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# **1 COUNTRY SPECIFICS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT – RISKS FOR LOW-SKILLED YOUNG PEOPLE**

The average number of unemployed people in Norway was 74 643 persons in 2010, or 2.9% of the workforce. 2 541 persons - or 1.8% of the workforce - were younger than 20 years old. 11 446 persons - or 5.2 % - were between 20 and 24 years old.

The unemployment rate in Norway is low. But the number of young people on disability pensions and work assessment allowance because of mental health problems has increased during recent years. About 75% of the new young disability pensioners have a serious or moderate mental illness and they are usually low-skilled.

## **The share of young people without school leaving certificate and with school leaving certificate but without vocational qualifications/college or university degree**

99% of all young people graduating from compulsory school (10<sup>th</sup> grade) enter upper secondary education and training. More than 50% of these choose Vocational Education and Training (VET). More than 1 in 3 people in VET do not complete within the normal time frame. One of the explanations for the high dropout rate is insufficient academic results in compulsory school (lower secondary education) and low motivation for further academic studies. Students whose parents have a low level of education and low ambitions for their children drop out more frequently than students with parents who have a strong educational background.

To some degree, dropouts happen because of a mismatch between the number of applicants and available apprenticeship places, which appears to a varying degree in different areas and sectors over time due to the decentralized industrial structure and fluctuations in the economy and number of applicants. In some areas of the country, the concentration of some industries means that apprenticeship places may not be available or are not available in the sectors that the young people are interested in.

Students unable to find an apprenticeship place are entitled to finalise their academic and practical training in an upper secondary school, but this is seen as less attractive than apprenticeship. With little motivation for further schooling, many students choose to do something else whilst continuing the search for an apprenticeship place. The risk of permanent disruption of training increases the longer it takes to find an available apprenticeship place.

This means that the Follow-up service, operated by the County Education Administration, has a target group of about 30 000 young people each year. Young people are referred from the County Education Administration to the PES if they do not enter upper secondary education after graduating from compulsory school (10<sup>th</sup> grade) or leave upper secondary education without an exam and without being employed. Among 4-5000 young people under 20 have contact with local PES offices each year (approx 1.5% of the age cohort). About 2500 participate in measures provided by the PES, mainly work experience. Among those young people

under 20 who are registered as jobseekers at the PES, approximately two thirds have not completed secondary school. The same situation applies to about half of those aged 20-24 years old who are registered as jobseekers at the PES.

In 2010 the average number of people under 20 who were unemployed for more than one year was 103, and the average for those aged 20 -24 years was 1584. The total average number of unemployed in more than one year in 2010 was 19 669. In recent years, a lack of completed upper secondary education has been shown to have a worryingly negative impact on living conditions - indicators show for instance that none or only a few of those people on social benefits, disability pensions, criminals in jail, people suffering from mental illness and so on, have a completed upper secondary education. This implies a high risk of exclusion from the labour market, meaning that competence requirements to at least VET certificate level is considered to be the minimum to keep a stable foothold in the labour market.

## 2 PES ORGANISATION AND SERVICE PROFILE

The Ministry of Labour is in charge of developing the labour market policy determined by the Parliament. Based on steering signals the Directorate of Labour and Welfare receives its mission each year and is responsible for implementation in the counties being accomplished. The labour market measures are outlined in state budget from Parliament to the Ministry of Labour and further to the Directorate of Labour and Welfare. NAV county is responsible for the local implementation and operation of the labour market policy. Counties determine the composition and organization of follow-up services and labour market measures in their own county according to needs of individuals and the labour market, within given steering signals, budgets and regulations from the Directorate. Reporting guidelines are set by the Directorate.

In 2006, a new Employment and Welfare Administration - called NAV - was established by merging the Public Employment Services, the National Insurance Services and the municipal social assistance services. 'One stop shop' services are set up in all (431) municipalities and (19) counties to provide for co-ordinated services for the public. Through the establishment of new, local Employment and welfare offices, we improve the basis for better coordination and interaction of the local public administrations, their services and benefits, and the enterprises and workplaces. The aims are to better connect job seekers and enterprises, and to have more effective use of available resources and measures through an administration that is better able to contribute to inclusion, participation, welfare and social security among persons who have problems in relation to the labour market.

The labour market measures are outlined in the state budget from Parliament to the Ministry of Labour and then to the Directorate of Labour and Welfare. The PES at county level is responsible for the implementation of the labour market policy, and designing the composition and organization of labour market measures in their own county.

Target groups with priority for labour market measures given by the Ministry of Labour are early school-leavers under 20 years of age and young people (20 -24 years of age), long- term unemployed (more than 6 months), immigrants and people with impaired work capability. PES services are financed by taxes i.e. yearly state budget.

Budget/resources: there is not a separate budget for PES services. The budget is a total for the whole Employment and Welfare Administration. The total budget for labour market measures is approximately 7 300 million Norwegian kroner (943 million EUR). There is not a specific budget for young people.

### **Upper secondary education/VET is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and subordinate units**

In Norway the Ministry of Education and the Directorate of Education are responsible for regulating all main education from elementary school (provided by communities) to upper secondary school, including apprenticeship-training (provided by the county

administration). The education system is rights-based. Education and training is considered a public responsibility. Higher education also is regulated by the Ministry of Education. The curricula of VET and apprenticeship is planned and carried out in cooperation with the employment and labour unions and their different bodies at central and regional level. Public and private companies are key players in providing the apprenticeship training for young pupils between 16-21 years old. The apprentice system in Norway is organised as a 2+2 model; that is two years in upper secondary school and two years in public or private companies following a curriculum for in-company training. This leads to a formal certificate which increasingly is required by employers. VET, including apprenticeship, is a fully integrated part of upper secondary education, regulated by the same act as general education and managed by the county educational administration. By Nov 2010 about 19 000 had applied for apprenticeship in companies of which 84% have had their placement confirmed.

A regular VET certificate may also be obtained through productive work, regular employment with a 25 % longer time-span than the main model, i.e. 5 years of relevant work as a basis for practical examination and test. This option may be of relevant interest to young and older adults who missed the chances in younger years and realize they need a formal competence to stay put in the labour market.

The county administration is responsible through the Education Act to operate a Follow-up service (Support-service) to capture and keep contact with young drop-outs (16-21 years). The main tasks are to motivate them, provide guidance and means in cooperation with the PES, to either resume school or get a job. One of the major challenges to the Follow-up service is to be able to get into contact with all school-leavers. Calculations indicate that as many as 10 000 adolescents between 16-21 years old not being in school or work are not reached by the Support-service.

### **3 ENSURING ACCESS TO PES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

To be able to achieve labour and welfare policy goals, the PES is heavily dependent on systematic cooperation with other key-actors, like health, education and other public authorities and especially private and public enterprises/employers and their unions and social partners. Initiatives to increase interaction have been taken by the Directorate towards other ministries/policy areas and vice versa, after the PES reform (2006), covering health, social, training and other means and measures to improve and offer comprehensive services in parallel when needed. This aims at promoting occupational and social advancement for users outside the labour market, who are at risk of exclusion from working life and dependent on public subsistence benefits. A majority of young people outside work and schools, depending on public benefits, are low-skilled with uncompleted upper secondary school.

The PES is cooperating with the educational authorities on both national (policy-making), regional and local level (career-guidance, running training programs, etc).

A central agreement between the Ministry of Labour and Norwegian Association of Regional and Local Authorities (KS) was signed in May 2007. The main objectives are to:

- enhance and systemize cross- sectoral cooperation to better achieve labour market- and educational goals
- a basis for committed regional agreements between the Labour- and welfare service and Regional education authorities
- an instrument enhancing the cooperation at regional and local level to bring more users at risk of exclusion into work or education (completing upper secondary school). This provides the options for the regional authorities of education and the PES to systemize and improve the targeting of means and measures by combining and coordinating them and confirming plans of actions in regional agreements.

Based on the central agreement, all counties have implemented regional agreements between the PES and the county education administration directed to users of all ages. The Directorate of Labour and Welfare is in charge of following up the implementation and experiences of the agreements in the counties, by operating a cross-ministry-board, seminars, progress-reports and external evaluation, among others. Evaluation highly recommends a continuous focus on further development of both cooperation- and interaction structures, as well as operative training projects combining tailored measures and close follow up of each individual.

Cooperation on young people who have dropped out of education and young unemployed people is a key priority of these agreements and efforts. In most counties this implies the implementation of more detailed interaction-routines between the local PES office and schools and Follow-up services at the schools. Currently most PES offices are also adjusting their internal organisation into particular youth teams and contact persons to enhance the focus on young people and to target their services and efforts more to young people's situation, ways of

communication and needs. Modern ways of contact like sms etc are used, and the use of social media is to be developed. The organising of youth-teams and contact persons in the PES facilitates interaction structures with relevant key-actors, and helps facilitate early contact with drop-outs and other young people outside work and education. The provision of early support to young people for guidance, needs-assessment, Job-clubs, close follow-up, offers of training-measures are considered by PES offices to be essential in achieving active solutions and results for drop-outs and young people outside work and education.

Experiences from the implementation of agreements in the counties still show that it takes time to establish sustainable structures and routines of cooperation and coordination. This was due to both huge resource-intensive administrative reforms in both sectors after 2006 (PES reform and the Promotion of Knowledge in the education system), sector-based differences in mandate, regulations, budgets and sector-culture. It takes time to organize routines, build relations and networks as well as knowledge to exploit the total capacity for action as a basis for operating projects and coordinated means. In counties having established more closer co-operating structures, we see that these structures offer a better basis for closer following up of young people, more coordinated, targeted and tailored services and measures, combined from both PES and schools/county education administration. A lot of other activities may be elements too in cooperating measures in municipalities, as for instance educational fairs and campaigns, social,- health,- mental health services and so on.

When there is a decline in the labour market this often appears to impact significantly on apprentices and applicants for apprenticeships. The mission of the PES is to support educational authorities in the counties with providing work experience or other measures that could be used in the apprenticeship training program when the companies are able to take the apprentice back on and continue the training program.

Currently the Ministry of Education is implementing a politically based comprehensive commitment to address the challenges of how to increase completion in upper secondary school ("Ny GIV"). The PES is a key partner in the implementation of the ministry's projects. One of the key projects aims at developing, co-operating and co-ordinating structures between local PES offices and the Follow-up services at upper secondary schools and for the county education administration to develop more flexible training programs for youth at risk of drop-out (among others). Existing cooperation-agreements, knowledge, experience and best-practise is to be further developed, such as systematically contacting and following up each young person at risk, offering better pedagogical models combining theory and practice in working-life, targeted and tailored measures from relevant sectors, etc. The county education administration is in charge of organising the effort in the county with grants from the Ministry. The Ministry of Labour and respective Directorate have also provided guidance to PES counties about their role and participation. The commitment involves binding participation and coordination among three ministries, which apart from the two already mentioned, also includes the



Ministry of Children and Equality. Another project in this big effort from the Ministry of Education aims at improving transitions from lower- to upper secondary school (for instance strengthening basic skills, summer school, etc). This is due to the recognition of early intervention with young people at risk of drop-out or other risk-factors identified in lower secondary school (age group 13-15).

In order to make VET competence more achievable for lower skilled and lower motivated youth, an alternative model of a 2-year practise-certificate has recently been tested, made available for the counties and to a certain extent put into practise. The certificate may then be further expanded to a regular VET certificate. This has, however, lead to discussions both among different parts of the education sector and the social partners about whether enterprises find this certificate attractive, if jobs exist for which the certificate is sufficient and if this scheme could lead to a two tier labour market. No final conclusion has yet been drawn.

## 4 PES SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**Legal rules on activation (timescale) and who they apply to:** The Act of employment (§14a) states that every citizen applying for services from the PES has the right to have their needs assessed for services to assist them aiming at supporting them into the labour market assessed. This includes young people and drop-outs.

**Target commitment of PES and impact on service delivery:** For young people it is important to motivate them to undertake further education to increase the chances of obtaining ordinary work. This is often done through the regional agreements between the labour- and welfare service (PES) and Regional (county) education administration described in chapter 3.

**Entitlement to benefits/allowances:** Unemployment benefit can be paid during participation in different training and qualifying labour measures. To be entitled to a benefit, you have to have had an income of at least N kr 113 500 (14 700 EUR) the last year before you are unemployed or N kr 227 000 (29 403 EUR) during the last three years. People with no right to a benefit are entitled to individual benefit for people on employment schemes while they participate. This will often be the case for young unemployed people without previous work experience.

**Core services related to registration, individual action planning, and frequency of follow up:** The Government considers it important to prevent long term unemployment and passivity among young people who are at the beginning of their working careers. A youth guarantee is established - a measure that guarantees young people under the age of 20 who are not at school or in employment to be offered participation in a labour market measure. There is also a follow-up guarantee for young job-seekers aged 20–24 who have been unemployed for the previous three months or more, which is intended to motivate them to engage in active job-seeking or some other form of appropriate activity; this involves a follow up of personal or telephone contact from PES staff, and new assessments of individual needs where required. From 2009 the Government introduced a guarantee to ensure that young people in the 20–24 age groups who have been unemployed for an uninterrupted period of six months or more are offered participation in labour market measures.

Guidance is an essential and vital main element in follow-up of all PES-users aiming at clarifying users' needs, and to give assistance to get work. On the basis of a common model of follow-up, the different phases outlined in the model will be used according to individual needs aiming at work, activity or education. The phases are: "ordering", "mapping", "work-potential-assessment", "activity plan" "accomplishing the plan", and "evaluation of completed measure".

**Channels available:** Supplementary to the service and information given by the local PES office, electronic services should be mentioned. [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no) is a central

source of information, both to employers and to job-seekers who may register themselves in a self-register-system. There is also a self-register-system for job-seekers addressing the local office as to unemployment, application for benefits, and others. Special electronic programs for careers guidance are available to assist young people to make choices for upper secondary education and higher education is available. [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no) also contains information on all services, measures, programs and all the types of benefits provided by the PES. Enquiries by telephone and e-mail to the local PES offices are dealt with by national contact centres staffed by counsellors with general competence. 269 people serves approximately 200 000 calls per month.

**Specialist services available to young people:** Specialist services are available to young people as well as all users of PES services according to individual need. Specialist services are provided by specialist-units in PES (for people with physical or psychological problems- etc) as well as services by local authorities (health, - psychiatry, etc). Sheltered workshops can qualify persons with impaired work capability with increased actual and formal competence through adapted training and work training. The objective of the scheme is to help the employee obtain a normal job or a self-financed education.

**PES co-operation with employers and employers' organisations to get information on available jobs for young people:** Twice a year the Directorate of Labour and Welfare, carries out an enterprise survey among enterprises in Norway to estimate the overall problem of skills shortages in the labour market. The surveys give information about current recruitment problems and employment forecasts for the year to come. Lack of labour and skills shortages are measured both by industries and by occupation.

The Norwegian Government and the major labour market partners (employers and workers organisations) have signed an initial Agreement on a more inclusive working life (IW) since 2001. The Agreement is intended to create a more inclusive workplace for the benefit of the individual, the enterprise and society. The specific objectives of the agreement are to reduce sick leave, secure employment for a far greater number of employees with impaired capacity and increase the average age of retirement from working life.

With reference to the above cross sectoral perspectives, several measures may be useful and relevant to maintain the IW target-group's working-ability, i.e. educational means like recognition and validation of informal experience and career-guidance, along with health-services etc.

**PES integrated in regional or local partnerships aimed at integrating young people:** It is a political and administrative goal to provide comprehensive career guidance with educational and labour market perspectives included. White papers (Labour & Education Ministries), national budgets and respective guidelines underline the goals, which also have been integrated in the agreement mentioned above.

Through political processes and decisions, educational reforms and cross-sectoral processes over the last decade, regional *Partnerships for Career Guidance* are now

established in all counties. Partnerships are integrated in county agreements, with all groups of young and adults being target groups. Being a part of the Knowledge Reform, there have also been ongoing processes strengthening career guidance in lower- and upper secondary school. Tasks of school counsellors have been clarified in regulations including advice on competence requirements. New subjects are implemented both in lower- and upper secondary school offering a more systematic exploration and reflection of the pupil's interests, providing opportunities for work-experience in cooperation with local employers.

The aim of regional partnerships is to develop models for binding partnerships to coordinate and cooperate on lifelong career guidance in each county. The lifelong perspective includes both educational and labour market perspectives and guidance-services for all ages at different crossroads throughout their working-life. The county education administration has been given the responsibility by the Ministry to establish and manage the partnerships in cooperation with the PES and other key-stakeholders such as social partners, higher education sector, regional municipal association, and others.

Most counties have chosen to establish career centres in partnership with the PES to provide career guidance services to young people and adults of all ages. Other educational services such as the validation of informal competences are provided at these centres. The career centres complement the ordinary services of counselling and guidance provided in schools, by the PES and other actors to their respective primary target groups. Supplementary to individual guidance services to young people and adults, the centres provides counsellors in schools and at PES offices with competence support. Many career centres also provide separate training courses to both young people when they need to choose their future direction in secondary education, and to their parents. Some centres also play a role in conveying information from employers about their skills needs and requirements to the users of the centres. This may include the organisation of common meetings at the centre for both employers and users, including young people.

A National Coordinating Forum for career guidance has been established under the Ministry of Knowledge and implemented from January 2011. The objectives include strengthening quality and knowledge (evidence), stimulating access and emerge of equal career guidance services to all ages at any point of life, to provide support to regional partnerships and enhance coordination among stakeholders.

## 5 EFFECTIVE PES MEASURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

There is little research on the effect of labour market measures on young people in Norway and it is difficult to prove the effect of these measures for young people especially. Unemployed young people are more likely to participate in labour market measures than older people. Training, work experience and mixed training/work placements are often used but the effects of these measures can be difficult to prove, both in the short and long term. Young people often enter labour measures after a short period of job-seeking or before they have started job-seeking at all. When they participate in labour measures they usually stop job-seeking. It is also questionable whether the work-experience really gives the necessary experience required from the employees for the labour market, even if the common opinion is that work experience helps them to get ordinary jobs afterwards and also helps young people to make up their mind of which type of work is suitable for them.

A lot of projects and programmes directed at young people (both under 20 years old and older young people) have been undertaken involving local PES offices, schools, employers and other stakeholders, with elements of vocational training, work experience and close follow up, tailored to individual needs. The basis is the political given guarantee committed by PES and for the youngest ones (under 20s), the follow up service by the county education administration. Many projects are initiated and granted by other sectors (health, - social,-etc) but very often includes the PES (for allowances and benefits) and training (VET). Some of these projects have been mapped by different ministries and the experiences summarized in reports. Main conclusions and identified success factors include:

- Close individual follow up of young people
- Co-ordinated services and measures from different sectors and stakeholders
- Tailored and targeted measures and training aiming at supporting young people to complete upper secondary school and to get and keep a job.
- Combining workplace training and theory training appears to be pedagogically more optimal, more motivating and provides a better learning outcome
- Co-operation with employers is a key-factor; they are needed as door-openers and support
- Maintaining regular contact with and providing support to employers that have given a training place to young people, is crucial to secure success both for the young person and for the employer to continue to take in young people for work-training.

One interesting example of a successful project is Project 300. In Nordland county a comprehensive project has been conducted (2009-2010 and to be continued) addressing challenges of helping young people without completed upper secondary training (VET) to qualify and integrate into the labour market. The unemployment basis was 850 young people without completed school. The model is a series of measures starting with six weeks of career guidance, motivation and validation of

completed work- and education experience, leading towards a realistic career plan. The plan forms the basis for further qualification aiming at completing upper secondary education and /or getting a job. Results for October 2010 showed that 176 unemployed young people between 19-30 years had participated so far. User survey (N 91) indicated that motivation had increased from approx 30% to 85% for resuming training and completing school. The participants' knowledge of the requirements for training and training options, as well as their awareness of the importance of training and completing school had increased and each had worked out an individual plan for further progress. The project was conducted in cooperation between the PES offices and career centres and the county education administration. The project illustrates to us the crucial significance of high quality career guidance, clarifying of needs and recognition of prior learning and experience as a basis for targeted and effective progress of further training and transition to work.

Some counties have initiated processes and projects to take a holistic approach towards challenges and needs throughout the total growth phase. The point is to see the whole age group from childhood to adolescence and to young people up to 30 years in a context. There is a growing understanding and recognition of the need to take a holistic approach to individual social, educational- and labour-challenges, needs and relevant solutions from early childhood to young adults up to 30. A lot of research has proved how problems may be identified in early childhood and then continue unless one makes early intervention. These projects therefore intend to involve all committed public social agencies with social missions towards children and youth in the communities. Decision makers at both political and administrative levels of communities and counties are needed to be involved, and several municipalities in a region may also be involved (one county). The purpose then is to see every agency's schemes, instruments, measures, competencies and resources in a context to compose targeted, holistic and individually adjusted services, training, measures etc to the young people. The main overall goals are to strengthen the ability and possibilities of young people completing their upper secondary education/VET which provides the minimum formal qualification to be able to keep a foothold in the labour market. These types of complex projects require a high degree of coordination- and interaction and common priorities. Thus these projects are interesting on a national level and compliant with the central agreement objectives, and relevant for further dissemination in the longer term.

## **6 ASPECTS OF TRANSFERABILITY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **Comment on potential transferability of aspects of host country practice to your country**

We find it interesting to see that Austria provides significant measures for the youngest young people:

- more active outreach to youth from PES is performed
- there is a comprehensive variety of instruments and measures administered by PES to avoid passiveness of young people and secure training opportunities for them
- more use of non-profit employment projects (public or private?)
- extensive use of “alternative” apprenticeship-placement for youth who are hard to place, using private companies being supported with subsidies and who are specially supervised and accompanied by public agencies, or non-profit organisations
- a great variety and basis of subsidies to employers and allowances to individuals
- extensive use of subsidised training in institutions when apprenticeship in regular companies is not obtainable
- extensive use of public work-training places by PES
- PES is much more involved with training provisions that in Norway is anchored by the education authorities by law.

### **Conclusion on most effective practices**

Cooperation with education authorities to ensure that more young people get the formal qualifications required to get and keep stable jobs.

Effective practises: more holistic organizing of services including training:

- close individual follow up both during participating in measures and after resuming secondary education
- coordinated services and measures from different sectors and stakeholders
- tailored and targeted measures and training aiming at completing upper secondary school and to get and keep a job.
- combining workplace training and theory training
- cooperation with employers as door-openers and for support
- follow up support for employers that have given a training place to young people to secure success

## **Conclusion on key issues to be addressed by PES**

- 1) How does the Public Employment Service assess, value and address challenges of young people completing upper secondary education in relation to their chances of maintaining a stable foothold in labour market?
- 2) Does the host country know the amount of young people registered on negative living condition indicators? How do you consider the connection with non-completed upper secondary education among these?
- 3) What strategies, schemes and instruments do you use to deal with the above mentioned challenges?
- 4) What can be done to make employers take more responsibility in creating apprenticeship positions and suitable jobs for young people?
- 5) How do you consider the risk of substitution and locking young people into Labour market measures? Is there a risk of making it attractive to leave school to participate in the different measures and receive allowances while other youngsters only get “pocket-money” from their families or small part-time jobs?
- 6) What are your experiences of the importance/effect of career-guidance to facilitate the choices of young people into an appropriate direction? How are such services provided? (PES or education sector or both?) Is career-guidance a part of BIZ-services?
- 7) How do companies/employers respond to shorter versions of regular apprenticeship curriculum (e.g. one year instead of three) ending with an officially recognised certificate?