

Youth and Employment: The Effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee Plan in Emilia Romagna and Sicily

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Abstract

The paper presents a comparative analysis of the “Youth Guarantee Plan” implemented by two Italian regions: Emilia Romagna and Sicily. Within the tradition of the sociology of public action, the study proposes a deepening of the institutional and cognitive analysis of public policies. From the comparison, two distinct models of public action emerge: The first model that implemented by the Emilia Romagna Region, appears more procedural and more founded on the involvement of institutions present in the territory (employment centres, universities, chambers of commerce, professional bodies), whilst the second model, implemented by the Sicily Region, seems founded mainly on the emphasis placed on the economic definition of the policy. From the study, most of all, the processes through which the distinct regional public actions succeed in interpreting the innovative potential of the Youth Guarantee Plan and the relations existing between the effectiveness of the policies and the collective meanings that institutions and individuals assign to them, emerge.

Keywords

Youth, employment, public action, South Europe

Analyses of recent transformations of labour reveal the end of many traditional types of employment in favour of new activities based, almost exclusively, on digital and IT competences (Frey 2016). The digital labourers, however, do not build their competitive advantage exclusively on IT abilities. They are individuals with pronounced creative skills. They are able not only of imagining new products or of innovating productive processes but of working, within Schumpeter’s still current teachings, on the labour cultures of belonging and of reference, testing logics, and models of action which have cooperation as their focal point (Schumpeter 1993). The transformations in the profiles of workers, re-proposing the relevance of the relationship between cultures and work, offer sociology important epistemological challenges.

Investigating the influences of work cultures on the employability of individuals entails deepening the institutional analysis of policies and enhancing the contribution that cognitive analysis of public policies can make to the sociological understanding of their effectiveness. Which social mechanisms create the work expectations of individuals? And moreover, how do labour policies influence the employment of the youth? The youth unemployment rates registered in southern European states and particularly in Spain,

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Italy, and Greece are above those registered in other European states (Barberis and Sergi 2016). In southern Italy, the rate of the youth unemployment in December 2016 was 40.1% (Istat 2016).

According to Cavalli, there is a reciprocal influence between the youth employment policies and modes, including sociological modes of representing the condition of the youth (Cavalli 2007). Social researchers who study public policies enhancing meanwhile their cognitive dimension, highlight the relationship existing between policies and the intersubjective meanings that individuals assign to them (Muller and Surel 2000). In this perspective, the youth employment policies appear to be influenced by broader political traditions, for example, by locally diffuse welfare state systems (Ferrera 1998).

Italy, like other European states, in the last few years, has followed European recommendations in matters of the youth employment and particularly the 2013 recommendation that outlines a political programme to fight the youth unemployment. Following this programme, the various countries of the European Union have elaborated a common policy denominated “Youth Guarantee”¹.

This paper, placing itself within the tradition of the sociology of public action, presents a comparative analysis of the “Youth Guarantee Plan” implemented by two Italian regions: Emilia Romagna and Sicily, and aims to highlight on the one hand how public action conditions the implementation of policies and on the other, the social mechanisms that hamper the institutional innovation which the policies themselves elicit.

The study is articulated in two parts: In the first, the innovative potential of the policy is analysed in the light of more recent literature on welfare systems in southern European states and this analysis is functional to the elaboration of a research hypothesis.

Is it possible that the innovative potential of the policy is conditioned by a social mechanism of de-particularisation and by the redefinition of

collective meanings of work that the policy can set in motion?

The second part of the paper is dedicated to the verification of the hypothesis and specifically to identifying which political actions facilitate with greater force the mechanism of de-particularisation and the redefinition of collective meanings of work.

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL OF THE YOUTH GUARANTEE PLAN

The sociological interest for a labour policy such as Youth Guarantee derives from its degree of innovation. With Youth Guarantee, the European Union experiments in all member countries with the implementation of a programme aiming to assure males and females between the ages of 15 and 29 who do not study or work [young NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training)] training and/or work opportunities to allow them to acquire new competencies and enter the labour market. In the first place, the innovation is identifiable in the policy model proposed by the European Union; Youth Guarantee is a very detailed policy both in its objectives as well as in the actions it sets out to undertake and it is aimed at single individuals. The participation of single individuals, in this case, is direct and not mediated for example by the attendance of specific school institutes that partake in specific programmes [take other programmes funded by the ESF (European Social Fund) as an example, such as the Erasmus Programme]; Youth Guarantee is immediately available to single individuals. The Youth Guarantee Plan maintains some characteristic traits of European policies, chiefly multilevel governance and the importance of the regional level government in its implementation process: The national Ministry of Labour, through a national plan, determines the general procedures for implementation; every region defines its own strategy, choosing which measures to undertake in its own

territory, within which time frames, and according to what procedures. The regional public action consequently configures itself as a crucial area of intervention, which owes its efficacy, as highlighted amongst others by Sapienza, to the capacity of territorially adapting measures foreseen at the national level (Sapienza 2003). The ability of regional administrators in identifying territorial needs and agreeing, as maintained by Duran (1999), on solutions to offer no longer seems of exclusive relevance but of relevance is also the ability of regional administrators of interpreting the economic and social transformations in action and their ability to agree on the instruments and opportunities to offer the youth and the firms to allow them to interpret the challenges of the changes taking place.

The analysis, from a sociological point of view, of the implementation of the policy at an individual level, allows an unprecedented exploration of regional contexts, an exploration that manages to focus not only on the administrative organisation of the single regions and in this case for example of the employment centres present in the regions, but on the structure of the various regional labour markets, their dependency on defined productive landscapes, and the influence that the local worlds of education and training exercise on these. The analysis of the individual level is relevant in our research perspective as it permits the verification of how the labour policies are interpreted at a collective level and through which mechanisms public action renders fragile or on the contrary reinforces locally shared modes of policy implementation.

The sociology of public action, in this case, can not only identify the principal actors involved in the policy process, their distinct roles or their inter-relationships but can also bring to light the relationship between politics and society, the conditioning that specific political and administrative traditions exercise on the implementation of single policies.

P. Vesan, in analysing recent labour policies implemented by some countries in southern Europe,

with respect to the classical distinctive traits of welfare systems in southern European states, signals a tendency towards universalisation deriving from some recent initiatives such as the increase in unemployment benefits or the foreseeing of a minimum income for some households in conditions of poverty (Vesan 2015). This political scientist considers such a tendency as a positive element, as a signal of change in the welfare systems of southern European countries.

The analysis of the tendency towards the universalisation of subsidies appears to sociologists of public action as a condition necessary for change but not sufficient for triggering processes of social innovation. Their analysis places in the foreground the social mechanisms through which individuals who live in the southern states of Europe perceive their social rights and the modalities through which they demand their recognition.

In the case of Youth Guarantee, it appears evident how universalisation, intended as the direct accessibility to the policy for citizens who find themselves in a specific circumstance, generates almost automatically a social mechanism which, with Mutti, could be defined of de-particularisation (Mutti 1994). Such a mechanism is implemented through the direct digital registration of young NEET on the national Youth Guarantee portal. The direct access to the policy initiative and to the financial subsidy that derives from it not only de-personalises participation but above all de-particularises it; it removes the dependency of the beneficiaries of the policy from actors or centres (for example in Italy, the trade union syndicates or trade union fiscal assistance centres) that in the management of financial subsidies, which are an object of the policies, play an important role and that traditionally use their role to exchange social policies against electoral consensus. The sociological analysis of particularism reveals that the objective of de-particularisation cannot be exhausted in the moment of the launch of the policy and must target in addition to the youth, also firms and employment centres.

DE-PARTICULARISATION AND REDEFINITION OF THE COLLECTIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF LABOUR POLICIES

Particularism stokes itself with mistrust towards public institutions but most of all with personal mistrust; it substitutes to discover in the youth of their own individual abilities an instrumental conception of policies and labour, almost as if politics has the exclusive function of operating income redistribution without acting on the significance that the youth attribute to work. The analysis of the relationship between universalisation and de-particularisation appears to be fundamental as it brings to light the area to explore and analyse the innovative function of a programme such as Youth Guarantee and allows one to elaborate a hypothesis such as the following: The effectiveness of such a policy is conditioned by its capacity to de-particularise the work relation and allow the young and firms to discover the professional qualities of the youth.

Labour markets in the countries of southern Europe are very rigid. Against such rigidity, labour reforms that since the beginning of the second millennium have succeeded themselves in Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal have had the principal objective of making labour markets more flexible (Barberis and Sergi 2016). The structural rigidity of the labour market concerns especially access to work, affects and penalises the younger generations and is, in productive landscapes made up almost exclusively of micro and small-scale enterprises, regulated by the relational capital of families and firms. It consists of a rigidity strongly conditioned by productive contexts, the innovation of which is not benefited by the locally diffuse economistic interpretation of the employment policies, which is favoured by reductions in the cost of temporary labour for the enterprises, often in turn connected to new hires but not linked to the maintenance in the medium term of the increase in the employment base of the firm. Temporary and

economistic labour policies together with non-competitive labour markets have favoured over time the emergence of complicity between firms and workers with the end of gaining from the economic benefits of policies and implemented through temporary formalisation of work contracts, interrupted by extended periods of unemployment. With respect to such morphologies of local labour markets, Youth Guarantee presents itself, as stated in the recent ISFOL (Institute for the development of vocational training of workers) report, as a challenge centred on the political capacity of re-defining locally diffuse interpretations of labour policies, re-configuring the birth and the form of labour relations (ISFOL 2016). To a pre-constituted match between demand and supply, strongly conditioned by temporary economic incentives for firms, the plan substitutes an unprecedented regulation founded not on ascribed modalities, one could say with Parsons (1971), but on technical modalities based on the professional competencies of the young and on the organisational needs of firms.

But through which implementational processes can the various regions facilitate the diffusion of non-economistic collective interpretations of labour policies and the establishment of new labour relations?

The first analyses of the Youth Guarantee Plan according to geographical macro-areas show firstly the different geographical attractiveness of the policy and, subsequently, the relevance of the regional public action that affects very different labour markets.

As Figure 1 shows, this policy reaches a much greater percentage of NEET in the South of the country relatively to the North. On a total percentage of 57% of young NEET reached by the policy, the young who concretely activate one of the measures foreseen by Youth Guarantee are 42.5% in the South compared to 21% in the Centre-North and 15.7% in the North-East. This supports the fact that the condition of NEET is more prevalent in the South of Italy than that in the Centre-North or the North-East, where instead it

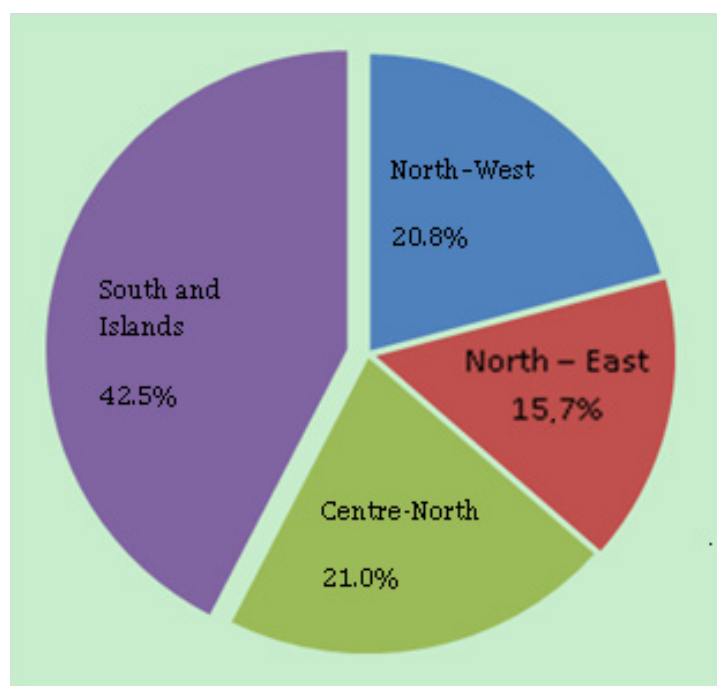


Figure 1. Young Participants in “Youth Guarantee” by Geographical Macro-Area.

Note: Source: Adaptation from ISFOL 2016 report.

configures itself as a more conjectural condition and more easily solvable.

Ensuing from the different geographical attractiveness of the plan, the analysis has been undertaken comparing two different regional interpretations of the policy, one implemented by a region in the Centre-North of Italy and the other by a region in southern Italy, the Sicily Region.

In the comparison, the ways through which the two regions have favoured innovative interpretations of the labour policies have been analysed. The following variables were compared:

- (1) The regional timing of the implementation of the plan;
- (2) The public communication realised by the region;
- (3) The internal financial articulation of the regional implementation plans;
- (4) The reflexivity of the regional public action.

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATIONS AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS

The ISFOL report published at the end of 2016, in presenting the regional implementations of the Youth Guarantee Plan, reports different speeds of implementations. The different speeds indicated by ISFOL refer most of all to the different timings of implementation. The European recommendation which establishes the Youth Guarantee programme was in April 2013. The national operational programme was transmitted to the European Commission in December 2013 and the European Commission communicated its decision to adopt it in July 2014. The first regional implementation plans were approved even before the decision of the European Commission that is starting from April 2014. Amongst the first Italian regions which prepared an operational plan are Veneto, Tuscany, and Lombardy; these regions approved the agreement with the Ministry of Labour in the spring of

2014, while also starting their programmes immediately afterwards. In Emilia Romagna, the plans began already in the summer of 2014, in Sicily, they began in April 2015.

The different starting times of the plans create problems in the monitoring of the policy, making comparisons of the results more complicated, but not only that, they also affect the policy's social impact and its innovative potential, one could say with Weber, that they redefine its rationality (Weber 1999).

The delay together with the lack of precise information with regard to the implementational procedures modifies the logical consequentiality of the measure and reduces the innovative impact of the public action. The free and spontaneous initiative of the youth, who registers on the portal and becomes active in the search for employment or a training programme which can facilitate his or her professional placement, is substituted by waiting, when the public action is announced but not realised, for the start of the programme on behalf of the youth and the firms, which in most cases already have a work relationship and await the launch of the programme to formalise, albeit temporarily, their labour situation. In such a context, the policy is perceived mostly in its economic dimension, as a possibility for firms to reduce or even, in the case of extracurricular traineeships, to eliminate, for a six-month period, the costs of labour. The delay offers firms an extra motivation to defer the formalisation of informal labour already active within the firms themselves. The delay in the public action inhibits a sort of "surprise effect" inherent in new policy measures and encourages the integration of the innovations which the policy elicits into pre-existing social logics.

The Emilia Romagna Region which approves the regional plan in April 2014 and starts it a few months later more easily manages to enhance the innovative potential of the policy; the announcement of the plan and the possibility of implementing it are almost concurrent and the consequentiality that the policy

measure establishes is respected. The launch can still represent the opportunity to formalise pre-existing worker relationships but the timeliness of the public action appears, in this case, more functional to its objectives, more greatly enhances the "novelty" which the policy elicits and it favours, as if by a lever effect, interpretations of the policy that are more coherent with the objectives of the national and European legislators.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REGIONAL PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

The Ministry of Labour has elaborated a portal dedicated to Youth Guarantee where, aside from the possibility to adhere to the plan, all the information necessary is presented, from the descriptive to the mostly procedural. To communicate the launch of the regional programmes, some regions have chosen to re-propose the presentation of the policy implemented by the Ministry of Labour by providing the same information contained in it and, in some cases, redirecting users through a specific link to the portal of the Ministry of Labour. The Sicily Region, in the section of its website dedicated to Youth Guarantee, has chosen to recall the portal of the national Ministry of Labour, re-proposing its graphics, colours, and various sections. The Emilia Romagna Region has chosen instead to personalise its section more; although the section redirects through a link to the portal of the national ministry; its graphics, colours, internal articulation, and information contained are all different. The initial page of the presentation of Youth Guarantee of the Sicily Region provides information relative to the total financial endowment of the plan. It is a message that immediately strikes the user because of the extent of the financial resources available but that in effect does not supply any exact information neither to the user nor to the analysts. From the data, it is not in fact possible to deduce whether the financial endowment is coherent with respect to the number of young NEET present in the region or to understand the

time period which the financial endowment refers to. It is not said whether the policy has a limited temporal duration, above which, as for other European policies, the non-utilised funds are lost or whether its duration is conditioned by the exhaustion of the financial resources. From the initial page, it is possible to access a second section of didactic character which provides the various implementational phases and indicates in the first point the target population that is the youth between the ages of 15 and 29, resident in Italy and that is not in work or enrolled in education or training programmes. The public communication of the Youth Guarantee Plan undertaken by the Emilia Romagna Region appears firstly oriented and aimed towards the beneficiaries of the plan, the latter are divided into two categories: firms and workers and two sub-sections of the initial page are dedicated to the two categories. The first communication offered on the portal of the Emilia Romagna Region has a definitional character; it relates to the mission of Youth Guarantee and is expressed by the following statement:

Youth Guarantee aims to increase the competencies of the youth to fight unemployment and increase the competitiveness of the territory, rewarding firms that invest on the youth and their training².

The communication has a definite programmatic character; the region with such a policy does not want to favour the employment of the youth who does not study or work as is often conveyed in common interpretations of the Youth Guarantee Plan but wishes to increase the competencies of the youth to fight unemployment and increase the competitiveness of the territory. In the regional interpretation of the plan, the increase in competencies is directly linked to the increase in competitiveness of the territory. Such a policy, as emerging from the above communication, is not a policy that exhausts itself with a temporary financial subsidy but is a policy that aims to respond to the youth unemployment with a defined choice, the increase in the competencies of the young which engages the whole territory in the pursuit of this objective. The

territory, in the sense here utilised, does not represent only a geographical space but is represented through the public action of the institutional actors in present that must mobilise and engage to increase the total competitiveness of the territory. As said on the initial page of the portal itself:

Youth Guarantee is a challenge that requires the collaboration and commitment of the institutions³.

Public communications made by the two regions appear different not only in terms of graphics and level of personalisation with respect to the portal of the Ministry of Labour but because they communicate two different interpretations of the same policy: One, that of the Sicily Region, appears more categorical, reserved to young NEET and linked to their immediate economic benefit; the other, that of the Emilia Romagna Region, appears more collective and procedural, and it inserts the youth in value production chains and the policy has a wider programme of territorial competitiveness-building.

A POLICY OF RESPONSIBILITY VERSUS A POLICY OF SUBSIDIES

The allocation of the financial resources to the various measures which structure the Youth Guarantee Plan is of significance. The programme envisages different initiatives, and amongst these are the extracurricular traineeship, apprenticeships, civil service, guidance in the start-up of a business, the admission or re-admission in education or training placements, and the employment bonus for firms that stabilise the youth who have benefited from one of the measures of Youth Guarantee.

As Figure 2 shows, especially in the first phase of the launch of the programme, the extracurricular traineeship is the measure most implemented by all the regions.

Although it appears to be the most attractive initiative, the measure however reveals, as Table 1 shows, a different complementarity in the South and

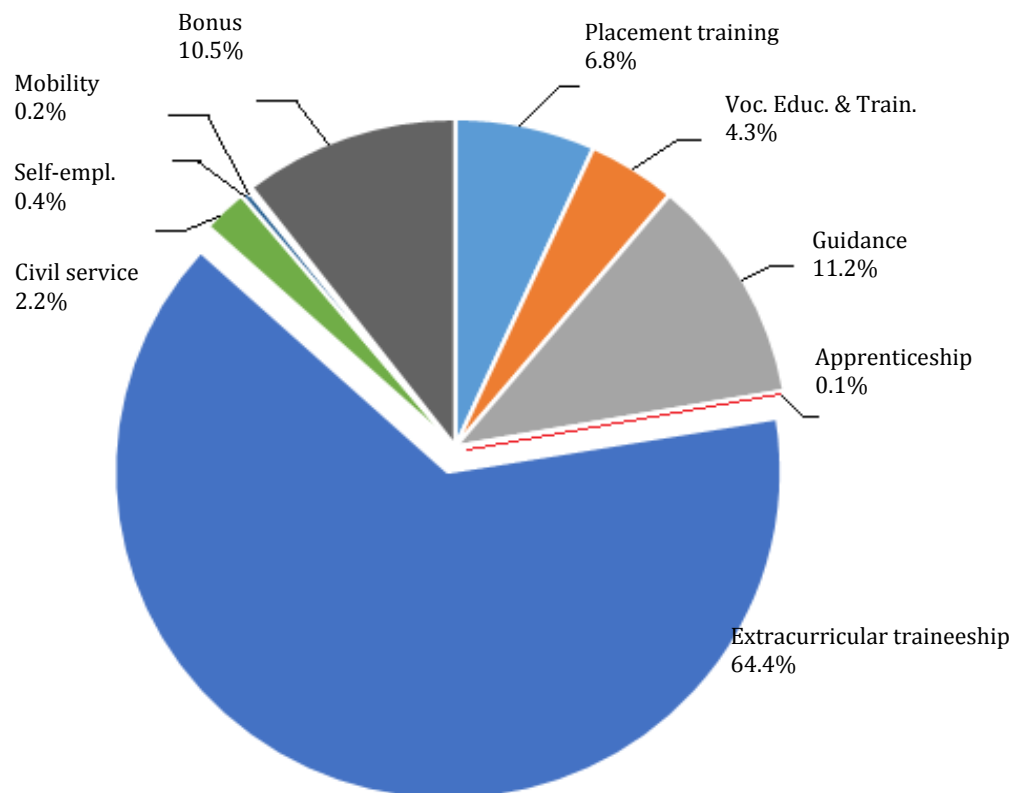


Figure 2. Incidence of the Various Measures.

Note: Source: Adaptation from ISFOL 2016 report.

the Centre with the other initiatives of the programme and reveals, in the final analysis, a different logic of the public action. In the South, the extracurricular traineeship in a firm represents 76.2% of total activated interventions. In the Centre, the same initiative represents 64.9% of interventions. In the South, the other interventions, if assessed in relation to their percentage rate of activation, appear fragmented, almost pulverised, while in the Centre, they appear more representative of the programme, among them guidance in pathways for training or professional placement stands out the most. The different use on behalf of the regions of the measures that compose the programme reveals different models and logics of public action; those of the Central regions are based more on the mobilisation of the various institutions

present in the territory and on a principle of activation, and those of the Southern regions are still founded more on a passive model of labour policy. The possibility of activating pathways for training and professional placements puts in the foreground the educational function and the role of mobilising agent that the region plays with respect to other institutions, first and foremost with respect to secondary schools, universities, chambers of commerce, professional bodies, the national social security institute (INPS). Actors that have a pivotal role in building employment pathways for the youth are relevant.

Amongst them, Youth Guarantee attributes a fundamental role particularly to the employment centres. As has been revealed also by a recent research on Youth Guarantee undertaken in France⁴, the

different effectiveness of the programme is due to the many biographical pathways of the young but also and perhaps most of all to the efficiency of the employment centres, to the capacity of these to play, initially, an informative function and later to connect the territory's labour demand with a qualified supply of labour. The innovation of these actors in Emilia Romagna does not appear to be left to chance but regulated by specific agreements, based on the activation in universities of those vocational training and qualification courses most demanded by firms, based on framework agreements between the provincial chambers of commerce and the firms. The employment centres envisaged by Youth Guarantee do not only play an intermediation and harmonisation role between demand and supply of labour but a true education for work function, mediated by specific forms of socialisation. Taking charge of the youth on behalf of the employment centre is conditioned by the willingness of the youth to commit to specific pathways of vocational qualification. In such pathways, the youth meets other youths in the same condition but also other actors, who similarly have also committed to permitting and favouring his or her vocational qualification. The inter-institutional agreements which the employment centres can avail themselves of reorganise local labour markets, making them more accessible and more protected, but also redefine the shared logics of labour policies; they permit the youth to discover his or her own qualities and to transform these into capabilities; the policy fills, in this case, vacuums that exist between the school worlds and the worlds of work.

The employment centres in Emilia Romagna manage to perform these functions as they avail themselves, in the implementation of Youth Guarantee, of other programmes, such as the programme activated by the Ministry of Labour and of social policies "growing in digital".

In the context of this programme, the youth can attend some courses aiming to increase their digital

competencies, competencies that are amongst the most sought after by firms.

The public action, in this case, contributes to the construction of the work identity of the youth favouring the formation of an identity that is attractive to firms. Similar functions substitute important, cognitive, and normative functions to traditional "subsidiary" functions of labour policies, and permit the youth to discover their qualities, to transform them into competencies, and to make them valuable in the labour market.

The economic incentive in the mechanism of construction of work identities of the youth performs an important function if aimed towards the actual increase of their competencies as, over and above the possibility of sustaining some personal costs, for example, those related to lodging, food, and transport; it nurtures in the youth the perception of the value that society places on their professional training. Such a mechanism encourages a social inclusion model based on attentiveness and care in selection that is geared toward the actual qualities of the single individuals and their desire to learn and get involved.

THE REFLEXIVITY OF REGIONAL PUBLIC ACTION

Youth Guarantee is currently in the second programming cycle. Almost all Italian regions have approved the reprogramming; in some regions, however, the new interventions have already been launched, whilst in others, the launch is still being awaited. The analysis of the reprogramming shows what Cersosimo and Wolleb defined as "the institutional learning" that the policies can elicit (Cersosimo and Wolleb 2001). Such learning emerges most of all from the different financial articulation of the regional implementation plans. Some regions, amongst them that of Emilia Romagna, interpret Youth Guarantee as a political programme that is developed in a determined time period and that begins in such a period to produce its effects, and they

Table 1. Actions Launched by Type of Intervention and by Geographical Macro-Area (%)

Macro-Area	Placement training	Voc. Educ. & Train	Guidance	Apprenticeship	Extracurricular traineeship	Civil service	Self-employment	Mobility	Bonus	Total
North-West	6.5	5.4	28.7	-	47.0	.7	.0	.1	11.6	100
North-East	16.7	2.8	5.4	.3	62.7	1.3	1.0	.0	9.8	100
Centre	2.4	6.3	10.1	.1	64.9	3.1	.4	.3	12.4	100
South-Islands	5.3	3.0	2.7	.0	76.2	3.1	.3	.4	9.0	100
Total	7.7	4.4	11.7	.1	62.7	2.1	.4	.2	10.7	100

Note: Source: Adaptation from ISFOL 2016 report.

adopt a “procedural logic”. In the specific, such regions recognise an impulse function to the work placement of the youth entrusted, in the first programming phase, mostly to the incentivisation of extracurricular traineeships, and in the second phase, mostly to the employment bonus.

In other regions, amongst them that of Sicily, the procedural logic of the policy and the different efficiency of the interventions in passing from the first to the second programming phase is not evident; the second phase appears to be very like the first. The logic of the employment bonus is different to that of the incentive to the extracurricular traineeship; differences are firstly the direct beneficiaries that are no longer youths but firms. The incentives to the traineeship and employment bonus, if analysed as consecutive actions, redefine the intersubjective perception of the economic advantage (incentive or bonus) activated by the policy measure and this becomes attractive only if it generates a system of value creation (new knowledge) for the youth and the firms. The financial reprogramming realised by the Emilia Romagna Region and the centrality placed in the second phase to the employment bonus, modifies the intersubjective perception of the economic

advantage, which from being a momentary advantage can transform itself into an opportunity for innovation of productive processes. The economic incentive, offered to firms in the shape of tax relief, can be interpreted in an exclusively economic fashion, as a mere economic advantage, or as an economic contribution destined to sustain the initial work experiences of youths in firms aiming to temporarily nurture the perception of the value that firms place upon their firm-level inclusion. The different interpretation derives from the effectiveness of the first phase, from how much it has been possible to motivate youths during their traineeship, and from the quality of the intermediation work undertaken in the selection and recommendation of interns for the various firms. The second programming phase is one that can correct possible mistakes made in the first and can reinforce the results obtained. It is a phase during which the reflexivity of the public action must be able to assess and reward the work of different actors, such as the employment centres and within these the staff specialised in the identification of training and education needs of youths and in their job guidance. The reflexivity of the public action presents itself not only in the sense given by Rosanvallon as integration

of the results obtained on the way to the temporal redefinition of the policy but also as diffusion of the objectives of the policy and as request to the beneficiaries of their willing participation (Rosanvallon 2008). In this perspective, the training events organised by the Emilia Romagna Region, for example, seminars in which a regional council member discusses with a European parliamentary member and with exponents of the chamber of commerce and the confederation of artisans, are occasions not only for ongoing assessments of the results of the policy but also for the diffusion of its aims amongst the youth and the firms.

CONCLUSIONS

Placing itself in a sociological tradition common to the sociology of public action, this research explores the institutional conditions for the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee Plan in two different Italian regions: Emilia Romagna and Sicily. Specifically, the study investigates the effects of the regional public action on local labour markets and identifies the regional actions that contribute to a greater degree to the process of favouring innovative institutional learning from the labour policies both amongst the youth and the firms. Starting from the hypothesis that the effectiveness of Youth Guarantee derives from the capacity of public action to de-particularise the labour relation and enhance the competencies of the youth, it has been asked what effects could: timings of implementation, public communication, repartition of resource internal to the plans, and reflexivity of the public action realised by the two regions in the implementation of Youth Guarantee, have on the above process. From the comparison, two different models of public action emerge: one more pro-active and inter-institutional followed by the Emilia Romagna Region; and one less participatory and more exclusively based on economic subsidies realised by the Sicily Region. The implementation times of the plans regulate the

innovative potential which the policy produces; the timeliness with which the Emilia Romagna Region implements the plan is consistent with national and European objectives assigned to Youth Guarantee, on the contrary, the delay of the Sicily Region in implementation favours the application of the plan by the firms to the formalisation of labour relationships already existing within them. The public communication of Youth Guarantee realised by the Emilia Romagna Region offers the region the opportunity to integrate the policy within a clear and defined political programme and to communicate the processes and the actors involved in the implementation of the programme; in the communication, the youth and the firms appear connected and integrated in pre-constituted systems of inter-institutional agreements aiming to create true pathways for the professional qualification of the labour supply, and new venues for the search of qualified work and institutional learning of the value of qualified labour. The non-exclusive allocation of financial resources to the economic encouragement of youth traineeships in firms and also other public actions such as the personalised guidance of youths in the construction of their employment pathway, carried out by the Emilia Romagna Region, contribute to substituting a measure typical of passive labour policies, such as traineeships, with forms of empowerment of employment centres and of youths. The last dimension emerging from the inter-regional comparison regards the reflexivity of the public action. In the successive temporal implementations of the policy, the Emilia Romagna Region is seen to attribute temporally differentiated and progressive social objectives to the policy. If in fact during the first phase of implementation of the policy, the direct encouragement of youths through the extracurricular traineeship appears to be the public initiative that attracts the greater part of the financial resources of the policy; in the second phase, once the introduction of youths in the labour market has been achieved, the

employment bonus directed to the firms becomes the initiative that is more coherent with the objective of consolidating the labour relationship.

The comparative analysis of the implementation of Youth Guarantee in Emilia Romagna and Sicily contributes to bringing to light some good practices in the regional public action of Emilia Romagna, it has however, in a comparative perspective, mostly the aim of underscoring the procedural character of public action and how the latter can modify or on the contrary reinforce the locally diffuse collective interpretations of labour policies.

Notes

1. For in-depth studies of the “Youth Guarantee”, please see the article by Vesan, P. 2014. “La Garanzia Giovani: una seconda chance per le politiche attive del lavoro in Italia” (The Young Guarantee: A Second Chance for Active Employment Policies in Italy). *Politiche Sociali (Social Policies)* 3:491-496; and the work by Fano, D., E. Gambardella, and F. Margiocco. 2015. *Garanzia Giovani. La sfida (Young Guarantee. The Challenge)*. Milano: Brioschi.
2. See <http://formazione.lavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it>.
3. See <http://formazione.lavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it>.
4. For a presentation of this research, please see Couronné, J., M. L. Leruste, and F. Sarfati. 2016. “La Garantie Jeunes en action: usages du dispositif et parcours de jeunes” (The Youth Guarantee in Action: Uses of the Youth Program). *CEET*, December 2016, pp. 1-4.

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