Integrating services to promote youth employment: Lessons from Finland

ESF Youth Employment Thematic Network

Sharing Paper No. 1
March 2017
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The European Commission’s recent three-year review of the Youth Guarantee recommends a stronger emphasis on supporting the most disadvantaged youth. It notes that an integrated approach to service provision can assist with this. Finland, one of the earliest Youth Guarantee pioneers, has established a network of around 40 integrated support centres for young people. Known as Ohjaamo, these centres offer employment/enterprise support, educational guidance and personal budgeting assistance. In addition, they provide housing, health and recreational guidance.

Across Finland, 80,000 young people used the Ohjaamo services in 2016. The Helsinki centre supported around 6,000 people in its first operating period. However, this represents a small fraction of its service users, as one-off drop-in clients are not recorded on the system.

The centres were co-designed with young people. The environment is casual and relaxed, with services delivered by teams of professionals drawn from different public departments. Ohjaamo also has an NGO and employer presence. To date, in the Helsinki office which hosted our visit, 40% of the young people attending employer events have found employment. The latest satisfaction rating from clients was 9.4 out of a maximum 10.

Seven distinctive aspects of the Ohjaamo model are worth underlining:
1. The importance of high-level support
2. The articulation between policy and practice
3. Young people at the heart of service design
4. Effective service integration is more about people than buildings
5. Location matters
6. The need for a coherent monitoring and evaluation approach
7. Clearly align practice with priorities
1.1. Transnational collaboration in the ESF

Transnational collaboration is at the heart of the EU project. Across Europe, Member States face similar challenges, and we are better placed to face these when working together.

The European Social Fund (ESF) provides an important resource to build human capital and social cohesion. In the current programming period (2014-2020) there is an emphasis on transnationality within the ESF. This is articulated through a Common Framework, which encourages the launching of Co-ordinated Calls for Proposals.

To support these calls, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion has established 9 Thematic Networks, each focused on an important aspect of the ESF. These networks are managed by AEIDL, and facilitated jointly by Thematic Experts and (in most cases) Managing Authorities. This sharing paper was produced by one of these networks, focused on Youth Employment.

1.2 The ESF Youth Employment Thematic Network

The Youth Employment network has a membership of 17 Managing Authorities as well as other stakeholders such as the European Youth Forum and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). An important aspect of the group’s work is to support one another in the design, development and management of co-ordinated calls, which cover the youth employment theme. Another is the sharing of good practice and effective use of the ESF in promoting youth employment.

To this end, the group decided to prioritise supporting the NEET (young people not in employment, education or training) group. Although a heterogeneous group, NEETs comprise some of the most marginalised and vulnerable young people. To enable the group to focus its work, four important sub-themes were identified, as follows:

- Service integration
- Outreach
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The study visit took place over two days. It comprised a preparatory session at the Finnish Ministry, which provided some important contextual messages on youth unemployment in Finland and the background to the Ohjaamo centres. This was followed by a visit to the Helsinki centre, where the group heard from the Project Director, staff members and young people using the facility. Following this, network members had an opportunity to debrief, tease out key points, draw conclusions and identify follow-up points.

This first site visit served as a useful pilot for our approach. Overall, it was successful. However, it also raised key points for us to improve in future, such as the lead-in and preparation time.

1.4 Aims of this sharing paper

The global aim of this paper is to share the key learning points emerging from our study visit. We hope that the findings will be useful for other agencies developing, or already offering, integrated services for young people. In addition, we believe that the lessons have an audience beyond youth stakeholders, as the interest in service integration is wide and growing. Finally, we hope that there are important points here that can help guide and shape future ESF co-ordinated calls across the EU.

1 The Learning Network on Transnational Mobility Measures for Disadvantaged Youth and Young Adults (TLN Mobility – http://www.tln-mobility.eu), co-ordinated by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, pre-dated the Youth Employment Group. Its members have already launched a series of calls.

1.3 The Helsinki site visit

As part of its investigation of Integrated Services, the ESF Youth Employment Network undertook a study visit to the Ohjaamo Centre in Helsinki in October 2016. The centre is one of almost 40 one-stop shop guidance facilities for young people throughout Finland. Prior to the visit, the group was supported by the advance circulation of materials on the Ohjaamo concept. Network members were also canvassed as to the questions they were most interested in answering and the stakeholder voices they would like to hear from during the visit.

In 2016/17 the network is undertaking a series of site visits, each linked to one of these sub-themes. During each of these visits, there will be an opportunity to investigate the operation of a good practice example. The study visits are organised in the form of peer reviews, which give network members a structured way of assessing the good practice example. This also provides the host with the opportunity to gather potentially helpful feedback from its peers.

1 These themes were selected because they present common issues and challenges to our members. As a network, we decided that by investigating each of them further, we could learn about ways to optimise the use of the ESF. There was also a hope that a better understanding of such services might help shape the design of future co-ordinated calls.

• Client activation
• Mobility

These themes were selected because they present common issues and challenges to our members. As a network, we decided that by investigating each of them further, we could learn about ways to optimise the use of the ESF. There was also a hope that a better understanding of such services might help shape the design of future co-ordinated calls.
2. THE OHJAAMO MODEL

2.1 Introduction

This section describes the context, concept and operation of the Finnish Ohjaamo model. It draws upon material presented during the network’s study visit to Helsinki, as well as background papers related to the initiative.

2.2 The Finnish youth employment context

Like many EU countries, Finland faces structural labour market challenges which affect all citizens. Economic growth levels are low. The economy is in transition, with a decline in employment levels in key sectors including advanced manufacturing. Alongside this, the population is ageing. At the other end of the demographic spectrum, research suggests a growing mismatch between the skills employers want and those the education system provides young people with.

Between 2001 and 2015 there was a year-on-year rise in youth unemployment rates. The latest data,¹ from December 2016, shows that the rate for those aged 18-24 in the labour market fell back to 14.7%. This represents a marked drop from the previous year, however it still remains high by Nordic standards.

As in many places, the profile of the youth unemployed group is diverse. It includes unemployed graduates and between June 2013 and June 2016 the number of unemployed graduates aged 25-29 rose, from 3,458 to 4,144.² There is also a growing number of unemployed young people from migrant backgrounds, as the chart below illustrates.

2.3 The Youth Guarantee in Finland

These youth unemployment figures in Finland are in spite of the country’s early and successful introduction of the Youth Guarantee. Finland was in the vanguard of developing the youth guarantee concept, and was one of the pilot Member States for the initiative.

An evaluation of the Youth Guarantee in Finland identified a number of early benefits arising which included:

- A sharper focus on the challenge of youth unemployment and the need for further service development
- A higher profile of youth unemployment at the local policy level


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**Finland youth unemployment rate %**

Source: Finnish Government
- Increased co-operation among the key actors: evidence that more than 50% of agencies working with young people had altered their services.

The evaluation also identified some key implications arising from the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Key among these were that:

- The availability of social and health services was estimated to be less adequate than most other services for young people;
- The greatest challenges were thought to be the lack of a rehabilitation service for those suffering from addiction and the lack of mental health services;
- Finding proper services for the young could be challenging depending on where they live.

Partly in response to these findings, in 2015 the Finnish government implemented the third phase of its approach to delivering the Youth Guarantee by introducing a nationwide network of one-stop shops for young people. This builds on its established 4P approach (Public, Private, People, Partnership) which has been in place since 2013.

2.4 The rationale for Integrated Service Centres

There are clear benefits of collocating public services. In financial terms, there are savings through fewer buildings, reduced overheads and the sharing of back office functions. But there is a bigger prize far beyond this. In Finland, the Youth Guarantee evaluation recognised the need to include a wider package of support services for young people. Specifically, the report refers to social and health services. Young people do not always make full use of such services, and there is established evidence that social and health issues, such as mental health, can be a barrier to their progression. Equally, unemployment can exacerbate physical and mental health conditions.

Consequently, the ability to draw upon a wide repertoire of services under one roof is a major asset in tackling the NEET phenomenon. It recognises that support needs extend beyond educational and vocational inputs and, at their best, such facilities provide a comprehensive support package derived from a holistic assessment process. The physical collocation of services in one place can assist this.

There are also practical advantages from the youth perspective. Given that a personalised support package implies a combination of inputs from different agencies, the Integrated Service model makes it easier for them to navigate the system. Collocated service teams, with a clear understanding of one another’s roles and remits, are well placed to refer clients to colleagues or to involve colleague in the assessment process. In this way, the young person does not have to go to a myriad of services; those services come to them.
The model can also extend beyond public services. Voluntary sector organisations often play an important role in supporting young people, and there is scope to include them in such structures. Additionally – as we saw in Helsinki – employers often perceive shared service provision favourably, and are happy to use established platforms to reach young job-seekers.

Ideally, this collaborative model also avoids the need for young people to fill in multiple forms, often asking for the same basic information. However, in practice, as we discuss below, sharing data remains a challenge.

2.5 The Ohjaamo concept – and the Helsinki model

Ohjaamo centres provide one-stop shop guidance for young people. They form a key plank in Finland’s delivery of the Youth Guarantee. Promoting the 4P Principle (Public-People-Private-Partnership) at the heart of the national approach, there are now almost 40 centres across the country. These operate in more than 100 municipalities, from the metropolitan capital city to Finland’s rural heartlands.

Ideally, this collaborative model also avoids the need for young people to fill in multiple forms, often asking for the same basic information. However, in practice, as we discuss below, sharing data remains a challenge.

The central concept is a low-threshold service providing guidance and support to young people under the age of 30. Within these services, young people can access a wide range of professional support. As well as careers guidance and training, this includes housing, welfare and social care provision.

The word Ohjaamo means ‘cockpit’ in Finnish. Behind this is the idea that the centres put young people in the driving seat, so that they have greater control over their lives and their futures.

Just as important as the range of services on offer is the way that they are provided. A distinctive feature of the Ohjaamo model is the fact that young people have been involved in the co-design of each local facility. Across the country, groups of young people came forward to contribute to the eventual working model, leading to some interesting features. One is that the Ohjaamo Helsinki environment feels informal and non-institutional. Helsinki staff don’t wear uniforms or name badges (although they do in other centres). The layout and design of the interior feels quite unlike a government institution, and more like a large coffee-shop.

Another important feature shaped by the youth input is a reliance on face-to-face relationships between professionals and clients. This insistence on personal support might seem surprising given that the millennial generation are digital natives. It also flies in the face of current public employment service (PES) trends, which increasingly rely upon web-based support services. However, it does confirm a recurring evaluation message about the value of trusted personal relationships as the basis for effective employment support.

As a consequence, entering the Ohjaamo building in Helsinki one is not faced by rows of job-seekers facing banks of computer terminals. The atmosphere is more low-key, with small groups and pairs deep in discussion, in a largely open-plan layout. It is all very relaxed.

Across Finland, each Ohjaamo is located in a town centre, where it is prominent, easy to find and easy to reach. In some respects, this goes against other evidence, which inclines towards neighbourhood-based approaches,

1 European Commission, PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs, March 2015: http://www.pesboard.eu/EN/pesboard/ServiceDocuments/documents_node.html

4 The rationale for a central location in other cases (such as Glasgow) is that territorial gang warfare restricts youth mobility so neighbourhood facilities are not available to all
linked to higher levels of deprivation. Whatever the decision, in the context of the NEET group, the question of location is widely identified as a key consideration, as noted in the Commission’s review of PES practices:

### 2.6 Finance

The costs of each Ohjaamo centre vary depending on numerous factors, including the location and scale of the service. Equally, the financial sources also vary across Finland, although constant features are the inputs from the local municipality, the PES and the ESF.

The Helsinki Ohjaamo centre is the largest and best-resourced in the country. Located in the centre of the nation’s capital, inevitably the building and service costs are relatively high. It is also one of the largest facilities in terms of numbers, with 27 full-time-equivalent staff.

The Helsinki Ohjaamo centre has an annual operating budget of around €1.8 million. The ESF provides around €1.3 million with the Helsinki City Authority providing co-finance. In relation to the personnel budget, 15 of the 27 staff members have their salaries covered by the ESF. Staffing costs account for around 80% of the total budget.

### 2.7 The partnership model

At the national policy level the Ohjaamo model is supported by a number of governmental departments. At its centre is the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, with support from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. There are no national laws or agreements between the ministries, more a collaborative understanding, with regular high-level meetings to review progress.

A national coordinating project (Kohtaamo) supports the development and implementation of the guidance centres and related web-based guidance. This cross-departmental model is quite new and although there is commitment, there are also challenges. These include the fact that each department operates to different targets, even though there are shared ambitions (set out below) for the Ohjaamo centres.

On the ground, there are local variations of the partnership model. In all cases, the local authority and the PES assume a key role. Across the country, additional partners – including NGOs and employer bodies – contribute as appropriate.

Ohjaamo Helsinki has five combined services staffed by people from 27 different professional backgrounds. Within this, NGO agencies assume a key role in providing guidance and support related to housing, migration and sport. Nurses are also on hand to provide health advice, and the centre director noted that it would also be good to have doctors on site in future. As in many other metropolitan areas, young people in Helsinki do not always make best use of available health and care provision.

### 2.8 The operational model

As we have already noted, Ohjaamo adopts a low-threshold multi-agency service model. In practice, this means that the majority of clients drop in to use the wide range of available services. On arrival, they are greeted by a staff member who will deal with their issue or refer them to a colleague if they are unable to help.

A large majority of users (around 90%) drop in and receive support without any further intervention. The

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5 Owing to Finnish housing policies, such neighbourhoods are not prevalent
remaining 10% are referred on for further support. The shape of this is determined by a light-touch assessment process conducted informally with a guidance professional. This will focus, for example, on education and employment goals, the young person’s situation, money, health and social support networks. Throughout, the emphasis remains on the young person being in control, and steering the process in a way that they are comfortable with.

Recent analysis of the service usage identifies the most common support needs in the following order:
1. Employment or entrepreneurship support
2. Educational guidance
3. Personal budgeting and financial support

Across Finland, 80,000 young people used the Ohjaamo services in 2016. The figures below show the patterns of usage by age and gender.

Between opening and September 2016, there have been around 6,000 support interventions through the model in Helsinki. However, Ohjaamo only registers the 10% of clients who draw down the more structured package of support. This reflects the commitment to offering a low-threshold service with easy access and limited red tape for clients. It also reflects a willingness to sacrifice performance data in order to make the service as attractive as possible to those deterred by institutional approaches. As these will include the most vulnerable people furthest from the labour market, this is a rational trade off – particularly as it may encourage the development of a trusted relationship with some of the most marginalised. Finland, as elsewhere, struggles to engage these young people in the Youth Guarantee model.

In recognition that some of the most marginalised young people will not willingly walk into any ‘centre’ no matter how informal, Ohjaamo works in collaboration with others to reach out to young people throughout the city. In some cases, this involves close partnership work with the municipal outreach workers who are addressing the risk of early school drop-out and marginalised youth. In other cases it consists of pop-up events in community locations and facilities heavily used by young people. Detached youth workers, operating out of the Ohjaamo centre, bring the skills and experience required to organise such events.

This physical outreach service is complemented by Ohjaamo’s use of social media to develop and maintain connections to young people. Although the young people contributing to the design of the model requested an emphasis on personalised face-to-face support, there remains an important role for social media in reaching out to the target group, particularly the more marginalised.

A good example is a group of young deaf people in Helsinki who are networked on Facebook and who became aware of Ohjaamo through it. On the day of our site visit, we happened to meet one of the group who was

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6 The 90/10 split is peculiar to Helsinki. In other centres, the ratio is more balanced. Anecdotally, a reason for this is that there is more service choice in the capital. Elsewhere, the entire local youth support team may be operating out of one shared space.

7 European Commission: The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on, October 2016: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079
attending a workshop for this group being held in the building. A qualified electrician, he was struggling to find work and dismissive of the support he had previously received through the PES. He was optimistic that the Ohjaamo model would be better placed to support him, and others like him, in finding employment.

Another of the key partnerships contributing to the operation is with employers. Ohjaamo is building close relationships with employers in Helsinki. This is done through a proactive outreach service to businesses. The emphasis is on identifying those with positive attitudes to youth recruitment and where there are employment opportunities. There is a regular forum enabling hiring employers to meet with young people. The Ohjaamo Centre’s Business Coordinator leads this and, to date, 40% of the young people attending these events have found employment. The centre also links in with the established network of start-up support agencies in the city.

2.9 Some challenges in providing an integrated service

A number of key lessons have already emerged from the Ohjaamo experience.

Collocating staff from a variety of services does not, in itself, create an integrated service. One of the biggest challenges is to support staff from different professional backgrounds to collaborate in a way that benefits young people. This means finding common ground among employees from different professional disciplines, who are used to particular working cultures and established work practices. Ohjaamo recognises that this is an evolving process.

At the outset, staff members had an initial period of sharing and exchange as they contributed to the codesign of the concept. This included the delivery of a support programme, delivered via another ESF-funded programme called TESSU, which was established specifically to support cross-disciplinary collaboration in the centres.

However, it is clear that the real learning begins once inter-disciplinary teams begin working together. As they do, it is evident that across professions there are different expectations and practices. It has also emerged that different professionals use the same terms to mean different things. In short, exposure to other ways of working can be a challenge, in terms of agreeing whose is ‘the right way’. This key question of culture shift is of interest to the Finnish government, and it will be a central point in the overall pilot evaluation.

It is important to note from Ohjaamo that most staff members opt in to work there. That means almost everyone on the team has made a positive decision to be involved, rather than being mandated by their organisation. Given that attitude is such an important part of this collaborative chemistry, this matters.

Ohjaamo staff members retain a line manager in their host organisation who deals primarily with administrative issues – payroll, leave and so on. Managers in the Ohjaamo centre take on the day-to-day line management of the services. An important ingredient for success is that the host organisation trusts the Ohjaamo managers to make best use of their resources. As part of the pilot, this matrix management model is under close scrutiny.

One of the biggest challenges to the single service model – as operated by Ohjaamo – relates to data sharing. As we have noted, one of the potential benefits of this approach is that services can avoid young people being asked to provide their basic information multiple times. This, however, assumes that the service providers are able to share their data.

The Helsinki experience indicates that this remains problematic. Data protection laws are carefully designed to protect citizens from third parties abusing their personal data. These rights are important and well-intentioned. However, one of the unintended consequences is that organisations collaborating to support clients cannot share anything more than basic information. Consequently, each agency has to gather and properly maintain its own data.

On the ground, this means that within Ohjaamo Helsinki, eight different data systems are in operation. During the first year of operations, it piloted a common data system but this proved not to be fit for purpose. Consequently, each provider has fallen back on reliance on their own system, which everyone recognises to be an inefficient way of working. At the national level, work is under way to establish a new, shared data model, but this remains some way off.
2.10 Measuring impact

Underpinning the shared service approach is an assumption that it provides greater impact for less money. What evidence is there that this is the case?

Gathering a clear picture of impact is rarely easy, and there are a number of difficulties with the Ohjaamo example. These include the facts that:

- The project in Helsinki has not been running for a long time – the collocated physical space has only been in place since December 2015. A longer operational window is required before a reliable evaluation study can be undertaken;
- Ohjaamo Helsinki only has tracking data for 10% of service interventions. This means that the outcomes related to the vast majority of interventions are – and will remain – unknown.

At the national level, a working group has developed an evaluation framework for the centres across the country. This group identified a number of key considerations which will influence their work. One is that each Ohjaamo centre is different, reflecting the local issues, the partnership configuration and the financial situation. Related to this is the fact that there are differing levels of local political commitment across the country.

Another issue is that the client group varies for each centre, depending on the existing local service map. Linked to this is the important point about supporting those with multiple and complex needs. This remains a priority; however in practice multiple interventions are often needed to develop and deliver the right support package.

In summary, a comprehensive evaluation of such a diverse service structure is challenging. Although based on established principles, each Ohjaamo centre is distinctive in its service composition. Nevertheless, the national group identified four evaluation domains which are set out in the table below.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation principles, despite local variations, all Ohjaamo centres will gather the information set out in the previous table in a consistent way. As much as possible, they will use existing tools to do this. There are high levels of interest in this pilot initiative, so monitoring data is being shared at national level on a regular basis. There are also regular workshops organised by Kohtaamo to consider particular aspects of the model.

In the meantime, an external evaluation has been commissioned which will report in 2017.

Finally, all Ohjaamo clients are asked to rate the service they receive from the centres. The latest feedback data from the Helsinki centre resulted in an overall satisfaction score of 9.4 out of a maximum 10. This suggests that, with the clients at least, this model is getting many things right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Key question</th>
<th>Evidence required</th>
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| 1. Reaches young people in need of guidance   | Are we reaching those most in need of support? (defined as NEET? Meet YG criteria?) | Number of visits
Client profiles                                                                 |
| 2. The service is useful to young people      | Do young people trust the service providers?
Does Ohjaamo assist in their career progression? | Client satisfaction data
Proportion of clients in guidance for 6 months + who elect to remain until reaching positive destination |
| 3. Integration of youth services              | Do young people get a multi-actor service when needed?
Is there a functioning network of service collaboration and distribution? | Documented scale and distribution of services
Survey of contributing organisations and respective functions |
| 4. Supports positive transitions of young people | Is there evidence that the service is supporting the progression of clients? | Documented transitions after service interventions |

Source: Kohtaamo
3. THE WIDER LANDSCAPE OF SERVICE INTEGRATION

3.1 Introduction

This section looks beyond the integrated services model for young people in Finland. It considers the current policy context around service integration and includes some examples of one-stop shop provision relating to young people.

3.2 Integrated services – old wine in new bottles, or an idea whose time has come?

The European Commission’s review of the Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative draws upon the learning from three operational years. The report sets out six key success factors. One is the need for “strong institutional backing and internal coordination.” Another is the importance of “a single point of contact helping to provide tailor-made services specific to the young person’s needs.” Both imply the need for an integrated services approach.

However, as the Eurofound study of social inclusion of young people found, the effectiveness of the partnerships required to produce these varies across Europe. It notes that in Member States like Finland, Sweden and Austria major efforts are being made to strengthen meaningful and broad partnership working. However, it notes that this is not universal. Encouraging government departments to collaborate is already regarded as a major advance – even before taking account of NGOs, youth organisations and other key players like the social partners.

The integrated services concept is not new. Nor is it confined to provision for young people. A recent review of integrated support for the long-term unemployed in Europe underlined some of the challenges in developing a collocated service approach in particular:

“Within the wide range of types of local arrangements, we can identify one group of countries which is very far from a one-stop shop model. This group includes Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia and Turkey. Experts from these countries highlight the lack of experience of coordination (Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Turkey), overlaps (Italy), rare cooperation (Lithuania), and the lack of decentralisation (Macedonia).”

The physical collocation of services – the so-called ‘one-stop shop’ model – examined in Finland is only one component of this strategic drive for integrated services. It is possible to have an integrated services approach without collocated services. Conversely, collocating services is not, per se, enough to guarantee an integrated services approach. However, where there is high-level commitment to collaborative service integration, as in Finland, it seems that the effort and investment required to achieve this can catalyse and transform the partnership culture.

3.3 A snapshot of other approaches to one-stop shop models

We have already noted the distinctiveness of the Finnish model. In the final section we will return to these points. However, across Europe there are several variations of the one-stop approach. Some examples provided by members of the Thematic Network are briefly described below.

Croatia
There are 11 CISOK centres operating in ten Croatian cities. Supported by the Croatian Employment Services (CES), their primary focus is to support a well-functioning labour market. The centres are open to all stakeholders (including parents, teachers, employers and unemployed people of all ages), so are not specifically aimed at youth. However, in 2015 young people under the age of 29 accounted for 58.4% of the 60,833 service users. Consequently, the CISOK services form an important strand of Youth Guarantee delivery.

In addition to these centres, Croatia has two specific youth support centres. One is located in Zagreb, the other in Split. Again, the focus is on supporting employment progression through a range of support services that include counselling, job-search support and access to job-seeking tools. There are plans to extend the number of Youth Centres to other parts of the country.

Sweden
UNGKOMP is a joint project between the Swedish Public Employment Service and 20 municipalities, running between 2015 and 2018. It provides a platform for these public-sector partners to collaborate on tackling youth unemployment. The model comprises multi-disciplinary teams operating out of accessible locations. The model places emphasis on the need to build trusted relationships with young people. It builds on the success of an earlier project, Unga In, which stressed the need for involving young people in service design.

62% of Unga In clients progressed to positive destinations, half of which were into employment.

Belgium (Brussels and Wallonia)
A network of support facilities is in place. The Public Employment Service for the Brussels region (ACTIRIS) has established a service targeted at young registered job-seekers. However there is no comprehensive support service that covers, for example, health and housing issues. Clients are referred to the appropriate service providers after an initial consultation session. Plans are under way so that the Cité des Métiers à Bruxelles will provide information related to employment, training and education in the capital.

Throughout Wallonia, there are the Maisons de l’Emploi and the Carrefours Emploi Formation Orientation but there is no single point centralising the different streams of information solely dedicated to young people.

3.4 Some final observations

It is evident that the Finnish Ohjaamo model is a distinctive example of one-stop shop youth provision in a number of ways. Amongst these are the breadth of its service offer, its emphasis on youth co-design and the relaxed non-institutional nature of its facilities. We return to these and other points in the concluding section.

From this work, including the discussion with ESF Managing Authorities, it is clear that a number of them are planning either to start or to augment their one-stop shop provision. Among the members of the Youth Employment Network, interest in this has been expressed by Greece and Andalusia, whilst Croatia and others are in the process of redesigning their existing models.

The evidence suggests that integrated service provision remains an important component of successful youth employment support provision. There are indications that collocated services can make an important contribution to that offer.
This final section draws together the key learning points from our examination of the Ohjaamo model in Helsinki.

We have identified seven distinctive aspects of the Ohjaamo model that are worth underlining. These are as follows:

1. **The importance of high-level support**

   Partnership is easy to say but much harder to do. Effective partnership requires clear leadership, willingness on all sides and clear shared goals. Effective cross-sectoral partnership also needs high-level commitment and investment of resources. Where service integration is primarily driven by a cost-cutting agenda, it is less likely to succeed.

   It is evident from our study visit that the Ohjaamo model has support across national government departments at the highest level in Finland. This is reflected in a commitment at the municipal level, which matters in a country with a strong culture of devolved decision-making.

2. **The articulation between policy and practice**

   The concept of service integration in Finland – and in the Nordic countries generally – is not new. The Ohjaamo centres build upon earlier waves of shared service activity, which extend back to the LAFOS centres of almost 20 years ago. Consequently, working across departmental silos is not as radical as it would be in other Member States.

   What we also see is an ambition to integrate policy and practice goals on the ground, indicating a high degree of sophistication around partnership working. Again, this is not easy, as separate professional disciplines and policy silos have created environments where performance and results are measured in different ways.

   In the Ohjaamo model we can see a concerted effort to address this, and to establish a clear link between the high-level policy goals and the operational realities on the ground. This takes time; however the Ohjaamo monitoring and evaluation model represents an important step forward in this alignment process.
3. Young people at the heart of service design

We have noted that young people have played an active role in the design of the Ohjaamo centres. This was one of the most surprising findings for some of our network members. Yet there is a growing evidence base that involving customers in product and service design makes sense in all service settings. This includes examples of ethnographic approaches to ensure that even the hardest to reach youth can help design the services they use.

Service co-production, once again, is relatively well-established in the Nordic countries, as we also saw from the Unga In example from Sweden. In other parts of Europe it is less well developed. To work well it requires the creation of right conditions, techniques and commitment on behalf of the ‘commissioners’. Most importantly, it requires a willingness to listen, and not to assume that ‘we’ know all the answers.

When we do listen, the results can be surprising. For example, the emphasis on face-to-face contact was perhaps an unexpected finding from a generation so comfortable with technology.

4. Effective service integration is more about people than buildings

Collocated services offer an important step towards integrated service provision. However, collocation is not synonymous with service integration.

Again, building on their extensive experience in this field, colleagues in Finland have placed great emphasis on the related human resource and organisational culture challenges. On the HR side, it is notable that Ohjaamo staff are ideally volunteers rather than conscripts. This means that they have a curiosity and interest in working in this collaborative setting. It is also important to recognise the matrix management structure that is in place, where trust is placed in the Ohjaamo line manager to support staff and to drive performance.

Alongside this, the challenge of constructing a hybrid organisational culture is huge. We have seen that this has been given special attention, with a separate, related ESF project in place to support the culture shift process. However, even with this in place, Finnish colleagues noted that much of this culture adaptation takes place on the front line, in the workplace, on a daily basis.

Perhaps the key take away here is the recognition of the scale and complexity of this dimension of the work, and the need to invest appropriately. This reinforces the earlier message about service integration being an unlikely source of budget savings if conducted effectively.

5. Location matters

Ease of access is widely assumed to be a core component of effective one-stop shops. In the Finnish capital, this has been translated into a city-centre shopfront location with good transport links. Elsewhere, the optimum location may vary, depending on the territorial situation and the target client group. For example, elsewhere the most accessible premises are sometimes deemed to be in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

However, a universal conclusion is that location is important, requiring careful consideration at the planning stage.

1 See the Copenhagen Job Centre case study in Supporting Youth through Social Innovation, URBACT, 2013, page 22: http://urbact.eu/supporting-urban-youth-through-social-innovation
6. The need for a coherent monitoring and evaluation approach

Within the extensive debates around service integration is an inbuilt assumption that they are better for clients – in particular those who are most marginalised in society. However assumptions can be dangerous, so it is important that we gather evidence enabling us to test our hypothesis.

It is evident from the Ohjaamo model that the design and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation framework has been an integral consideration from the start. Overseen by a cross-departmental team, the approach is pragmatic and a good basis for collaboration. However it is also evident that despite a robust and structured framework, a number of practical challenges remain. One of the most important of these relates to data-sharing and difficulties in developing workable systems. Resolving this remains work in progress.

Another important issue relating to monitoring and evaluation pertains to client tracking. Another major surprise for our network members was to hear that a large proportion of Ohjaamo Helsinki clients are not captured in their data. There are clearly some risks associated with this approach, for example an under-reporting of clients may ultimately lead to reduced funding. However, as our next and final point underlines, this risk is calculated and in line with Finland’s strategic priorities linked to the Youth Guarantee.

On the ground, the strategic decision not to record details of drop-in users of the Ohjaamo centre illustrates the Finnish response to this challenge. It acknowledges that continuing to capture data from every client at the outset would be a major deterrent to the most marginalised young people using this service. The gamble is that the low-threshold, light-touch approach will encourage them to come in, providing an opportunity to develop that key trusted relationship. The evaluation will go some way to telling us whether this gamble has paid off.

7. Clearly align practice with priorities

Although NEET is a relatively new acronym, the group it describes is not. In the past decade our understanding of the group – the profile of such young people, the barriers they face, effective support measures – has improved. What has also become clear is that regardless of the economic cycle, there is a core group of young people who struggle to make a smooth transition from school to sustained employment. The profile of this group includes young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, those with health issues and newly-arrived migrants.

Much evaluation evidence points to the importance of guidance and trusted relationships to support people – of all ages – into employment. Yet many of the young people furthest from the labour market are mistrustful of official services, and reluctant to engage. These are the young people identified as a future priority for the Youth Guarantee both in Finland and in the recent European Commission review.
Also available

TRANSCATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ESF 2014-2020, an introductory guide (version 2) – November 2015

This guide sets out the rationale for transnational co-operation in the ESF and describes the components of the Common Framework established in the 2014-2020 period to remedy the shortcomings experienced in the previous period. These include the common themes, the co-ordination of calls for proposals, the thematic networks and the EU-level platform. It also covers the possibilities of the flexible approach, the mainstreaming of gender and social innovation, and how the ESF can contribute to Macro-Regional Strategies. It concludes with answers to frequently asked questions, references, a list of National Contact Points and an extract from the relevant legislation.

THEMATIC NETWORKING, a guide for participants. Technical dossier no. 1 – April 2016

This dossier is a comprehensive guide to making a success of the ESF Transnational Platform’s mutual learning function. It describes the role and functioning of the nine thematic networks that support transnational co-operation in the ESF. It sets out the different stakeholders involved, and suggests a number of principles and tools for animating their interaction. It details the planning phase, including how to carry out a problem assessment and construct a logical framework. It explains the procedure for co-ordinating calls for proposals before covering various tools to support mutual learning: selecting good practices, conducting peer reviews, and preparing case studies and policy briefs. Separate chapters address the effective use of web conferencing, social innovation, gender mainstreaming and the expense reimbursements system.

ESF TRANSNATIONAL CALLS, Writing and managing calls for proposals – February 2017

A step-by-step guide to designing transnational calls for proposals in the ESF, from added value, institutional capacity and priorities, through design, partner search and the TCA, to assessment. Piloted at the seminar on transnational calls in November 2016, this guide has been updated to include Member State plans for transnational calls in 2017 and 2018.

These documents are available for download, in English, at http://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality.

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