings in Tirana, Vlora, and Shkodra with civil society organisations and social partners active in the labour market ecosystem. (Initiative No. 5)

i. **Strengthening education and Youth Guarantee information systems.** Significant progress was made in consolidating the Pre-University Education Information Management System, which enables online registration and transfer of students through the e-Albania platform and improves access to real-time educational data. In 2023, the system reached an important milestone by enabling online enrolment and transfers, integrating education data, and providing real-time access to academic records and student documentation. (Initiative No. 6)

Box 1. Best Practice on the pre-registration system for NEET young people, developed in line with the principles of the EC guidelines on Youth Guarantee

NAES established a dedicated Youth Guarantee information space within the Employment Services Information System. To support preliminary registration in line with EU principles and reporting requirements, the online service “Youth Guarantee Application (Employment, Education and Training)” was launched on e-Albania on 21 November 2023, marking the effective start of the Youth Guarantee pilot phase in Albania. This service enables pre-registration of young people in the scheme, which is subsequently confirmed by employment offices through registration as unemployed jobseekers, initiating their pathway within the Youth Guarantee. During 2023–2024, a total of 560 young people were registered in the scheme: 271 in Tirana, 210 in Shkodra, and 79 in Vlora.

Through the information system, NAES manages a comprehensive profile of young people, including socio-economic background, education, skills and qualifications, work experience, and individual career aspirations. This information forms the basis for the development of Individual Employment Plans and for tracking each young person’s pathway towards employment or further education and training.

Within the framework of Youth Guarantee implementation, NAES has designed the “Youth Guarantee” portal as a comprehensive and accessible platform providing young people with structured information on the scheme, dedicated services, and available offers. The portal is fully populated and is expected to be launched during the national roll-out phase of the Youth Guarantee. In 2024, NAES also integrated the “Discover Yourself” (Holland Test) career assessment tool into the puna.gov.al portal. This simple and practical tool helps young people better understand their skills, interests, and professional preferences. Through structured questions and 30 selected occupational activities, it guides users towards career paths aligned with both their abilities and aspirations.

Reforms and initiatives of the Outreach phase that require further attention

The following reforms and initiatives have not yet started or require increased attention going forward:

a. Effective identification and outreach to young people require the establishment of fully functioning Local Partnership Networks involving municipalities, administrative units, the State Social Service, employment offices, local education authorities, education institutions, Local Youth Councils, and civil society organisations. At local level, these networks should operate as operational

mechanisms for identification, case management, and referral of young people to specialised employment and social services.

b. To ensure effective service delivery, better coordination is needed in disseminating information on available youth services, alongside the establishment of a single entry and referral point for young people identified during the outreach phase. These developments should be embedded within the unified Youth Guarantee portal to consolidate both information provision and access to the scheme, while also meeting European Commission reporting requirements.

c. Reporting by municipalities and higher education institutions needs to be systematically integrated into the Youth Guarantee monitoring and reporting framework.

Overview of the current status of reforms and initiatives

Nr	Name of the reform/initiative	Completed	Initiated	Not initiated
Planned Reforms				
1	Amendments to legislation framework (by-laws) applied to youth organization grants.		√	
2	Consolidate the network of Local Youth Councils and provide them with the capacities needed to exercise its competences.	√		
Planned Initiatives				
3	Communication campaign supported, mainly, in social media channels. (Developed within the YG Communication Strategy)		√	
4	Portal “On youth” foreseen in the Law on Youth as the main online communication strategy under YGIP. (The “On youth”portal is also included in the mapping phase as above presented)	√		
5	Local network training		√	
6	Outreach contract programme		√	

2.3. Preparation

Key results during the reporting period

a. **Revision of employment promotion programmes for NEET youth.** In 2023, NAES revised four employment promotion programmes to better respond to the needs of NEET youth, in line with DCM No. 17 and No. 535. In addition, a new programme, “Traineeship under the Youth Guarantee Scheme” (DCM No. 264), was approved and began implementation in 2024. (Reform No. 1)

b. **Approval of the Social Reintegration Programme.** In 2024, the Social Reintegration Programme was approved (DCM No. 401). This programme has a duration of up to six months and aims to facilitate the labour market integration of unemployed jobseekers through the provision of specialised counselling for employment, self-employment, and vocational training. The programme is implemented by NAES in cooperation with other public institutions and non-profit organisations whose core mandate focuses on the economic empowerment of disadvantaged groups. These partners provide specialised counselling, coordinate and refer beneficiaries to employment and social services, and support their gradual integration into the labour market. Implementation of the programme is planned to start in 2025. (Reform No. 1)

c. **Capacity-building and international cooperation under the Youth Guarantee pilot.** Within the framework of the Youth Guarantee pilot phase, NAES strengthened the capacities of staff in employment offices, training centres, and vocational schools, with the aim of improving service coordination at local and regional levels and ensuring effective implementation of the revised employment promotion programmes. NAES organised training for staff of Local Employment Offices on the concept of Integrated Case Management. In addition, a study visit was organised for staff from Regional Employment Offices to Lyon, France, focusing on service delivery for young people and vulnerable groups. This visit was followed by a bilateral meeting in Tirana between France Travail, the French Public Employment Service, and NAES, during which the process of formalising institutional cooperation was initiated. (Reform No. 3)

d. **Development of methodological guidance for NEET counselling.** NAES developed a Methodological Guide for the Counselling and Guidance of NEET youth, aimed at supporting local employment structures in delivering professional counselling and career guidance services to young people. This guide was developed through cooperation between NAES and the Swedish Public Employment Service. (Initiative No. 8)

Box 2. Best Practice on new practices in the development of Soft and Digital Skills for young NEET

Soft and digital skills are an integral part of the employment services package offered to all registered unemployed jobseekers. As such, they are also fully embedded in the service delivery model for young people participating in the Youth Guarantee. Counselling and job-search support, tailored to individual needs, form a core component of this process and are provided to all Youth Guarantee participants.

In 2024, a total of 856 young jobseekers aged 15–29 attended the “Digital Skills” course delivered by Public Vocational Training Centres across Albania.

In parallel, a new “Employability Skills” curriculum has been developed to support recipients of economic assistance, with a particular focus on young people aged 15–29 with low levels of education. The programme aims to help beneficiaries transition out of the Economic Assistance scheme and integrate into the labour market. It will be implemented through Public Vocational Training Centres nationwide, with implementation planned to start in 2024 and a target of approximately 500 participants.

Reforms and initiatives of the Preparatory phase that require further attention

The following issues highlight reforms and initiatives that have not yet started or require increased attention going forward:

a. **Registrations with employment offices have increased by approximately 35 percent**, driven mainly by young people with higher levels of education and stronger competencies who are better positioned to benefit from the opportunities offered by the scheme. However, the NEET youth population remains highly heterogeneous. An estimated 18 percent belong to groups at high risk of social exclusion, including Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, beneficiaries of economic assistance, young people with orphan status, and return migrants.

b. In this context, and in line with recommended European practices, there is a clear need to **further strengthen employment services to enable effective and inclusive participation**. This includes reinforcing integrated counselling services, applying new tools for career orientation and decision-making, and developing tailored programmes in cooperation with labour market actors. Such measures are essential to proactively identify and support vulnerable young people and to ensure their sustainable integration into the labour market.

Overview of the current status of reforms and initiatives

Nr	Name of the reform/initiative	Completed	Initiated	Not initiated
Planned Reforms				
1	Reform of the eligibility criteria related to the implementation of employment promotion programs.	√		
2	Establish a network of counselling and guidance services - "open door shops" - managed in partnership between NAES, Municipalities and NGOs. (Delivered within the context of Local Youth Councils and in articulation with their role in the outreach strategy. To involve the youth workers)		√	
3	Capacity building of NAES by developing staff skills (articulate with new job descriptions in development under SREPVET) and increasing the number of human resources.	√		
Planned Initiatives				
4	Train staff form NAES regional and local agencies, municipalities, and NGOs	√		
5	Portal "On youth" (foreseen in outreach strategy)	√		
6	Consolidation of the Pre-University Information Management System (SMIP)	√		
7	Reinforce counselling and guidance within education and training system (mainly after compulsory education)		√	
8	Methodological Guide to Support counselling and guidance according to NEET	√		
9	Deliver short training courses addressing employability skills of the NEET (job search skills, labour market soft skills, digital skills.		√	

2.4. Offer

Key results during the reporting period

- a. **Revision of vocational qualifications and introduction vocational matura.** With the adoption of Law No. 32/2024 amending Law No. 15/2017 "On Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Albania", important changes were introduced to the structure of vocational education and training. Amendments to Article 16, paragraph 4, on "Vocational qualifications and corresponding levels", clarified that completion of upper secondary vocational education, organised around broad occupational fields and with a duration of three school years following basic education, leads to Level 3 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF). This level concludes with a vocational upper secondary graduation certificate and allows progression to higher levels of vocational education, access to general bridging courses, or direct entry into the labour market. (Reform No. 1)
- b. **Expansion of post-secondary pathways and part-time education.** In 2023, a new post-secondary programme, "Diagnostics and Management in Automotive Services", was designed, approved, and introduced in selected schools. In parallel, part-time education continues to be offered within the pre-university education system. At basic education level, part-time programmes were offered in 16 institutions during the 2023–2024 school year, with a total of 317 enrolled students. At

upper secondary level, part-time education was also offered in 16 institutions, with a total of 4,570 enrolled students during the same school year. For the 2024–2025 school year, part-time education is offered by 17 basic education institutions, with 344 enrolled students, and by 17 upper secondary institutions, with a total of 4,544 enrolled students. (Reform No. 3)

c. **Provision of AQF Level 5 vocational programmes.** With regard to AQF Level 5 provision in public higher education institutions, a total of 52 vocational study programmes with a duration of one or two years were offered in the academic year 2023–2024. Of these, 51 two-year programmes were attended by 4,981 students, while one one-year programme enrolled 21 students. In non-public higher education institutions, a total of 54 professional study programmes were offered during the same academic year. Of these, 53 two-year programmes enrolled 1,612 students, while one one-year programme enrolled 11 students. During 2024, Level 5 AQF programmes were implemented in specific priority fields, including Management of Accommodation Structures in Vlora and Shkodra, and Real Estate Intermediation and Renewable Energy in Saranda, Golem, and Durrës. (Reform No. 4)

d. **Introduction of the Dual pathway in VET.** In 2024, a major reform initiative was launched as part of the broader VET reform agenda: the introduction of the Dual VET model in Albania. This intervention is based on the relevant secondary legislation, including DCM No. 691 of 6 November 2024 on apprenticeship contracts and minimum remuneration for students in the dual system, as well as Order No. 1109 of 16 December 2024 of the Minister of Economy, Culture and Innovation on procedures for the assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning. The dual model has been implemented in 10 VET schools across 8 municipalities and covers six vocational fields: Reception, Culinary Arts, Multimedia, Auto-Electrical Services, Hotel Facilities Management, and Electrical Installations (low, medium, and high voltage). A total of 100 partner businesses have been engaged, enabling structured and sustainable cooperation between education providers and the labour market during 2024.

e. **Traineeship programme for young people.** NAES has initiated the implementation of the approved Traineeship programme for young people aged 15–29 (DCM No. 264/2023). The programme is implemented through vocational training courses with a duration of three to six months, delivered through learning in the workplace, followed by a further six months of employment. (Reform No. 6)

f. **The National Internship Programme,** now administered by the Ministry of State for Youth and Children, provides opportunities for young people aged 21–26 who have completed at least a bachelor's degree. The programme offers three-month work placements in central and local public institutions, businesses, and non-governmental organisations. (Initiative No. 11)

g. **Evaluation of Active Labour Market Programmes.** The European Union has prepared a findings and recommendations report based on the preliminary assessment of the efficiency of two employment promotion programmes: DCM No. 17 (Employment Programme) and Decision No. 348 (Self-Employment Programme). Building on this work, MECI and NAES have planned and initiated a comprehensive effectiveness evaluation of employment promotion programmes implemented during the 2020–2024 period. The objective is to generate robust evidence to inform the further improvement of active labour market policies. (Reform No. 5)

Box 3. Best practices on improved Employment, Training, and Education Management Information Systems

The Employment Services Information System has been consolidated and now provides comprehensive statistics and information on employment services and employment promotion programmes. The system contains data on approximately 60,000 unemployed jobseekers, of whom around 21,000 are under the age of 30. It supports operations across 12 regional directorates and 40 local employment offices. Young people can access online services to view and update their profiles, complete career orientation tests, apply for job vacancies, and receive labour market information. The system is used by approximately 15,000 online service users and by around 200 NAES staff at central, regional, and local levels.

The Pre-University Education Management Information System has also been further consolidated, providing comprehensive data on students across all levels of pre-university education. The system covers 5 Regional Education Directorates, 52 Local Education Offices, 2,202 schools, 31,708 teachers, and 335,483 students. It serves as a key tool for more than one million users with different roles. Young people have full access to their personal education records within the system. Students aged over 18 can view detailed information on their academic achievements during and at the completion of the school year, including certificates and supplements aligned with AQF levels. This process has been in place since the 2022–2023 school year and also enables access for parents or legal guardians.

Reforms and initiatives of the Offer phase that require further attention

The following issues highlight reforms and initiatives that have not yet started or require increased attention going forward:

- a. Assessment of needs to **expand and increase the attractiveness** of the education and training offer, alongside implementation of measures to strengthen the Second Chance programme. (Reform No. 7).
- b. Development and strengthening of **continuous vocational education and training**. (Reform No. 9)

Overview of the current status of reforms and initiatives

Nr	Name of the reform/initiative	Completed	Initiated	Not initiated
1	Planned Reforms			
2	Review the VET regulation to enable youngsters over 21 years old to enter and re-entering the VET offer.			√
3	Revise the current VET) structure in order to avoid State Vocational Matura for the students that will not continue higher education, aiming to enter in employment. To create an autonomous certification. (Amendment of point 4b) of article 16 Revision of law no. 15/2017 "On education and vocational training in the Republic of Albania")	√		
4	Expand offer of post-secondary vocational courses addressing level 5 of qualification of the Albanian Qualification Framework. Courses with 1 year of duration for both graduates of general secondary schools and vocational schools, and other interested young individuals. Review and support the part time system of MOES that works for students beyond the age of secondary education (needed for soft skills, career orientation, ... as part of this programme)	√		
5	Comprehensive Impact Evaluation of the Active Labour Market Policies		√	
6	Establish an Apprenticeship System within the VET sector system	√		
7	Assess the needs to expand offer and make it more attractive. Implement measures and strengthen the second chance opportunity programme		√	
8	Capacity building of NAES by developing staff skills (articulate with new job descriptions in development under SREPVET) and increasing the number of human resources. (see in articulation with reform included in preparation phase)		√	
9	Continuous education and training		√	
	Planned Initiatives			

Nr	Name of the reform/initiative	Completed	Initiated	Not initiated
10	Raise the offer of Internships Program Open access to a wider target group. (1)		√	
11	The National Internship Program, 7th call, will be administered by the MSYCH, unlike the previous six calls managed by MAS. It offers young people aged 21-26, who have completed at least a bachelor's degree, the opportunity for a 3-month internship in central and local institutions, businesses, NGOs, and more.	√		
12	Employment Programme	√		
13	On the Job Training	√		
14	Self-employment Programme	√		
15	Financial support for Roma and other vulnerable groups as migrants. Scholarship program for high school students (post compulsory education including VET paths) from families in economic difficult.	√		
16	Vocational Training Courses The offer should prioritise emergent transversal skills (as digital skills) and relevant economic sectors (as tourism).	√		
17	VET short courses – from 3 up to 12 months – organized in modules.		√	
18	Increasing VET courses	√		
18	Apprenticeships Courses	√		
20	Support small social enterprises promoted for imprisoned youngsters		√	

Section 3: Direct Monitoring Indicators

This section presents the core direct monitoring indicators used to assess the implementation and performance of the Youth Guarantee in Albania, in line with the EMCO monitoring framework. The indicators focus on the timeliness, coverage, and outcomes of support provided to NEET young people, capturing both the scale of outreach and the effectiveness of service delivery. The data are drawn from the Statistical Programme and the Employment Services Information System and are disaggregated by age group and gender where applicable, providing an evidence-based overview of progress achieved during the reporting period.

TABLE 6: EMCO INDICATORS OF YOUTH GUARANTEE IN ALBANIA

Indicator ²	Baseline	Achievemnet 2024	Sources and Means of Verifications
Number of NEET young people supported, by type of offer	0	414 young people received a quality offer, of whom: By age group: • 15–19 years: 59 • 20–24 years: 192 • 25–29 years: 163 By gender:	Statistical Programme and Employment Services Information System

² All indicators will be disaggregated by two age groups (15–24 and 25–29) and by gender, where applicable.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men: 184 • Girls and women: 230 	
Average duration for NEET young people before they receive an offer	0	53 days from the date of confirmation in the Youth Guarantee scheme	Statistical Programme and Employment Services Information System
Percentage of NEET young people receiving an offer within 4 months of registration		87.7% overall ³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men: 92.1% • Girls and women: 84.3% 	Statistical Programme and Employment Services Information System
Percentage of young people in the preparatory phase of the Youth Guarantee exceeding the 4-month deadline	0	21.8% ⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men: 20.7% • Girls and women: 22.8% 	Statistical Programme and Employment Services Information System

Conclusion

The 2024 progress report confirms that Albania has established a solid operational foundation for the Youth Guarantee and has made substantial progress in implementing the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023–2025, particularly through the pilot phase launched in Tirana, Shkodra, and Vlora. Of the 46 planned reforms and initiatives, 25 have been completed, 20 are ongoing, and only one has not yet started, indicating strong overall implementation momentum across all four phases of the plan (mapping, outreach, preparation, and offer). Importantly, the findings of this progress report were presented and discussed within the relevant governance and coordination structures, including the Thematic Working Group and the IPGM on Human Development, supporting transparency, inter-institutional alignment, and evidence-based decision-making for the next phase of implementation.

A key achievement during the reporting period has been the consolidation of core systems and tools needed for implementation and monitoring. These include improvements in the statistical profiling of NEET youth, the establishment of a Youth Guarantee module within the Employment Services Information System, and the regular production of EMCO indicators. On the education side, the scaling up of the Early Warning System and the strengthening of career guidance mechanisms have contributed to earlier prevention and better transition support. In parallel, reforms in VET and the launch of Dual VET in 10 schools, together with expanded Level 5 provision and the introduction of work-based learning and traineeship pathways, have strengthened the offer side of the Youth Guarantee and its links to labour market demand.

Direct monitoring results show that the pilot is delivering timely outcomes for young people who enter the scheme. In 2024, 414 young people received a quality offer, and the average time to an offer was 53 days from confirmation in the scheme. A high share of participants (87.7 percent) received an offer within the four-month target, demonstrating that core service delivery processes are functioning. At

³ Indicators are measured in accordance with the standard EMCO format.

⁴ The data refer to the period up to 30 June 2025.

the same time, 21.8 percent exceeded the four-month threshold during the preparatory phase, signalling bottlenecks that require attention as the scheme scales up.

Looking ahead, several priorities that will be decisive for a successful regional and national expansion. First, outreach must become more systematic and inclusive, as registration increases have been driven largely by better-educated youth, while a significant share of the NEET population includes young people at high risk of social exclusion. Second, Local Partnership Networks need to be operationalised as functioning mechanisms for identification, case management, and referral, supported by clear activation pathways and a single entry point through the Youth Guarantee portal. Third, stronger institutionalisation and resourcing are needed for early prevention measures, particularly the Early Warning System, alongside stronger reporting contributions from municipalities and higher education institutions. Finally, the planned extension of implementation through 2025 and the forthcoming EU for Youth Employment Operational Programme 2024–2027 provide a critical opportunity to consolidate reforms, address capacity constraints, and strengthen service quality and equity before full national roll-out.