

PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

SUSTAINABLE ACTIVATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING (NEETs)



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OR TRAINING (NEETs)**

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Introduction



What is the purpose of this toolkit?

This toolkit has been developed as part of the Mutual Learning Activities of the European Network of PES¹ and is intended to **assist you in designing and implementing your approach to activate people not in employment, education and training (NEETs)**. A focus is put on young NEETs, and the transition from school to work or further education and training.

The toolkit provides concrete guidance and tools for PES to assess the NEET challenge and set priorities; draft and implement an Action Plan; and develop new tools, measures and competences from scratch. The toolkit can however also be used to review and refine existing practices, while taking into account wider organisational and contextual factors.

The toolkit helps you to answer the following key questions:

- ▶ What are the main characteristics of the NEET groups your local/regional PES services address?
- ▶ What groups of young people are among the NEETs addressed by your PES? What hampers their transition from school to work or further education and training?
- ▶ What priorities need to be set in your PES? What tools, measures and competencies are needed?
- ▶ How can your PES structure collaboration around an 'employment path' approach?
- ▶ How can your PES identify and overcome barriers of disadvantaged groups (e.g. low skill levels, little or no work experience, discrimination due to a migrant background, low motivation, personal and psychological problems, multiple employment barriers)?
- ▶ How can your PES develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation measures?

Why have a PES Network toolkit on sustainable activation of NEETs?

There are plenty of reasons why an individual is neither in employment nor in education and training, hence, has become NEET. Spending extended periods of time in NEET status can have severe individual short- and long-term consequences for a person's career. A range of factors contribute to the risk of becoming NEET: early leaving from education and training, a lack of qualifications, a migrant

¹ For more info, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1100&langId=en>

background, or a history of unemployment in the family. But structural factors such as a difficult labour market situation also play a role. Understanding these risk factors is essential, as it will inform the design of measures.

For young people, the transition from school to work, or from one educational level to the next (lower secondary to upper secondary education, or lower secondary to vocational education and training) is a critical step in their career. This is particularly the case for young people who are at risk because of social problems, health issues or learning difficulties. Interventions at that stage help to identify their strengths and resources, and support the process of identifying opportunities. This is important, as young people who go through long periods of inactivity in that phase have a higher risk of becoming disengaged, and, as a consequence, moving further away from the labour market.

Therefore, in the context of the **Youth Guarantee (YG)**, Member States have committed to guaranteeing that all young people under 25² get a good-quality, concrete offer of employment, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education, within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.³ This concerns all young people – whether they are registered with employment services or not. To this end, the YG tries to prevent young people from becoming NEET, but also aims to reach out to those who have already become disengaged, and find the right way to activate them. Hence, the NEET challenge is in the focus of European Youth Employment Policy.

Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive, tailored and partnership-based approach, with interventions as early as possible. PES have an important role to play in facilitating young people's transitions from education to work or further training. Sustainable solutions are needed to ensure young people do not start their working life with extended phases of unemployment and inactivity, and prevent long-term instable work histories. In the context of the YG, **PES have played a key role by acting as conductors and facilitators in YG management and partnerships**, mobilising the cooperation and resources needed to establish effective connections between different stakeholders and resources.

2 Please note that in some countries (e.g. Croatia, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and others) the age limit has been extended to 29 or even 30 years.

3 For more info, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

In about one-third of Member States, PES have a central conductor role in the YG, and in the rest PES are an important partner, with vital connecting roles⁴. When designing and implementing a NEET Action Plan focusing on young people's transition from school to work or further training, different settings and circumstances need to be taken into account. This toolkit provides a method that is applicable to various conditions across the EU.

Who is the toolkit aimed at?

This toolkit is aimed primarily at all PES practitioners who are involved in designing Action Plans and setting up, running and evaluating PES practices to meet the NEETs challenge. With necessary adaptations, it can also be useful for the regional and national partners of the PES – especially in the framework of the Youth Guarantee.

How is the toolkit structured and how do I navigate around the information?

The toolkit is based on a '**NEET journey to employment or further training**' approach, in alignment with the PES 2020 strategy emphasis on promoting gainful career transitions. The whole path is about providing timely and tailored support for young people.

This 'journey' can be broken down in several steps, each related to key tools and measures enhancing employability and employment. **Three main steps** can be differentiated:

- ▶ Step 1: Designing a PES Action Plan for the sustainable activation of NEETs
- ▶ Step 2: Implementing the Action Plan
- ▶ Step 3: Monitoring and Evaluation

Each step contains a range of practical information tips around what to think about and which actions to take. This includes 'practical tips', tools and templates, PES examples, and signposts to further information. The toolkit ends with a summary section, which includes a tool table that can be used to summarise the work related to each of the steps and draft the final Action Plan.

The toolkit is developed for people in a variety of PES roles. You can navigate around the information in various ways depending on your role.

4 Implementation of the Youth Guarantee. PES Network 2015.



Are you a practitioner charged with designing, developing and implementing practices for NEETs?

If yes, reading the full toolkit is highly recommended, especially the 'Practical tips' boxes.

Are you a senior PES manager?

If yes, you should ideally review Steps 1 and 3 on designing and evaluating the Action Plan. Moreover, the boxes with 'Practical tips' and 'Interesting examples' from European Member States might be interesting for you.

Are you an operational delivery manager?

If yes, you can familiarise yourself with Step 2 on implementing the Action Plan. It might also be worthwhile reading the key messages and key highlights boxes at the beginning of each Step.

Are you a policymaker in PES and/or a government ministry?

If yes, screening the key messages and key highlights boxes at the beginning of each Step will give you an overview of the content of the toolkit. You may also find the boxes with 'interesting examples' from European Member States inspiring.

Are you a performance manager?

If yes, the section in Step 3 on monitoring and evaluation will be interesting for you.

Step 1.

Designing a PES Action Plan for the sustainable activation of NEETs



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

In this step, you will learn:

- ▶ How we define the NEET outreach and activation journey.
- ▶ How to assess your NEET challenges and set priorities.
- ▶ How to identify tools, measures and competencies to meet the challenges.
- ▶ How to identify the internal and external involvement in meeting the challenges.



KEY MESSAGES

This toolkit focuses on the sustainable activation of NEETs. Activation, however, is based on successful outreach strategies. Outreach calls for close cooperation with education providers, NGOs and local youth work organisations in particular, so the PES Action Plan needs to be designed in dialogue and focus groups with key stakeholders, including the NEETs themselves. NEET groups can have a very diverse background, and there are many reasons why the transition from school to work is difficult for young people. Analysing the groups your PES deals with will have an impact on setting priorities to ensure PES practices address the most vulnerable groups. Identifying further risk factors is important to ensure measures are sustainable and help to avoid drop-out and long-term unemployment. A thorough analysis should build the basis for a sound NEET Action Plan. PES will however need help here, as some problem clusters require deeper collaboration with partners from the social and health care system in particular.

1.1 Sustainable activation of NEETs

The emphasis in this toolkit is on *activation* of NEETs. It focuses on PES services to provide support to improve the employability of NEETs, and helping them to find and sustain employment. However, activation builds on good preventive and outreach systems. So, in alignment with the PES 2020 Strategy⁵ and PES conductor role, PES need to look at the entire transition journey from education to employment or further training; look at the different stages and services available during the journey; assess where the journey possibly needs to be enhanced; and contribute accordingly in developing the entire public employment system.

Designing, implementing and evaluating the PES Action Plan for NEETs needs to be done in collaboration with key internal and external stakeholders all along the way. A '360 degree' approach (see figure 1 overleaf) can be used, where the design, implementation and evaluation is seen in a multi-stakeholder and networking context. You can think of the PES 'NEET team' being in the middle, and around it the customers (such as the NEETs), internal and external partners and management. Focus groups, workshops and surveys can be used to get input, ideas and critique from the 360 degrees of stakeholders (see chapter 3.3.2 on evaluation, where this approach is more closely described).

In figure 2 overleaf, it is shown how the activation phase builds on outreach. In the context of young people, collaboration – especially with educational institutions, local youth work organisations and NGOs – forms the basis of activation. Outreach and Activation I (transition from school to work and fostering employability) overlap, so close collaboration is needed in order to avoid young people being 'lost in transition', and failing to register in PES.

The first stages of the journey contain a lot of preventive, **supportive and empowering measures**, which form the basis of securing the path, and for activation measures later on. In the beginning stages – OUTREACH – PES can provide information and collaborate with educational institutions, teachers or even parents.

⁵ Public Employment Services' Contribution to EU 2020: PES Strategy Output Paper. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9690&langId=en>

Figure 1 360-degree input into design of the NEET action plan

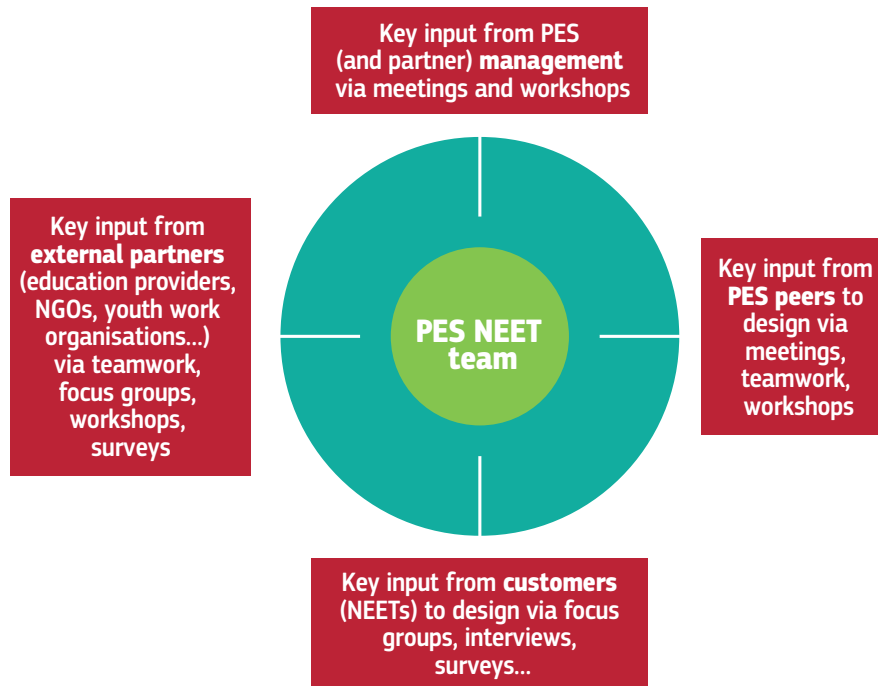
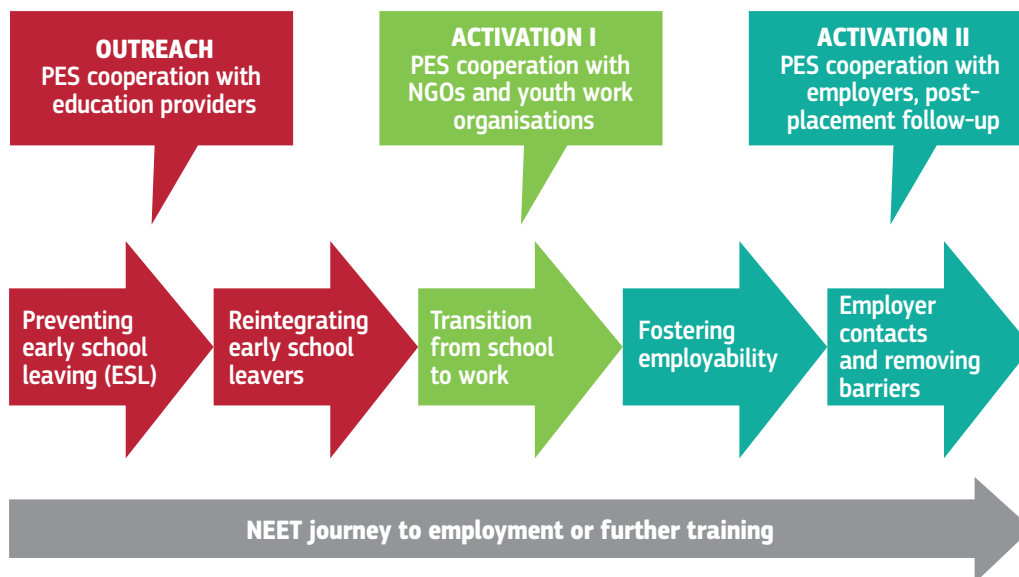


Figure 2 The NEET journey to employment or further training: Outreach and Activation



The emphasis in this toolkit, however, is where the conductor role of PES is strongest, in **activation of NEETs**, such as providing support for improving employability and for finding and sustaining employment, marked as ACTIVATION I and especially ACTIVATION II. However, activation builds on a good preventive and outreach system, so if that is not in place,

PES efforts need to be geared more towards helping to build this system. As the stages before PES get in contact with NEETs often overlap with activation, they are briefly treated in this toolkit.

For instance, from a NEET prevention and activation perspective, the journey starts with prevention of early

school leaving (ESL). Early school leaving and a lack of skills and qualifications have been identified as two of the biggest risk factors in finding work and laying the foundations for a stable work history.⁶ Hence, the risk of becoming NEET brews already in education. Students may fail in school for multiple reasons, including learning difficulties, health issues, low educational attainment, problems in family, loss of motivation and others. Consequently, empowering and preventional work needs to start within education. This includes proactive work with schools and various forms of drop-out prevention and outreach: early identification of risks, career counselling within education, PES events and awareness raising, collaborative working, and data sharing with PES and others.

Between the measures within education and measures closer to work placement lies a 'grey zone' (in figure 2, ACTIVATION I), which is a critical stage of transition from school to employment or further education and training. This is the stage specifically addressed by the Youth Guarantee, as here many young people become 'lost in transition'.

Addressing this 'grey zone' is critical, as being NEET often means **being off the radar of regular mainstream services of the social system, including PES services**. There can be different reasons why NEETs do not get in touch with PES: lack of knowledge of PES offers, low expectation and mistrust in officials, bad reputation of PES among young people, unbelief in availability of jobs in a high unemployment environ-

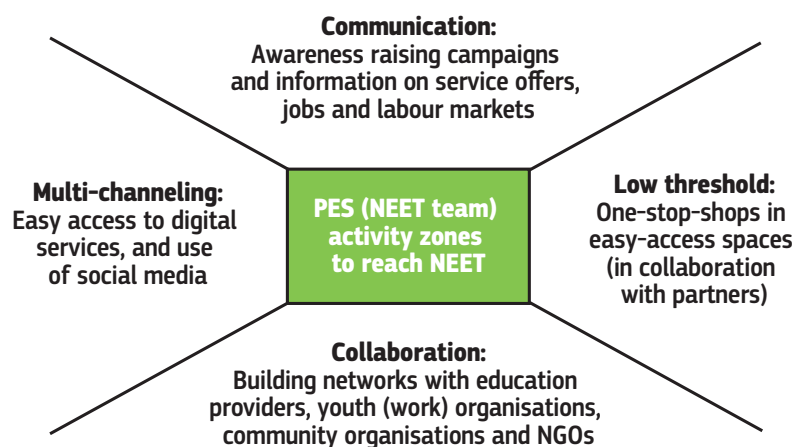
ment, and others. In its conductor role, the PES needs to address these challenges with various 'zones' of activity (see figure 3 below) ranging from information on labour markets, awareness raising and advertising its offer, developing easy-access digital services and use of social media, providing low threshold one-stop-shop counselling services (often in collaboration with partners and in easy-access spaces, like shopping malls) and by developing its own career management offer.

In order to get into contact, and build trust, intermediaries like NGOs, voluntary organisations, community activists, youth workers, youth ambassadors and 'role models' are needed. Especially collaboration with youth work organisations can assist PES in several regards: Youth workers can help PES to reach out to certain groups of youth, but beyond that, can also ensure that young jobseekers are better prepared and motivated.⁷ Such collaboration practices should be supported by clear collaboration agreements (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding between the main organisations involved) and should be carried out by qualified and experienced staff. This will help to encourage young people to register with PES early, so there is enough time to decide on the right activation measures.

6 For figures see: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/statistics-and-indicators/statistics-and-graphs/labour-market-prospects>

7 For more info see the report: 'The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment. European Commission, DG EAC, Brussels, 2015. http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/contribution-youth-work_en.pdf

Figure 3 PES activity zones to address low level of registration of NEETs



1.2 Assessing the NEET challenge and priorities of PES

1.2.1 Analytical tools to assess the diversity of the NEET challenge

The concept of NEET refers to a very diverse group of (young) people without employment, education or training. This diversity increases when the NEET rate is high, as it then contains a large number of young people, also well educated, who are not just without a job, but disengaged from services because of being discouraged about finding a job. In principle this is not a particularly vulnerable group in the short term, but may become one if non-employment continues. But then there are also the more vulnerable groups, with low or disrupted education, disabilities, immigrant and refugee background, and people coming from low-income families who have other barriers to employment. Efforts are needed in all NEET groups, but priorities need to be set to address vulnerability, and this has to be reflected in the PES NEET Action Plan.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Designing NEET policies and practices

When designing policies and actions to re-engage NEETs with the labour market or with education, the diversity of the NEET population needs to be addressed. The different national situations and the needs and characteristics of the various subgroups have to be taken into account, and the one-size-fits-all approach must be avoided.

This toolkit offers five analytical tools for designing the PES Action Plan⁸:

1. A tool table to assess your national NEET clusters and discuss the implications for your PES' planning;
2. A tool table to identify specific NEET groups and set priorities for your PES;

⁸ Based on: Mascherini, M. et al. (2012) NEETs – *Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*. http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_files/pubdocs/2012/54/en/1/EF1254EN.pdf

3. A tool table to identify further risk factors and assess their influence on your PES' priorities;
4. An assessment tool to position the priorities of your PES in an effective employment path;
5. A 'NEET challenge assessment table' to summarise the result of the analysis.

1.2.2 National NEET clusters and their initial implications

According to the analysis of EUROFOUND⁹, the composition of NEET populations in different Member States is very diverse. Broadly, European countries can be clustered into four groups (see below). This clustering exercise can be helpful for your PES when setting priorities. However, clustering per country has to be quite general and 'broad-brush'. We are aware that local and regional situations can differ considerably from an overall national situation. Hence, all action plans need to be tailored and updated to the particular situation of your PES.¹⁰

Characteristics of the **first cluster** (for example, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) include low NEET rates with a high share of inactive people. Many NEETs have work experience and they are often low skilled. There are few discouraged workers in these countries, i.e. people who are not searching for jobs because they believe jobs aren't available. As the overall NEET rate is low in these countries, the NEET group is mostly vulnerable and disengaged, i.e. people facing multiple barriers to entering active life.

The **second cluster** (for example, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Poland and Slovakia) displays high NEET rates, with a high proportion of female NEETs. NEETs here are mostly inactive and without work experience. A large share is highly educated and many are discouraged workers. This cluster is almost the exact opposite of the first, and as the NEET rate is high, it contains a high level of diversity: both less and more vulnerable groups.

⁹ Cf. Presentation given by Massimiliano Mascherini (EUROFOUND) at PES Network YG conference, 8 December 2015 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14531&langId=en>, and: Mascherini, M. et al. (2012), *ibid*; and: EUROFOUND study 'Exploring the Diversity of NEETs', (2016), available at http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1602en.pdf

¹⁰ For NEET statistics, see EUROSTAT: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/EDAT_LFSE_20, and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_education

The **third cluster** (for example, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain) comprises countries that have been badly affected by the economic crisis and significant rise in youth unemployment. They have high NEET rates and a majority of NEETs are male. NEETs are mostly unemployed, but often have prior work experience. Countries in this cluster have a high number of NEETs with a high skill level and a high share of discouraged workers, and thus contain a high level of diversity and both less and more vulnerable groups.

The **fourth cluster** (for example, Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Luxembourg and Slovenia) is rather heterogeneous but displays below average NEET rates. Most NEETs are registered as unemployed and have previous work experience. There are few discouraged workers and NEETs have, on average, a medium skill level. Diversity is considerable, but not as high as in the second and third clusters.¹¹

Tool table 1 EUROFOUND 'NEET Clusters' and their implications on the PES NEET Action Plan

Use tool table 1 to initially assess what might be the focus of your PES NEET Action Plan. The examples given in the right column are only indicative and meant as food for thought in your discussions.

CLUSTER	CHARACTERISTICS	ACTION PLAN AND MEASURE IMPLICATIONS	EXAMPLES OF ACTION PLAN FOCUS
Cluster 1 Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low NEET rate • Inactive • High work experience • Low skilled • Low level of discouragement 	Mostly vulnerable NEETs The plan needs to address low skills, skills upgrading and life-coping skills.	Collaboration with prevention, holistic life-skills development, outreach, upgrading of skills, motivation and perspectives.
Cluster 2 Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Italy, Romania, Poland, Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High NEET rate • High skilled • High level of discouragement • Inactive • Low work experience • Female 	High NEET rate means many diverse groups so NEET plan needs to address high diversity, different levels of education and vulnerability, and invisibility of some NEETs.	Diversified Action Plan addressing different groups and stages of transition, attention to providing work experience; attention to young female NEETs.
Cluster 3 Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High NEET rate • Unemployed • Work experience • High skilled • High level of discouragement • Male 	Diverse like cluster 2; needs to address discouragement and thus invisibility of NEETs.	As cluster 2, but need to build on work experience and establish employer contacts; attention to young male NEETs.
Cluster 4 Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Luxembourg, Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below-average NEET rate • Unemployed • Work experience • Medium skilled • Low level of discouragement 	As most NEETs are registered as unemployed, most NEETs are 'visible' and can be taken as the main basis of planning.	Collaboration with prevention, upgrading of skills, building on work experience.

¹¹ The clusters are based on the EUROFOUND research, see footnote No. 6. Please note that from the EU-28 countries, Croatia and Malta are not included in the original (2012) research.

1.2.3 Identifying NEET groups and PES priorities

Taking a closer look at the subgroups of NEETs reveals more clearly if there are more or fewer vulnerable groups, and if they are more or less often in contact with services like PES. Yet, an individualised and diversified understanding of NEET is needed. Identifying groups and clusters is a planning tool, and must not lead to 'labelling' or 'stigmatising' customers or 'cementing' a certain situation.

The main subgroups within, in order of vulnerability, can be summarised as follows:¹²

- ▶ **Disengaged:** This group includes young people who are not seeking jobs or education, and are not constrained from doing so by other obligations or incapacities. It may also include discouraged workers as well as other young people who are pursuing at-risk lifestyles;
- ▶ **Unavailable:** This group includes young carers, young people with family responsibilities and young people who are sick or disabled;
- ▶ **Conventionally unemployed:** This group includes those available and actively looking for work, which can be further subdivided into long-term and short-term unemployed;

- ▶ **Opportunity-seekers:** This group includes young people who are actively seeking work or training, but are holding out for opportunities that they see as befitting their skills and status;
- ▶ **Voluntary NEETs:** This group includes young people who are travelling and those constructively engaged in other activities such as art, music and self-directed learning.

The five categories identified (above and in figure 4 overleaf) include a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people.¹³ It includes people who are extremely disadvantaged and others who are able to choose voluntary exit from the labour market and education.

The *disengaged and unavailable* are those who are most 'off the radar' of PES, who fail to register, and are thus in the 'grey zone' referred to above. It was pointed out above that addressing this 'grey zone' calls for PES to keep an eye on the entire transition journey from education to employment, and develop activities related to all four 'zones' (communication, low threshold, [target-group specific] multi-channeling, and collaboration), which requires close collaboration between PES and other organisations.

The *conventionally unemployed* may be likely to become disengaged and thus enter the most vulnerable group – especially if unemployment is protracted – as they involuntarily suffer from a lack of available jobs. The opportunity seekers are more likely to be non-vulnerable and to come from a more privileged background as they voluntarily decide to remain outside the labour market and education system in order to hold out for opportunities.

The same may apply to the *voluntary NEETs* who have decided to follow alternative trajectories and who can be constructively engaged in other non-formal activities, and can in fact be quite resourceful. It is also important to realise that those who decide against employment because of child care are another type of 'voluntary' NEET. PES should have a view on the extent of that group, to avoid making wrong conclusions about the size of the NEET group they are dealing with and make sure resources are not wasted unnecessarily.

Conversely, the group of *disengaged* young people and those who have unsuccessfully tried to enter the labour market (or who have lost faith in trying



PRACTICAL TIPS

Avoiding 'labelling' and 'stigmatising'

Taking stock of the overall situation, analysing which NEET groups are your PES' main clients, and having a closer look at the risk factors they face are important analytical steps that should feed into the planning of your actions. For instance, these steps can help identify possible gaps in the service offer. However this should not lead to 'labelling' or stigmatising certain groups. NEET is a status changing over time, as youth transitions – moving in and out of the labour force and education – are no longer traditional linear steps from school to work, but often complex and protracted, and highly individual. Institutional and structural factors, such as the parents' social and economic status, ethnicity and cultural background are also becoming more diversified.

This means that analysis and assessment of NEET status and NEET groups need to be regarded as fluid categories, and should be updated regularly, and at short intervals, to keep up with rapid changes.

¹² Groups identified by Mascherini et al., (2012).

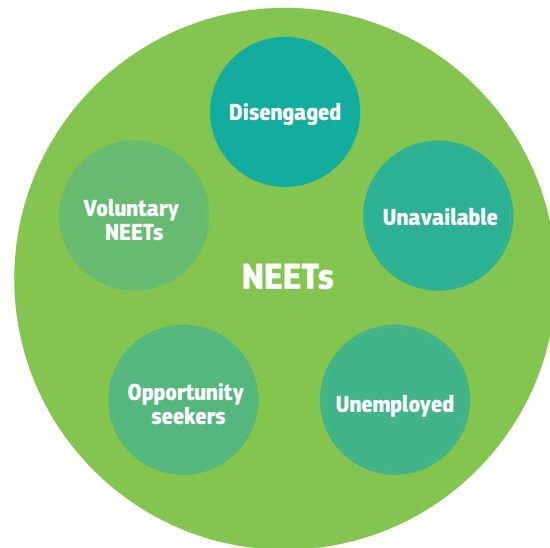
¹³ Ibid.

in the first place) and have since given up their attempts are more likely to be vulnerable, with very complex situations and needs. This group is also more at risk of pursuing dangerous and asocial lifestyles.

Finally, the *unavailable* group includes a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable people: young people with disabilities who need support in order to participate in the labour market or education, young mothers who are unable to afford childcare, as well as young mothers with a high household income who voluntarily decide to exit the labour market to take care of their children.

This heterogeneity of the NEET population needs to be addressed when designing policies and measures to re-engage NEETs with the labour market or with education. The different needs and characteristics of the various subgroups have to be taken into account, and the one-size-fits-all approach must be avoided.

Figure 4 The heterogeneity of NEETs (with darker shades of green indicating higher vulnerability)



Adapted from EUROFOUND 2012/2016

Tool table 2 NEET subgroups and assessment of their relevance for PES NEET Action Plan

Use tool table 2 to assess how relevant and important the particular subgroup is for your PES NEET Action Plan. Three asterisks (***) means this is the focus and priority of the Action Plan, while fewer asterisks mean secondary and tertiary emphasis.

NEET SUBGROUP ASSESSMENT	DESCRIPTION	ASSESSMENT
		*** HIGHLY RELEVANT ** SECONDARY RELEVANCE * TERTIARY RELEVANCE
Disengaged	Not seeking work, discouraged (often not registered by PES)	
Unavailable	Young people with family responsibilities or sick or disabled	
Conventionally unemployed	Long-term or short-term unemployed seeking work (registered in PES)	
Opportunity seekers	Seeking work or training, but holding out to see benefits and opportunities	
Voluntary NEETs	Engaged in self-directed activities	



PRACTICAL TIPS

Designing practices based on the sound analysis of further risk factors

Some young people are at greater risk of becoming NEET and suffer from a subsequent scarring effect than others. Women, young people with disabilities, young people with a migrant background, those with a low education level, those living in remote areas and young people with a low household income have been found to be at greater risk of becoming NEET than others. Additional intergenerational influences have also been shown to increase the chances of young people undergoing extending phases of unemployment. For example, having parents with a history of unemployment, or with low education levels, or divorced parents proved to increase young people's likelihood to drop out.

Identifying the nature of these risks can help design measures to prevent or tackle NEET status. Working with young people with high and/or multiple risks calls for a collaborative approach in PES, especially with NGOs, and social and health services.

1.2.4 Identifying further risk factors and PES priorities

Further elaborating on the analysis of the NEETs, you need to take a closer look at important risk factors.

Please use tool table 3 to assess the relevance and importance of particular subgroups for your PES NEET Action Plan. Three asterisks (***) means this is the focus and priority of the Action Plan, and two or one asterisk(s) means secondary and tertiary emphasis.

Tool table 3 Assessing relevance of risk factors for PES Action Plan

RISK FACTOR	DESCRIPTION (BASED ON OVERALL EU ANALYSIS)	ASSESSMENT
		*** HIGHLY RELEVANT ** SECONDARY RELEVANCE * TERTIARY RELEVANCE
Low education	Young people with a low level of education are three times more likely to become NEET compared to others.	
Migrant background	Young people with a migrant background are 70% more likely to become NEET compared to nationals.	
Disability	Those declaring or suffering some kind of disability are 40% more likely to become NEET than others.	
Divorced families	Those young people who suffered the divorce of their parents are 30% more likely to become NEET than others.	
History of unemployment	Having parents who experienced unemployment increases the probability of being NEET by 17%.	
Low household income	Young people with low household income are more likely to become NEET than others.	
Remote location	Living in remote areas increases the probability of becoming NEET up to 1.5 times.	

Mascherini et al. (2012)

1.2.5 Positioning PES in the journey

The NEET toolkit is based on a '*NEET journey to employment*' approach, which aims to promote timely and tailored support for young people at several stages of their transition from education into employment. Hence, when developing your PES NEET Action Plan, you need to:

- ▶ consider the whole journey,
- ▶ identify how well it is functioning at the moment – with the current services, and
- ▶ decide where the priorities of your PES are.

It was pointed out in the beginning that the emphasis in this toolkit is on *activation* of NEETs by PES, i.e. in the stages after prevention and outreach, and establishing contact with NEETs. The emphasis of PES in this role is during the transition to work and in establishing contact with working life.

Activation is in many ways based on the work done through prevention and outreach practices, which can include:

- ▶ preventive work within education,
- ▶ career guidance available in schools, PES, and training institutions,
- ▶ reintegration of drop-outs back on track,



PRACTICAL TIPS

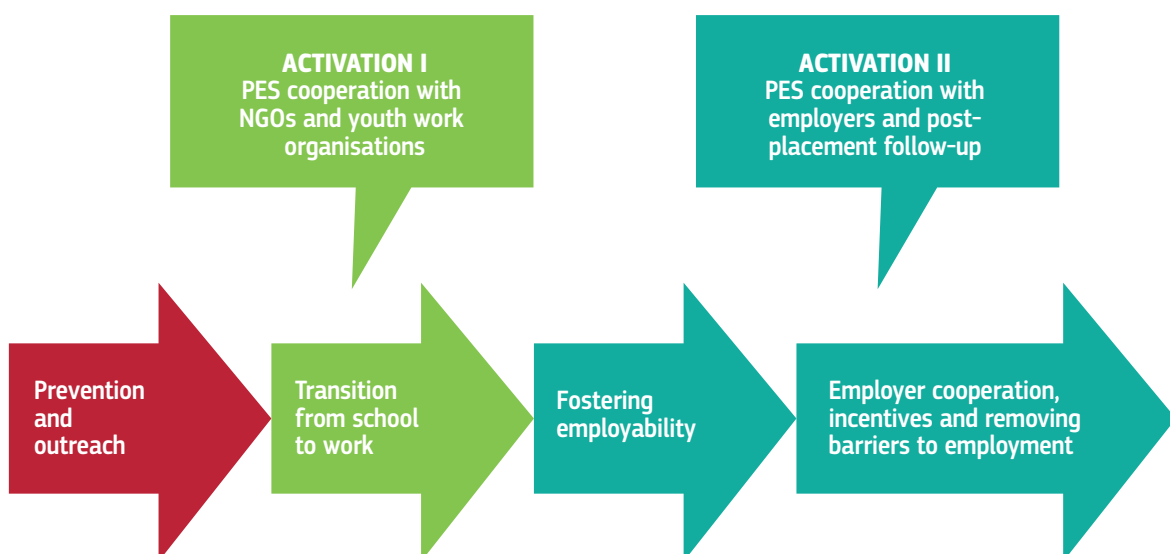
The interdependence of steps on the employment journey

If the first stages of the path are not in good shape, then it is very likely that steps designed to address later stages will also fall short of expectations. While in this toolkit, we focus on activation, we would like to point out that the PES NEET Action Plan, in alignment with the PES conductor role concerning the whole journey from education to employment, needs to address the entire path in an appropriate manner. This can include devoting efforts to enhance actions in all areas that are underdeveloped (for instance, step up the efforts to collaborate with schools and NGOs to establish career guidance, improve outreach to certain groups and develop suitable regulations for data sharing).

- ▶ youth outreach by youth work organisations and NGOs, and
- ▶ collaboration and data sharing on NEETs between education providers, PES, NGOs and others.

Use tool table 4 overleaf to assess how relevant and important it is to focus on a particular stage of the path in your PES NEET Action Plan. Three asterisks (***) means this is the focus and priority of the Action Plan, and two or one asterisk(s) means secondary and tertiary emphasis.

Figure 5 The NEET journey to employment: Activation



Tool table 4 Assessment tool to position priorities of PES in the journey

STAGE FOR POSITIONING PES EMPHASIS IN THE PATH	INDICATIVE DESCRIPTION	ASSESSMENT *** HIGHLY RELEVANT ** SECONDARY RELEVANCE * TERTIARY RELEVANCE
Collaborating with schools to improve prevention and outreach	Information and promotion of PES services, providing career and working-life information and counselling, visits to PES, participating in job-fairs and events	
Collaborating with NGOs and youth/social work organisations to improve outreach	Collaborating to enhance outreach and addressing (multiply) disadvantaged groups, using partners' access channels to promote PES services, provide career and working-life information and counselling, visits to PES, participating in workshops, job-fairs and events	
Transition from school to work or further education and training	Personal advisers and case managers in PES, assessment and action plans, practical information, collaborative one-stop-shops, collaboration with VET providers, second chance programmes, work-based learning	
Fostering employability	Help with CV drafting, information on job markets, improving job-search skills, preparation for job interviews, job-search support, upgrading skills, job-specific training	
Removing barriers to employment	Intensified counselling, collaboration with social and health work, vocational education and training preparatory measures, rehabilitation activities, language courses, mobility support, tailored training	
Collaborating with employers	Enhance young people's understanding of labour market needs and requirements through job trials, internships, short spells of work experience, on-the-job training, subsidised employment, vouchers for training or employment	

The outcome of the first step of designing a PES Action Plan for NEETs can now be summarised in a NEET challenge assessment table, which gives the main features of the emerging Action Plan (see tool table 5 overleaf). You also need to integrate the feedback coming from partners and stakeholders via the focus groups, etc. you have used into your design summary.

Take a look at your notes and assessment from the clusters, NEET subgroups, risk assessment and the journey, and partner feedback, discuss the assessment questions (and add more as relevant), and make a note of the outcome in the right column in a few key sentences.



Tool table 5 NEET Challenge Assessment Table

DESIGN DIMENSION	ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT OUTCOME IN A FEW SENTENCES
Cluster assessment	In few words, what is the initial cluster outcome informing the plan – is the focus primarily on low educated, disengaged NEETs, or is the task more complex and include highly educated NEETs, calling for a broader and modular plan?	
NEET subgroup assessment and feedback from partners	What was the outcome of relevance/importance of the subgroups? What is the message from partners and the NEETs themselves? How important/big is the most vulnerable, i.e. disengaged, group?	
NEET risk factor assessment	What was the most important observation about the risk factors and/or their combination?	
Employment journey assessment	What are the strong and weak points of the employment path, and where will your PES concentrate its efforts in the Action Plan? Perhaps you will look at priorities spanning several years and focus more in detail in the first year Action Plan.	

As the final outcome of the entire design phase, it is advisable to crystallise the NEET analysis to a few sentences: a **problem statement** and **proposed solutions**, which you can then use as the opening chapter of your PES NEET Action Plan.

EXAMPLE



Problem statement and proposed solutions

The main NEET problem in our area are the disengaged, non-registered NEETs who have been discouraged to look for jobs. We will concentrate mainly on this group in the first year. We do not have sufficient knowledge of the actual size of this group, but according to the message coming from our partners, particularly youth workers, it is growing. In particular, our collaboration with NGOs needs upgrading to address this target group.

As unemployment is high, and rising, we have also a growing number of highly educated, unemployed jobseekers. Our services have been insufficient for this group and we need to upgrade those services, while also looking into the growing e-service possibilities.

Finally, we need to upgrade our collaboration with employers to have a broad range of opportunities for work-based learning and practical training at hand; including short internships offering first work experiences, as well as full-blown apprenticeships leading to a recognised qualification. This will make sure we have something to offer to both low educated, and highly educated job-seekers.

1.3 What skills, tools and measures are needed in PES to realise the Action Plan?

1.3.1 Overview of activation tools

On the basis of the assessment made in the NEET challenge table and the outlined priorities, it is now time to identify what competencies, tools and measures are needed in PES to address the NEET challenges identified.

It is necessary to take stock of **what skills, tools and measures are already available** in PES, and in the network, and what is perhaps **missing and/or needs to be improved**. This is an initial assessment, and more details of the measures are given in the second phase of the toolkit: Implementation.

The NEETs, especially the more disengaged and vulnerable NEETs, need a personalised and tailored approach. Often a combination of personal advice and active methods (e.g. something to do and try out, such as in workshops or internships) works better than just talking over the table. It is also important to emphasise the continuity of measures, as a person's NEET history is often riddled with breakdowns. With NEETs it is also often important to have go-betweens and coaches (like NGOs) to secure the

success of the plans and transitions. Success with NEETs comes by **combining measures, tools and collaboration**.

In terms of personnel and skills, the **personal advisers, counsellors and case managers and teams** designated for NEET activities – full-time or part-time – are core to PES activities.

The advisers and counsellors use **assessment of skills, competences, qualifications and aspirations**. Some PES use **profiling** of customers, which means assessing the situation and distance of the customer from the open labour market.¹⁴

EXAMPLE



Analysing NEET groups and profiling young NEETs in Malta

In Malta, a Youth Guarantee pilot project (NEET Activation Scheme) with a profiling exercise of NEETs was carried out. Research and data on the predominant NEET groups in Malta show that 26.5% of unemployed youth in Malta were single parents (hence inactive), 9.6% had a form of disability or learning difficulty (hence only employable with restrictions), 9.8% were regular jobseekers registered with the Maltese PES for longer than six months, and another 9.6% for less than six months.

The remaining 44.6% of unemployed youth were not registered as jobseekers, hence the PES was not aware of what this group was doing. It was assumed, though, that this group was not necessarily disengaged, as potentially many of these young people could have an undeclared job or could be registered with private recruitment agencies.

The pilot project addressed young people up to the age of 25 regardless of whether they are registered with the Maltese PES or not. They received an individual profiling and competence assessment, and 40 hours of direct contact with a youth worker, as well as 80 hours of training intervention consisting of: motivation and behaviour; labour market orientation session; CV writing and interview skills; and communication skills. The profiling included recommendations and suggestions for the beneficiary's future development and to further improve his/her capacity. Data protection regulations allowing, the profiling of the dropouts was shared with relevant stakeholders in the sector for further action.

About half of the programme participants moved on to employment or further study within twelve months of completing the scheme. The programme also led to an enhancement of registrations of young people with the Maltese PES.

During 2015, a NEETs Census was conducted. The objective of this Census was to identify NEETs and provide them with services which are tailored according to their specificities and aspirations. The NEETs Census consisted of a questionnaire aimed at gathering the relevant information on the characteristics of the NEET population and their expectations of education and the labour market. Such a close intervention provided insight on the young people's perception on Government interventions and the awareness of Government programmes, thus ensuring that future policies and measures are targeted at the specific needs of the NEET cohort. Following this Census it emerged that NEETs in Malta can be sub-divided into three categories:

- ▶ Transition NEETs- Those young individuals who have chosen to take time out before progressing onto further or higher education opportunities;
- ▶ Floating NEETs- Youth who lack direction and motivation. They tend to have spells of being NEET in between further education courses and employment with no training;
- ▶ Core NEETs- Youth with social and behavioural issues, including those who come from families where "worklessness" and unemployment is accepted as a norm and not much importance is given to further and higher education.

These findings contributed to the development and design of the NEET Activation Scheme II.

¹⁴ Konle-Seidl, R. (2011). *Profiling Systems for Effective Labour Market Integration*. PES to PES dialogue. DG EMPL. And Bimrose, J. & Barnes, S-A. (2011). *New Approaches to Profiling and Holistic Assessment*. PES to PES dialogue. DG EMPL.

EXAMPLE



Vouchers system in Poland

In Poland, a voucher system was introduced in 2014 to help young people do a range of things: acquire the practical skills needed to undertake a job and develop work experience; take up a job; and increase their job search activity. It also supports young people with beginning their careers and supports geographical mobility. The target group is people under 30 who are registered with the unemployment office as 'unemployed'. PES are the main implementers.

Four voucher schemes are in place:

- ▶ First, training vouchers are available to cover the cost of training (vocational courses and those providing professional qualifications), any required medical or psychological examinations, and the costs of travel and accommodation (if the classes are held outside the place of residence).
- ▶ Second, internship vouchers help an unemployed person undertake a traineeship with an employer for a period of six months. Employers who hire an unemployed person after the six month internship receive a bonus in a form of lump sum. These vouchers also cover the costs of travel to the work place and the costs of any necessary medical or psychological assessments.
- ▶ Third, an employment voucher provides employers with funding towards the remuneration costs of employing an unemployed person aged under 30. The employer must employ the person for at least six months after the funding period which should last at least 18 months.
- ▶ Fourth, the voucher for settlement provides an unemployed person with funding to cover housing costs required to take up employment, other paid work or a business activity far away from their current home.¹⁵

On the basis of assessment, counsellors make **individual action plans**, offer career advice and provide **practical information** on various benefits, transport, etc. Various **preparatory measures** to improve the person's competencies and employability are used (such as improving motivation, coping strategies, 'soft skills' and **job-search skills**), usually in collaboration with external partners such as NGOs. 'Soft skills' refers to communication skills, the ability to relate to people and having self-esteem. Sometimes tailored training courses and second-chance education is needed – and provided in collaboration with outside trainers. **Web-based counselling** and e-coaching is becoming increasingly widespread, especially for highly educated jobseekers.

When the time is right, **job-searching, on-the-job-training, apprenticeships, subsidised work, vouchers** and **job placements** are used in collaboration with employers in particular. Vouchers are subsidies in the form of purchasing bonds, which are given to the customer, in order to emphasise the role and power of the jobseeker in making the choice of placement.

1.3.2 Assessment of tools, measures and competencies for activation of NEET

Use tool table 6 overleaf to assess tools, measures and competencies that are available in your PES to realise the Action Plan and make initial notes with key words on 'what to do'.

- ▶ Three asterisks (***) means the tool, measure or competence is needed, available and adequate to realise the Action Plan (note that the adequacy of a tool depends on which particular subgroup of NEET it is meant to help).
- ▶ One asterisk (*) means the tool, measure or competence is needed and available but needs improvement.
- ▶ A dash (-) means the tools, measure or competence is needed, but is missing and needs to be established.

¹⁵ Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee – A contribution of the PES Network. Brussels 2015.

Tool table 6 Assessment of activation tools

TOOLS, METHODS AND COMPETENCIES AVAILABLE	ASSESSMENT *** ADEQUATE * NEEDS IMPROVEMENT – MISSING	WHAT FOLLOWS? NEXT STEPS FOR IMPROVING THE SERVICE OFFER
Designated and competent NEET counsellors		
Tools and measures for assessment of skills, competencies and aspirations		
Making individual action plans		
Web-based counselling and e-coaches		
Providing group and peer group counselling		
Improving coping and 'soft skills' in workshops and training		
Job-specific training and upgrading of skills		
Tools and measures to improve job-search		
Traineeships		
Apprenticeships		
Work trials, work practice		
Vouchers either for training or employment		
Subsidised work		
Cooperation with social and health work on family issues, substance abuse and others		
Other, what?		

1.4 Whom to involve inside and outside PES

1.4.1 Internal involvement

Depending on the assessment of the NEET challenge, and what PES have already in place in terms of internal responsibilities, structures, methods and capabilities, the internal team responsible for implementing and follow up on the Action Plan needs to be identified. This is usually done by the youth department, or by designating a special team or unit in PES to work with the NEET challenge.

Taking part in a NEET team does not necessarily require a large time commitment. Responsibility for NEETs does not always mean a full time responsibility, as it depends on the circumstances and goals of the PES. If such a team does not already exist, and experience with NEETs is thin, the PES Action Plan needs to identify how building up the team and competencies can be done.

1.4.2 Outside involvement and building partnerships

Based on the NEET challenge and the PES tools and competencies assessment, the key partnerships and outside collaboration needed to realise the NEET Action Plan must be identified. PES alone cannot provide suitable support to young people who have complex needs. Successful practices – for instance the previous ESF-funded project Youth Integration (Unga In) from Sweden – show that well-organised cooperation can lead to more effective working and all parties gain more from the same resources.¹⁶

A similar practice is in place in Denmark: regional and local Youth Guidance Centres (UUV) work closely with PES and the youth education institutions, and have the authority and obligation to follow up on all

¹⁶ The previous Swedish 'Unga In' practice is described in more detail in a 'PES practice fiche' on the DG EMPL PES practices webpage.

young people who have left/graduated from lower secondary education up till the age of 25. They have a special responsibility to follow those that have not engaged in or have dropped out of an upper secondary or a vocational education. Notably, this latter group will be followed and approached even though they are in employment in order to support them to go back to education. To ensure that young people are able to acquire a qualification that allows them to have a sustainable career, the UUV assess the extent to which young NEETs have the academic/vocational, personal and social competencies to begin and complete an upper secondary education, and refer them to suitable measures.¹⁷

Depending on the situation concerning the entire employment path, the priorities might be to strengthen NEET prevention, or outreach, or the transition from education to work by developing individual NEET counselling and intermediary measures; or there may be more of a focus at the end of the path by developing job search techniques, work trials and connections to work.

If the weak point and emphasis is in the beginning of the path, collaboration and partner priorities are the educational community, NGOs, and social and youth workers. If the weak point and emphasis is in the transition phase from education to work, collaboration with NGOs, various trainers and workshops are key partners. If the last phases of the path need development, contacts with employers are the natural priority. For instance, the 'Ballymun' Youth Guarantee pilot project was very proactive in their work with employers. The PES' dedicated Employer Engagement Officers went out to meet them in their premises to explain what the PES could offer them and find out what they could offer to the project using a 'menu of options', whereby any contribution from an employer was welcome – from a simple talk at a job club to providing a work experience placement or a traineeship.¹⁸

17 The Youth Guidance Centres (UUV) operate under the remit of the 'Ministry for Children, Education and Gender equality', not to the Ministry of Employment. UUV are responsible for cooperation with the school system. Cf. Guidance in education. Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation, 2012. <http://ufm.dk/en/publications/2012/guidance-in-education-2013-the-educational-guidance-system-in-denmark>

18 The Irish 'Ballymun' Project is described in more detail in a 'PES practice fiche' on the DG EMPL PES practices webpage.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Establishing a NEET team

When putting together the team that discusses the NEET challenge and develops the Action Plan, you should take the following into account:

- ▶ NEET teams should involve members with practical experience of working with the target group(s) – including the most challenging groups;
- ▶ NEET teams should involve members with experience in designing measures (including ALMP¹⁹);
- ▶ NEET teams should involve decision makers;
- ▶ NEET teams should be multidisciplinary, hence should involve members with a diverse professional background;
- ▶ NEET teams should involve external partners – to bring in a certain perspective that is not available in-house, and to be able to realistically discuss roles and responsibilities regarding implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- ▶ As knowledge and skills beyond the experiences of the team members may be needed, NEET teams should be able to draw on a good internal and external network (especially youth workers, psychologists, social and health workers, NGOs and employers).

Developing such a team can have the positive side effect of identifying key partners for implementation at an early stage. However, NEET teams can also be based on existing collaborations and partnerships.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Working with NGOs and social partners

NGOs can offer valuable work experience to young people, through placements or internships. For instance, in Portugal, the internship programme "Employment Traineeships" aims at the professional integration of young people through the development of a work experience in an enterprise or an NGO.²⁰

In some countries, internship programmes are also led by social partners, as in Ireland, where the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC) runs its own internship scheme called Gradlink.²¹ This scheme provides work experience for recent graduates.

19 Active labour market policies.

20 As per information obtained from IEFP – Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, I.P. <http://www.iefp.pt>

21 More about the Gradlink programme: <http://gradlinkireland.weebly.com/internships.html>

EXAMPLE



A coordination unit to align measures and programmes for youth in Austria

In Austria, Coordination Units for Youth Education Employment were founded in 2007 on national and regional level. The units organise the collaboration on (vocational) education measures and active labour market policy programmes for young people aged 15-21 who find themselves at the transition from school to work; as well as young people with disabilities below the age of 25. The main tasks of the coordination units are:

- ▶ Support and services for co-operation partners such as organisation and moderation of meetings, conferences and working groups; preparation of analyses and overviews of vocational inclusion and labour market integration measures.
- ▶ Information management and analysis: Improving access to information especially for those employed with funding agencies. Organisation of information and expert meetings, reports on vocational inclusion measures for disabled and disadvantaged youth. Data analyses and reports on topics related to this target group.
- ▶ Assistance with the co-ordination and implementation of programmes and projects, such as coordinating youth coaching with other projects.
- ▶ Facilitation of networking between different projects and regional support systems (e.g. youth work, youth welfare, etc.).
- ▶ Moderation and organisation of meetings and workshops regarding specific topics related to education and labour market inclusion of youth, such as 'supporting girls and young women', 'including people with psychological disorders into the labour market', etc.

High quality vocational training is important to equip young people with work-related skills that can then make them more attractive to potential employers. Research has shown that Vocational Education and Training (VET) can also be very effective in reducing early school leaving, and in reaching out to NEETs. Learning at the work place, or through real work simulations, is attractive especially to those young people who had negative experiences at school. VET can improve young people's confidence and increase their motivation and engagement by helping them to adopt a more positive attitude to learning.²²

Many PES know this from experience and are therefore working with a range of stakeholders – social partners, chambers of commerce, providers of VET, youth organisations – to put in place suitable basic and further VET programmes.

In some countries, PES also collaborate closely with employer organisations to ensure young people find a suitable training opportunity in a company.

EXAMPLE



Working with employers in experimental Apprenticeship Schools (PSEK) – Greece

The Greek VET system underwent significant reform in recent years, with apprenticeships being extended to cover the whole spectrum of VET qualifications. In addition to the PES having 51 'Apprenticeship Schools' across the country, it has recently opened two 'Experimental Apprenticeship Schools' (PSEKs), both focusing on tourism. They are intended to facilitate labour-market integration of young high school graduates, aged 18-20, toward technical and vocational education and training, namely in tourism. The PSEKs offer three-year programmes that lead to qualifications recognised in Greece and Germany in three different professions: cooks, hotel employees, and food and beverage managers. Four months each year are dedicated to theoretical training. This is conducted during the tourism off-season, so that the students can put theory into practice throughout the sector's high-season months. The scheme pertains to a Dual System of Education, whereby personal and field skills are developed through the effective involvement of employers.

The Greek PES is the main implementing body, but it works in collaboration with social partners, businesses and experts. In its first year of implementation, 75 students enrolled. In its second academic year (2014-15), 120 students were admitted. The practice will be evaluated at the end of the first three-year programme.²³

²² See for instance Cedefop briefing note: Vocational education and training prevents and counteracts early leaving from the education system <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/9101>

²³ Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee – A contribution of the PES Network. Brussels 2015.

EXAMPLE



Project 'No degree without follow-up' – Germany

German PES collaborate closely with Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Trade, Schools and NGOs to disseminate information about open apprenticeship places in companies. Practices were closely aligned, to ensure NEETs registered with PES, unregistered NEETs, and young people applying through open market mechanisms have similar chances. Information about open apprenticeship places is centrally registered with the Chambers, and information is shared with PES; who, in turn, bring young jobseekers in touch with the right support systems.

For instance, in the project 'No degree without follow-up' "KAoA" in North-Rhine Westphalia, 32 so-called 'Start Assistants' based at several Chambers across the region bring together companies and young people. Their in-depth knowledge of the companies enables them to find the right young person for the employer, and make sure young people find an apprenticeship in a trade that suits them. The 'Start Assistants' support young people's vocational orientation, providing them with information on training opportunities – including lesser known industries. They support both companies and young people on their way to closing a contract for an apprenticeship; for instance, by supporting a young persons' application process, or by arranging work trials and internships. Apprenticeships are monitored during the first year of training, both apprentices and companies can call upon the 'Start Assistant's' support.

In the years 2013 to 2015, the 'Start Assistants' helped 1800 young people find an apprenticeship place; more than 400 young people find an internship place, and 300 more young people pass an entry qualification.

Moreover, KAoA has developed comprehensive minimum standards of guidance for all students in North-Rhine-Westphalia as of 8th grade.²⁴

1.5 Setting the timetable and milestones

Based on the assessment performed, it is necessary to think about timetables and milestones. The NEET challenge is complex, and depending on the condition of the entire employment path, there might be a rather long development and rehabilitation period ahead for both PES and their partners. Sometimes the goals of the PES NEET Action Plan can be reached most efficiently by setting a focus and treating other activities as secondary in this year.



PRACTICAL TIPS


A three-year perspective

A one-year time frame for an Action Plan may be too short to address all relevant points of the employment path, measures and the NEET groups. Trying to do everything at the same time can compromise efficiency and effectiveness of the plan. It is therefore advisable to identify a priority order and a timetable over a longer time span. For example, an indicative three-year overall Action Plan could set the following priorities:

- ▶ **First year:** priority focus – strengthening education contacts; secondary – collaboration with NGOs and employers
- ▶ **Second year:** priority focus – NGOs; secondary – education and employers
- ▶ **Third year:** priority focus – employers; secondary – education and NGOs

²⁴ More info (in German language):

<http://www.keinabschlussohneanschluss.nrw.de/uebergang-schule-beruf-in-nrw/basisinformationen/bilanz2015.html>



Step 2. Implementing the Action Plan

Phase II, Implementing the PES Action Plan entails two interconnected fields of action:

- ▶ PES in-house implementation, and
- ▶ PES collaboration with partners.

When designing the NEET Action Plan, it is important to decide what your PES can/should do alone, and what your PES can/should do in collaboration with partners. Based on the Design Phase, we can now identify important aspects related to implementation throughout the entire employment path. This will help to decide on the main in-house and collaboration measures (as depicted in figure 6 overleaf).

In-house and collaborative measures are often closely linked. It is therefore useful to understand implementation as a sequence of in-house and collaborative measures, which are implemented in phases at the different stages of the path. Also, in practice, the phases are often interconnected and overlap. In reality the process and service delivery is not always linear, but many things can (and often should!) happen in parallel – e.g. giving individual counselling, improving job-search in practice, upgrading skills, providing work practice. To that end the ‘employment path’ is a working tool to distinguish main phases for the sake of clarity.

In-house and collaboration phases in implementation are:

1. Beginning phase of the path (prevention of ESL and reintegration of ESL);
2. Middle phase of the path (transition from school to work or further training, fostering employability); and
3. End phase of the path (removing special barriers to employment, providing work trials and practice, connecting to work and employment).

2.1 Beginning phase of the path: prevention of early school leaving and reintegration of early school leavers

As already indicated in the Design Phase, prevention of NEET status and good outreach is an essential basis for later activation phases along the path to employment, especially in the transition time to further levels of education (such as from compulsory to secondary school, etc.). Although the emphasis of this toolkit is on the middle and end phases (activating NEETs), some PES may need to work on the first phase to establish a firm foundation on which they can build activation services.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

In this step, you will learn:

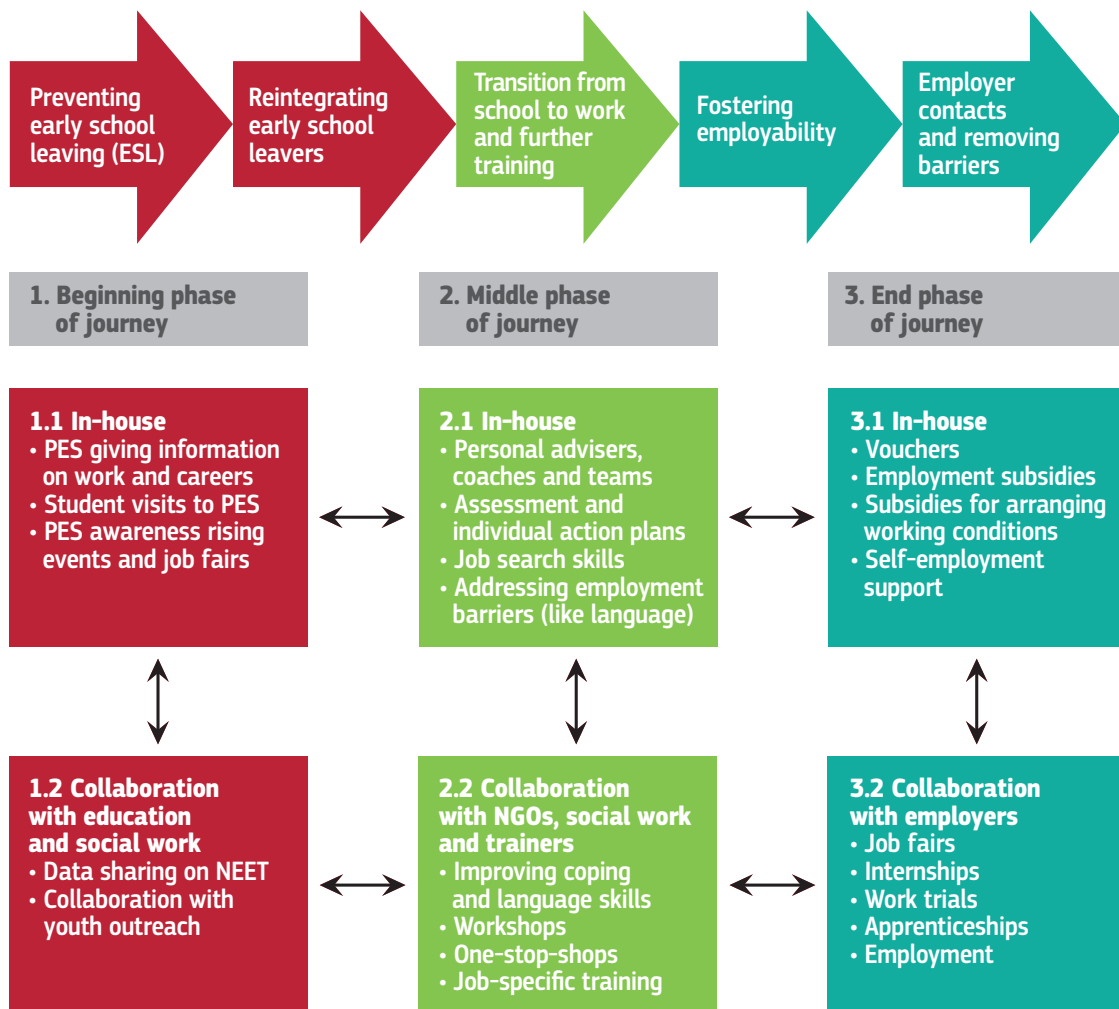
- ▶ How to implement measures at different stages of NEET activation;
- ▶ How to combine in-house and collaborative implementation;
- ▶ How to identify the key PES tools and measures in activation.



KEY MESSAGES

This step shows how you can contribute in your PES to the activation of NEETs based on a three-tier journey approach. It will help to decide what measures are useful to implement the priorities set, and what collaboration structures are needed.

Figure 6 Employment journey with key in-house and collaborative measures



If the first phase is not working well, PES need to devote extra attention to (re)build this phase, especially in collaboration with the educational community, by giving information on working life and helping to build career counselling in schools.²⁵ For instance, in Norway, the pilot project on PES Tutors in Upper Secondary School aims to prevent young people from dropping out of upper secondary school and to test a model of cross-sectoral and close collaboration between the PES and upper secondary schools. Forty-five PES tutors from 33 PES offices are located in 28 upper secondary schools across Norway. Within one school, the dropout has reduced

²⁵ See: [PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs](#). A contribution of the Network of Public Employment Services. Brussels 2015.

from 4.8% to 3.1% from 2012/13 to 2014/15 and drop-outs now only account for 11 of over 800 students in this school.^{26 27}

If the first phase is functioning well, PES can still provide valuable input by providing information on working life and careers; arranging visits and awareness raising events; and creating campaigns

²⁶ The Norwegian 'PES tutors in Upper Secondary Schools' practice is described in more detail in a '[PES practice fiche](#)' on the DG EMPL PES practices webpage.

²⁷ It should be noted that NAV in Norway covers more than just public employment services. This means that when the NAV officers/case handlers are cooperating with secondary schools, they have several issues to deal with in working with young people. For example, their responsibility also includes social assistance issues.

EXAMPLE



New data sharing regulations in Croatia²⁸

In 2015, Croatia established new regulations on data sharing between the PES and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. An agreement was made to allow the exchange of data on the career intentions of those in the final years of school, and includes clear roles and responsibilities. Data is collected on an annual basis on 1 November. The results are used to identify, and prevent, those who are likely to be early school leavers. It also helps to link up young people's aspirations with the reality of the (local) labour market. In addition, the survey identifies those who may require additional support (for example, those experiencing health or behavioural issues who may need support to successfully integrate into education and employment).

A second agreement was established to set up a link between different databases and to exchange data between compulsory schooling, secondary schools, universities, employment service and the pension system. This will be a basis for creating target-oriented activities and measures in partnerships with local stakeholders. It will also allow for the identification of those who drop out of the education system, as well as tracking other inactive non-registered NEETs.

on working life, vocational education and labour demand needs. This will help by giving students ideas and perspectives on working life and by increasing their motivation to stay and complete their education.

It is also important to collaborate with educational institutions on data sharing and 'early warning' of NEET status, as this makes the collaboration timely and more efficient, and helps to minimise the number of young people being lost in transition.

PES can also contribute to youth outreach work, for instance by providing or co-financing workshops and measures to offer places and courses where young people can develop their soft skills, try out practical working and get positive ideas about what to do in their lives.

2.2 Middle phase of the path: transition from school to work and fostering employability

The middle phase is critical for activating NEETs. The practical role of PES increases in the middle phase of the path: In most EU countries, PES actively support a young persons' transition from school to work or further training, and are strongly engaged in fostering a young persons' employability. The key measures in this phase are career guidance and information, individual action plans, coaching, guarantees, one-stop-shops and job-search assistance, which are increasingly provided in combination with web-based tools. Job-specific training, placements, traineeships and apprenticeships are provided to help acquire, upgrade or update skills, and can eventually lead to a qualification. Second-chance schools and measures to improve motivation, soft skills and coping of young people who have been lost in transition and need encouragement and recuperation to get back on track, are also used in this transition phase in the form of special workshops in collaboration, especially with NGO partners.²⁹



PRACTICAL TIPS

What can you do in-house; where should you involve partners in the beginning phase?

Key in-house implementation activities in the beginning phase:

- ▶ PES giving information on work and careers
- ▶ Student visits to PES
- ▶ PES awareness raising events and job fairs

Key collaboration activities in the beginning phase:

- ▶ Data sharing and early warning on NEETs
- ▶ Collaboration with youth work and other organisations involved in outreach
- ▶ Providing and co-financing NEET workshops

²⁸ The Croatian data sharing practice is described in more detail in the context of the Croatian 'Lifelong Career Guidance Centres' (CISOK) in a '[PES practice fiche](#)' on the DG EMPL PAS practice webpage.

²⁹ Providing work experience and working-life contacts are of course also measures befitting the transition phase, but, for clarity, they are treated in the last phase of the journey.

The middle phase is a central and critical one, in terms of PES' role in NEET activation, as it is precisely here that many young people are lost in transition and can fall out of the radar of public services, and of PES in particular.

It was pointed out in the cluster analysis above that a high NEET rate and a high unemployment rate means there is great diversity within the NEET pool. Therefore, in the design phase, analysis was carried out to identify the different subgroups of NEETs, risk factors and the focus of PES in the whole path. In implementation it is vital to make sure, on the basis of the design phase assessment, that PES concentrate their efforts on those vulnerable subgroups, risks and

employment barriers where they can make the most valuable contribution. Among the most vulnerable, four groups can be differentiated:

- ▶ Young people who are disengaged, unavailable and/or (long-term) unemployed;
- ▶ Young people with a low educational level and/or in precarious work conditions;
- ▶ Young people with a migrant background; and
- ▶ Young people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

But even within these groups the degree of vulnerability differs. It is therefore important to ensure there are targeted offers for each of the groups and sub-groups, and measures are well connected.

EXAMPLE



Outreach, activation and reintegration in Belgium (VDAB)

In Belgium, a comprehensive range of services was established that links outreach, activation, and reintegration along an employment path. The most recent example is the **Find-Mind-Bind** – practice, which is in place in Belgium-Flanders (since 2013) as well as in Belgium-Brussels (since 2015).

Find-Mind-Bind specifically addresses the hardest-to-reach NEETs under the age of 25, who, lost from the system, require a supported path to the labour market. Using the Find-Bind-Mind method, the partners work to find and provide supported paths for these youth. The method entails three practice levels, which are:

- 1) Find: actively identifying and seeking NEETs (by visiting places where young people gather and by building on networks and activities of grassroots organisations);
- 2) Mind: providing a supported path, first by offering tailored guidance by those organisations close to the young person and once ready, guiding them to PES services in order to prepare them for suitable offers of employment or training;
- 3) Bind: providing aftercare and following up on participants.

Moreover, in 2004, the Belgian-Flanders PES (VDAB) established **Youth Competence Centres (YCCs)**.³⁰ The YCCs work at the interface between free time/leisure, work and competence development. Offering second chances and reintegration is another key for promoting possibilities for young people, and this interface is the success factor of the YCC approach.

The YCCs in Antwerp are run by JES, a non-profit organisation that – as a metropolitan laboratory – continuously initiates new projects that aim at increasing opportunities for young people in the cities of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent to benefit from creative and meaningful free time activities, employment and training, participation in society, and policy making. The idea is to offer a low threshold for reintegration, and to rely on the strengths and informal activities of young people. Young people need encouragement and help to develop their skills and make them visible. The YCCs especially focus on youngsters between the age of 16 and 25. They apply an integrated and multidisciplinary approach that focuses on leisure, employment and education. The centres closely cooperate with counsellors of the Flemish Employment Service (VDAB) and Study Choice counsellors ('Studiewijzers').

Additionally, VDAB cooperates with **Youth at Risk (YAR)**. YAR focuses on young people with complex problems – mostly, but not exclusively, young people with a file at the juvenile court. YAR offers these young people a chance to get their lives back on track by collaborate closely with VDAB whenever a young person under their remit is ready to take up a job or training.

³⁰ See OECD study: <http://skills.oecd.org/developskills/documents/youthcompetencecentresinantwerpflandersalocalcasestudyfrombelgium.html>

It is also important to note that, with the present high unemployment rate in many countries, a lot of highly educated people are having protracted difficulties in finding employment. The traditional focus of PES, and thus also methods and competences, have tended to cater to customers with a low-to-middle level education, so serving highly educated customers – some of whom already have considerable work experience – may pose a challenge.

There exists a broad range of **successful practices to activate NEETs in the middle phase**. In the sections below, we describe the main type of services and give a few examples of successful practice.

2.2.1 Career guidance

Career guidance is provided by different officials and counsellors, ranging from regular front-line officials to specialised career counsellors, such as career psychologists. Traditionally this has been provided as individual counselling ‘over the desk’. Today more and more, a rich set of methods are used, emphasising not only one-to-one talking, but teamwork, guidance groups, peer groups, combined action and learning – such as visits and work trials – in order to get a better picture of the customers’ situation and skills, and provide inspiration and ideas. Such action-based counselling is very relevant for the NEETs. Individual counselling is of course needed, especially in situations addressing particular disabilities and rehabilitation or other matters that require one-to-one consultation. Many countries put considerable effort into developing different e-guidance tools, including labour market information, self-assessment tools, etc., which could be very helpful in guiding NEETs.

For instance, the 11 Lifelong Learning Career Guidance (LLCG) Centres established in Croatia, starting from 2013, have become an important factor for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Services are created and delivered to the assessed needs of a specific group so that they are closely aligned to their real needs. On a wider level, each LLCG Centre tailors their services to local and regional needs to ensure that they are ‘fit for purpose.’ This means that while there is a standard model with common goals and methods their delivery and target groups vary. The specific needs of a local area may not be immediately clear and can take time to uncover. For example, one LLCG Centre targets university students, new graduates and employers, whereas another LLCG Centre operates in an area

of high long-term unemployment and focuses on supporting hard-to-place groups.³¹

2.2.2 Coaches and mentors

Career guidance is also increasingly combined with **coaches**, who act as brokers and go-betweens, providing encouragement and support by securing the planned transitions. Such coaches can come both from inside PES and from the outside, in cooperation with NGOs. **Mentoring**, face-to-face or over the internet, is also becoming more widespread. While these are currently provided mainly for highly educated customers, it can be foreseen that web-based methods will and should be developed for all customer groups, also the NEETs, as many NEETs can be resourceful in using the internet and social media.

For instance, the Belgian PES (Actiris and VDAB) offer customised online services for highly educated jobseekers. This practice was developed in a participatory process based on feedback gathered from young PES customers. PES carried out three panel discussions with around 120 young people, identifying their needs regarding PES online guidance services. The process showed that participants wanted to receive individualised and tailored online guidance services, not automated systems. An evaluation of the pilot phase showed that the practice was positively assessed since it is able to provide flexible and easily accessible advice and guidance to PES users.³²

2.2.3 Case managers and individual action plans

The Youth Guarantee urges PES to support young jobseekers through personalised guidance and individual action plans. Many PES implement a case management approach. This approach involves designated employment counsellors taking on the role of case managers for a number of young jobseekers. Case managers support jobseekers throughout the entire ‘middle phase’, until they have completed a successful transition to the next phase of their life.

³¹ The Croatian LLCG practice is described in more detail in a ‘[PES practice fiche](#)’ on the DG EMPL PES practices webpage.

³² The Belgian ‘Online guidance for highly educated jobseekers’ practice is described in more detail in a ‘[PES practice fiche](#)’ on the DG EMPL PES practices webpage.

Case managers often replace numerous different job counsellors, services and professionals. They are used to secure the flow and effectiveness of the individual action plans. This entails the responsibility to monitor the entire process from the beginning to the end of the service. Quite often the service process of NEETs can last a long time from outreach to a placement in a job, often via several intermediary phases, like a placement in activation workshops or rehabilitation. Such a long process involves several service people, and institutions, and is prone to break down. Good case management is challenging to establish, as it also needs good databases, both on the general customer flow between services, and following up the process of the individual. There are often legal restrictions hindering such information flow, but they can be circumvented to some extent by obtaining consent from the customer that his/her information can be passed on to the other services agreed upon.

Individual action plans are used to write down the plan drawn together with the customer. The core of the plan is to provide a 'roadmap' to the next relevant steps needed so that the customer's situation improves. Some PES use **profiling** in identifying the situation and imminent challenge of the customer.³³ For NEETs, often several milestones need to be reached before employment in the open market is reached.

2.2.4 One-stop-shops

One-stop-shops come in different forms, as easy-access and close-to-people spaces, where the aim is to provide a low threshold holistic service for jobseekers, where the potential complexity of the division of labour of services, and 'run-around' is minimised. Such low threshold spaces and services can help to reach the non-registered NEETs. It aims at simplifying and streamlining the service by gathering expertise and connections provided by a multi-professional team and different institutions like PES, education, local authorities and NGOs under 'one roof', while at the same time making an efficient use of public resources. For instance in Germany, Youth Employment Agencies (YEA) bring several actors in the field of youth unemployment together under one roof and provide a combination of preven-

³³ European Commission. (2012). Jenny Bimrose and Sally-Anne Barnes: *Individual Action Planning (IAP): Resolving tensions and maximising impact in European PES*. Brussels.

EXAMPLE



Comprehensive individual counselling of registered unemployed people in Latvia

This practice, implemented by the State Employment Agency, will be rolled out and mainstreamed from 2014 to 2018. It is intended to help with the integration of unemployed people, aged 15-29, into the labour market. Each registered young unemployed person is individually guided and provided counselling according to their skills, needs and profile. The supporting counsellor, who monitors and guides the young participant throughout, helps to prepare a career plan and define and identify necessary training and ALMPs.

The Youth Employment Initiative has provided funding for the mainstreaming phase of this practice, so that it will eventually be available for all young jobseekers falling into the remit of the Youth Guarantee. The Latvian PES is not the lead organisation in the measure but it is involved in most aspects, including career guidance, job-search assistance and implementation of ALMPs. It collaborates closely with employers, education and training providers, sectorial expert councils and other labour market actors.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Participatory development of individualised action plan

It is important to make sure that the customer activation plan is indeed made together, and that the young jobseeker really adopts it as his/her own plan, motivated to realise the next steps. Too often the plan can end up as the officials' plan and the jobseeker sometimes does not even realise such a plan has been made. This danger is particularly apparent with NEETs, who often have a history of being given 'good advice' by adults several times, with very little effect. So a sensitive, participatory and collaborative approach, with intensive customer dialogue is called for, combined with motivating action and learning.

and intervention measures: career guidance and job counselling to students in schools, ALMP and youth welfare services to young unemployed people. They all reside in one office to facilitate seamless service delivery ('one-stop-shop') to meet the needs of young unemployed people and students during the transition from school to work.³⁴

³⁴ The German 'One-stop-shop' practice is described in more detail in a 'PES practice fiche' on the DG EMPL PES practices webpage.

EXAMPLE



An easy-access one-stop-shop centre in Finland

Ohjaamo (in English literally a ‘cockpit’ as in an airplane, or ‘bridge’ in a ship), a low threshold one-stop-shop centre, is developing in Finland (started in 2015) and supported by ESF funds. It was launched on the basis of a recommendation by the Finnish Youth Guarantee Steering team. The aim is to provide an easy-access service point for young people below the age of 30. Its operating model is to provide information, advice, guidance and support across a range of sectors from the basic services of various administrative branches and across a broad network of collaborators. The open operating model encourages young people to get in touch to sort out their own career and employment situation, which they can also do without involving the referring organisation. The Centre will give special support to young people going through transitions and will also encourage them to remain in education and work.

The core function of the Centre includes personal advice and guidance, support in life management, career planning, social skills and capacity building as well as education and employment support. The professionals working at the One-Stop-Guidance Centre examine the situation and service needs of each young person individually, helping young people to take charge of their lives. The Centre does not always mean being all under one roof, but existing as an easy-access network, providing the holistic service on entry at any point.

The Centre has access to functional PES services, which both help in identifying the needs of young people and reinforce their capacity to cope with day-to-day life. As well as official bodies, educational institutions and workshops, the Centre’s wide collaborative network includes third-sector organisations, voluntary organisations and other bodies that work with young people. The Centre also functions as a link to the business community through local companies and trade associations and promotes meetings between employers and young people.

When building up a Centre’s operation and developing the service model it has been important to incorporate young people’s view of development work. The young people themselves are actively involved with the Centre and can implement various peer-based group activities.

EXAMPLE



The French Guarantee for Youth³⁵ – helping young vulnerable people to gain autonomy³⁶

With a rate of youth unemployment above 23% and a share of NEETs of 12.5%, the situation of young people in France calls for specific preventive measures in order to help the most vulnerable of them to gain autonomy and get back to work. Following the Council Recommendation of April 2013, the French authorities have introduced a Youth Guarantee Plan in December 2013 that includes a range of measures to tackle this issue. Among these measures is the so-called Guarantee for Youth (‘Garantie Jeunes’) measure, aimed at young vulnerable NEETs aged 18-25 (with possible exceptions for 16-18 year olds).

Eligible for the Guarantee for Youth are young people who are vulnerable in at least one of the following three areas:

- ▶ Financial vulnerability: young people living in a family with financial resources below the minimum income threshold;
- ▶ Family vulnerability: young people having left the household or living in the household with no family support;
- ▶ Social vulnerability: young people having dropped schools out with no qualification, or young people under criminal justice control.

The programme as such is based on two main elements. First, it offers a guarantee of a first professional experience, which means offering young people a pathway that includes work experience and training opportunities. This is based on the principle of a contractual relationship between the local PES (Missions locales) and the young person. Both parties sign a contract defining their mutual engagement. The contract is signed for one year and can be renewed once. Support includes individual guidance and follow up.

The measure is based on the ‘work first’ principle, that is to say offering a plurality of professional experiences, which can be completed with training opportunities. The role of ‘immersions’ in companies is particularly emphasised. Yet, before the young people meet employers, group workshops are set up during which the young people are prepared for their first professional experiences.

The second element is a financial allowance. The amount of the allowance is close to the minimum income for one single person and is awarded to the young person. Employers do not have to pay any wages or compensations.

Hence, the Guarantee for Youth is a discretionary tool based on a contractual targeted relationship between the local PES (Missions locales), local employers and the young person. Young people to take part in the measure are selected by a local ad hoc committee. First evaluation results show that this strong focus on local collaboration and local partnerships is a key success factor.

³⁵ Please note that the French ‘Guarantee for Youth’ (Garantie Jeunes) is **one initiative** that is part of the broader package of measures related to the French ‘Youth Guarantee’.

³⁶ For more information on the measure, see: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/action/la-garantie-jeunes> (in French language).

'One-stop-shop' does not necessarily imply that organisations are literally in the same physical space. It can also mean that several organisations act under a common trademark and exist as a network; or a digital platform. However, all one-stop-shops aim to offer coordinated and holistic service to jobseekers with different entry points and a low threshold. Jobseekers immediately get a multi-professional service, either face-to-face or virtually, or in combination.

2.2.5 Guarantees (Youth Guarantee)

In April 2013, EU Member States made a commitment to ensure young people's successful transition into work by establishing Youth Guarantee (YG) schemes. This entails giving a **guarantee** to all young people, up to the age of the 25 (30 in some countries), that

they will receive a concrete good quality offer within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The offer should be for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education.

The 'Second Assessment report on the PES capacity to implement the Youth Guarantee'³⁷ shows that across Europe, the instrument has already been helpful in making the service offer for NEETs and all customers more coherent, coordinated and systematic in many countries. Already in its first years of implementation, the Youth Guarantee has helped to reform the way in which actors from public, private and third sectors come together to engage and support young people to ensure their successful transition to the labour market.

PES' ROLE



PES' role in implementing the Youth Guarantee across Europe

The aim of the Youth Guarantee is to provide early intervention in the school-to-work transition with an individualised service in a partnership arrangement. Hence, at its core lies a combination of one-stop-shop thinking and case management. These practices are believed to be sufficiently proven as effective, so that a country can commit to 'guaranteed' success.

Yet, **the 'guarantee' aspect puts significant pressure on the players involved, and has triggered reforms.** In order to be effective, the YG needs to be a comprehensive approach to streamline the way in which actors from public, private and third sectors come together to engage and support young people to ensure their successful transition to the labour market.

In many countries, PES have played a key role in implementing the Youth Guarantee. But the challenges, developmental paths, institutions and cultures in relation to the critical school-to-work transition vary substantially across countries. Differences in institutions are reflected also in the emphasis and form of partnerships in different countries, where some have a **national YG coordination group** led by PES of the Ministry of Employment, while in others PES engage in partnerships through **municipalities or with regional and local youth and education bodies**, and in many cases there are partnerships with employers on increasing employment, apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities for young people. Often elements of all the above exist in a particular constellation.

A grouping of the measures shows that PES concentrate on four areas:

- ▶ Area 1: Transparency of supply and demand in the labour market
- ▶ Area 2: A comprehensive range of services for young people (including counselling and career guidance, personalised services, individual action plans, multi-channelling)
- ▶ Area 3: Services for employers (including incentives for employers and measures to encourage employers to create employment or training opportunities for young people)
- ▶ Area 4: Activation and placement (including outreach to difficult target groups, profiling, internships, first work experiences)³⁸

In many countries, PES also act as a conductor in facilitation and management of partnerships; mobilising the cooperation and resources needed to establish effective connections between different stakeholders and resources.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that the better coordination level reached by special efforts in YG is not easy to maintain in the long run, without special attention and continual maintenance. This is why **consolidated partnerships with stakeholders can help to maintain the momentum.**

37 Ibid.

38 PES Network (2015): Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. DG EMPL, Brussels.

In many PES, the Youth Guarantee (YG) has also led to strengthening the offer for young people. The ‘Catalogue of Measures for the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee’³⁹ points out that the YG has made it possible to make services and programmes available in a more coherent structure (by ‘packaging’) and to deliver and guarantee the services in a shorter and more systematic fashion. In some PES it has also led to reorganisation or strengthening of youth specific employment, counselling services and efficiency of ALMPs. In short, the difference made by YG has intensified the entire offer of the networks to young people, and has put them in a better position to ‘guarantee’ a good quality offer within a reasonable amount of time.

2.2.6 Job search assistance

Job-search assistance is combined with counselling, action plans, one-stop-shops and guarantees as one element in them. Obviously this entails pointing out the options available, but also includes other interventions: for instance coaching NEETs for job-interviews and presenting themselves is necessary, as this can be a weak point. Job-search assistance also usually includes helping young people to write CVs. As beginners often have very little to write in CVs in a formal sense, due attention should be given to the informal skills and hobbies of young people, as they can be very resourceful in their own activities.

2.2.7 Web-based methods

Expanding the offers by developing other, additional channels of counselling can also be very efficient to reach out to young people.⁴⁰ **Websites and web-based tools** are an effective way of bringing together a wide variety of information and reaching out to large numbers of young people at a low cost. An example is the Latvian education and career internet portal⁴¹ which brings together young people, employers and education institutions. The Netherlands has invested a lot in web-based services for all customers.⁴² Another example of web support comes from France (see box).

39 Ibid.

40 Multichannelling has been analysed in the PES to PES dialogue process: Pieterse, W. (2011). *Comparative Paper on Integrated Multichannelling*. PES to PES. DG EMPL.

41 www.prakse.lv

42 More info: https://www.werk.nl/werk_nl/werknemer/home

EXAMPLE



100% web support in France

This measure builds on the exclusive use of digital channels between jobseekers and counsellors: chat, video, interviews through webcam, web call-back and email with a job counsellor. All emails are responded to within 48 hours. All correspondence is tracked through the jobseekers’ account, which they can access. It also includes e-counselling modules about job search techniques and presenting occupational sectors with high recruitment prospects.

Over 100 specifically trained voluntary counsellors are dedicated to this support. It has resulted in over 4 500 video interviews. The first qualitative evaluation shows that 96% of jobseekers are satisfied. The measure is seen as time- and cost-saving, practical, and can be adapted to the needs of jobseekers; while the rate of absenteeism seems lower than in face-to-face interviews. This pilot began in February 2014 in 11 local agencies across seven regions and it is being progressively rolled out on a national basis.

2.2.8 Job-specific training

Job-specific training is a traditional ALMP offer of PES, either as a first step in vocational training, but mostly as a recap and/or supplement to existing VET education and work experience. A first step for NEET groups is usually providing some kind of possibility to get activated and inspired, like in workshops and/or voluntary work. Then training can be first offered as smaller modules, as taking on a long training, aiming for a degree can be unrealistic for many customers, but success in modules can inspire to go all the way.

2.2.9 Additional support to those facing multiple barriers to employment

Some groups, such as the disabled, or certain minority groups, may face multiple barriers to employment and hence could benefit from additional support to enter the labour market. Programmes aiming at removing such barriers can therefore be an important step in supporting these young people in their (re)integration into education and training, as well as employment. Those NEETs that are considered as hardest to place may benefit from some form of engagement and preparation before employment, training or education.

Measures may range from financial support for commuting to the workplace to offering specific training for young people with disabilities. Some Member States use ‘taster sessions’ that may take

EXAMPLE



Learning for the Young Adults (PLYA) in Slovenia

The Slovenian project 'Learning for the Young Adults' (PLYA) supports the social integration of young people with multiple barriers to employment. The main goal of the programme is to motivate youngsters to continue education and/or find a job, to raise the motivation, social inclusion and trust to become more competitive and employable.

As a distinctive mentoring programme, PLYA takes a very flexible approach, based on the individuals' development needs to a successful learning and training pathway.

PLYA includes activities that help participants to improve their general knowledge about the world of work, and acquire a flexible mind-set, which is needed for successful reintegration into a school or work environment and everyday life. The programme includes problem solving simulations, and helps young people to explore their personal competences and better understand how they fit with vocational orientations.

EXAMPLE



'Building Bridge to Education' in Denmark

The 'Building Bridge to Education' programme in Denmark caters to young people, who are receiving education benefits. These are young people who have registered with the PES. The average age of participants is between 22 and 24 years old. The programme aims to prepare young unemployed people for vocational education. This is done by making individually designed programmes at ordinary vocational education institution consists of a fixed schedule with various short internships at vocational schools and enterprises. Furthermore the young people will participate in courses to upgrade their basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Each young person is provided with a mentor to support them through their time and to provide them with follow-up support.

The programme has been implemented through 12 projects at vocational schools across the country (44 Partner schools and 52 local PES offices). Funding is provided to each education institution. Further initiatives will be put forward in 2016 to support more local PES offices to develop and use 'Building Bridge to Education' programmes to young unemployed people. The length of the initiative differs depending on the needs of the young person.

The 2015 evaluation⁴³ shows that 25 weeks after the start of a bridging course, the proportion of young people in education is 15 percentage points higher for those who participated in the course than among a comparison group of young people who have not participated in a bridging course.⁴⁴

place outside of the classroom or working environment. For example, some Member States use 'bridge programmes' as an effective way to prepare a young person for entry into mainstream options. These programmes are intended to provide the young person with an opportunity to get used to different expectations and behavioural norms.

Another way to remove barriers is to incentivise employers to employ young, and often less experienced, employees. This can be done in the form of lowered wages or other subsidised employment measures (see section 2.3.2).

Some young people have complex support needs, and responding to them often calls for collaboration with partners. In addition to lacking work experience or qualifications, they can face a range of other practical and logistical barriers to taking up employment or further education or training opportunities.

Young people with a disability may require specific initiatives, not only in terms of additional support (for example alternative provision of training) but also to **access their study or workplace**. PES measures also offer **subsidies for adapting** the existing workplace or training environment to accommodate the needs of the young jobseeker.

43 Rosholm, M., Svarer, M. (2015): Kvantitativ evaluering af Brobygning til uddannelse (www.star.dk). After: EEPO Country Reports (2016), Implementation of the 2013 Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee.

44 Mutual Learning Programme, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: Key policy messages from the Peer Review on 'Targeting NEETs – key ingredients for successful partnerships in improving labour market participation' <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&wslId=2261&furtherNews=yes>



PRACTICAL TIPS

What can you do in-house; where should you involve partners in the middle phase?

Key in-house implementation activities in the middle phase

- ▶ Personal advisers, coaches and teams ('NEET-team')
- ▶ Assessment and individual action plans
- ▶ Job search skills and mobility support
- ▶ E-coaching
- ▶ Removing special barriers to employment in collaboration with partners

Key collaboration activities in the middle phase

- ▶ Improving coping and language skills (NGOs)
- ▶ Workshops (local authorities, social work, NGOs, VET-providers)
- ▶ One-stop-shops (local authorities, social work, NGOs, VET-providers)
- ▶ Guarantees
- ▶ Job-specific training (schools, VET-providers, employers)

2.3 End phase of the journey: connecting to work, employment and removing barriers

The key measures at the end of the employment journey are those that provide young people with real working life experience, training and finally, a temporary or permanent job. It needs to be emphasised, however, that providing working experience can, and should be provided at any point of the journey, when needed and possible. So providing real working life experience overlaps with the former period, the transition to working life, but is treated here just for the sake of clarity.

2.3.1 Internships, work trials, apprenticeships

Real working life experience can be important at a very early stage. In fact, as is the case in some countries, youth get this experience while still in school, where a short work practice period is part of the curriculum in the last year of basic education.

Also, it is very well proven that the *dual vocational education system*, used particularly in Germany and Austria but to an extent in many other countries,

is successful in bridging the transition to work by combining education and real working life experience.

Providing work experience in different ways gives students and customers of PES an insight into working life and enables them to learn by doing. Fundamentally, it provides young people with practical experience, inspiration and motivation. These are key questions concerning NEETs, who start to suffer from demotivation, and lack of perspectives at an early stage, or get discouraged in the vain hope of finding employment in a high unemployment environment.

For instance in the Netherlands, internships or 'learn-work jobs' are offered by recognised 'learning companies'; through them young people can gain experience while receiving a trainee allowance. The programme is administered via a website⁴⁵ on which the learning companies must provide a clear profile, so that students can choose the job that fits their needs. This way, vacancies are filled more quickly.

In Malta, the Alternative Learning Programme provides students who are not inclined to further their studies with an ICT course and the possibility of a work exposure, followed by a traineeship. This experience serves as an up-skilling and preparation for gainful employment.

In other countries, especially those that have a strong dual apprenticeship system in place, PES developed models on how to organise and finance additional apprenticeship places for those who have trouble finding a place in the regular system.

Ideally, the time spent in placements and internships and the learning outcomes from this phase should be noted in a Transcript of Records. At the end of each internship or work trial, a short assessment could take place – even on a very informal basis – which would enable PES and the employer to certify certain knowledge, skills and competences the learner acquired through the practical phase. This would help future employers to get a better view on what a young person understands and is able to do. Many national education and training systems allow for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning; so that internships, placements and traineeships can bring a young person closer to eventually acquiring a full qualification.

45 <http://www.stagemarkt.nl/>

EXAMPLE



Supra-Company training in Austria

In 1997, the regional government of Vienna and the PES collaborated to create an apprenticeship foundation called 'Initiative Lehre' ('Apprenticeship initiative') as a reaction to the shortage of in-company apprenticeship training places. In 1998, the supra-company training was rolled out nationwide. It aimed to ensure the transfer to a regular apprenticeship training. In 2008, the supra-company training was reformed and accepted as regular dual apprenticeship training, delivering the same level of qualifications and allowing learners to take the final apprenticeship exam.

The supra-company training provides apprenticeship training at a training provider, which is not linked to a company. The training provider provides the work-based part of the apprenticeship training, the theoretical training is provided in vocational schools. Learners are enrolled at the supra-company training provider by signing a training contract. It aims to provide apprenticeship training (either for a few months or the entire training period of usually three years) for learners, who cannot find a training company.

The supra-company training includes three different models. All three of them aim to transfer the young adult, who cannot find a training place at a regular company, to the regular labour market.

- ▶ Model 1 provides the entire apprenticeship training at a supra-company-based training place. It aims to transfer participants to the regular labour market after the completion of the apprenticeship training, which usually lasts 3 to 4 years.
- ▶ Model 2 provides parts of the apprenticeship training at a supra-company training provider (mostly one year). At the same time, it cooperates with companies, aiming to transfer the learner to a company-based regular apprenticeship training after some time. It supports the learner in submitting applications to companies for a training place.
- ▶ Model 3 provides a partial qualification for apprentices who are not able to participate in a regular apprenticeship training because of a lack of required skills and competences. This also includes learners with learning disabilities.

Participants who transfer to a regular apprenticeship training at an enterprise, after having spent some time at the ÜBA, can shorten their training time at the regular company, based on the time spent at the ÜBA.

2.3.2 Employer incentives and subsidies

A key barrier to employment faced by many young people, besides lack of work experience, is the issue of low productivity at the beginning stages of work. Faced with high levels of youth unemployment, some countries have therefore chosen to implement measures that can stimulate demand for young employees, such as **subsidised jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships or reductions in social security contributions for employers**.⁴⁶ The key rationale behind these measures is to increase the demand for young employees and provide an additional incentive for employers who decide to train young people.

Subsidies for apprenticeship wages are in place in one-third of European countries.⁴⁷ A number of countries (Estonia, France, Italy and Spain) specifically provide 'first job support' for young people. This is geared towards encouraging employers to take on young people with no experience and low qualifications by subsidising their wages and training.⁴⁸ In contrast, with high numbers of well-educated unemployed youth and a lack of job vacancies, Poland relies on job subsidies for the private sector (a measure known as 'Intervention works') to encourage job creation for this particular group.⁴⁹

46 ILO (forthcoming – 2016): *What works on wage subsidies for Young People: A Review of Issues, Theory, Policies and Evidence*.

47 Hawley, Jo, Anne-Mari Nevala, & Tina Weber (2012b): *Recent policy developments related to those not in employment, education and training (NEETs)*. Eurofound, GHK Consulting.

48 Eurofound 2015.

49 OECD LEED (2015): *The local implementation of Youth Guarantees: emerging lessons from European experiences*.

For instance, in France, a key component of the 'Jobs for the Future' subsidised employment programme is that each young person placed in a company needs to follow a comprehensive training plan for up to three years. Training is personalised so that it fits the sector, employer and young person's needs. Support is also provided from beginning to end to all employers, employees and young people through counselling provided by local contact points ('missions locales').⁵⁰

Vouchers are subsidies in the form of purchasing bonds, which PES can give to the customer (the young person), so they 'move with the customer', both in order to emphasise the role and power of the customer in making the choice of placement and also to have fewer administrative costs.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Making subsidy schemes work

Financial incentives for employers are contested as they do not always lead to sustainable employment. Subsidised employment schemes will be effective only if well-designed and well-targeted.⁵¹ Some factors should be taken into account:

- ▶ **Duration:** Subsidised employment schemes should have a duration that is sufficient for a young person to prove her/himself sufficiently in the company to get a chance for permanent employment;
- ▶ **Quality:** Subsidised employment schemes should involve qualified work, or the opportunity to grow into it;
- ▶ **Learning potential:** Subsidised employment schemes should provide the opportunity to learn on the job, and ideally combine the practical experience with theoretical training. Ideally, for unqualified young people, it should (eventually) lead to a qualification. A number of countries have combined wage subsidies with training measures or use wage subsidies and social security exemptions in order to promote the taking-up of trainees or apprentices;
- ▶ **Certification:** Taking part in subsidised employment and training schemes should be certified. Ideally the scheme would lead to a qualification. Otherwise, units of learning outcomes could be assessed, validated and accumulated so that eventually they will lead to qualification.

⁵⁰ The French 'Jobs for the future' practice is described in more detail in a '[PES practice fiche](#)' on the DG EMPL PES practices webpage.

⁵¹ Cf. [HoPES Note on Criteria for sustainable wage subsidies](#).

EXAMPLE



'Sanssi' voucher scheme in Finland

The Sanssi ('Chance') programme was introduced in 2010 as a temporary measure during the financial crisis in order to ease the employment situation of young unemployed VET or higher education graduates (aged 18–30 years), and registered with the Finnish PES. The aim was to enable young people to gain employment with the help of a wage subsidy. The programme built on existing Finnish wage subsidy schemes and offered a number of additional concessions for employers over a period of 1.5 years.

A Sanssi card entitled holders to the following benefits:

- ▶ The card holder will be paid the salary stated in the collective sector agreement;
- ▶ An employer may receive a pay subsidy for 30, 40 or 50% of payroll costs depending on the duration of the previous unemployment. For instance, an employer hiring a young person who has been unemployed for less than a year, may receive a subsidy covering 30% of the payroll costs for that person for a period not exceeding 10 months. If the young person has been unemployed for a longer period, the subsidy may be more extensive and paid for a longer period;
- ▶ This pay subsidy is available for employment relationships that are valid until further notice or for a fixed term, and for part-time and full-time work;
- ▶ In the case of training contracts (e.g. apprenticeships), subsidies can be granted for the entire duration of training.

With a Sanssi card, a young person could seek employment with a company, an NGO, a municipality or a household. Every card was valid for three months at a time. The Sanssi card scheme was introduced in May 2010 and by January 2011, 18 500 young people had received a Sanssi card.



2.3.3 Self-employment support

Self-employment support also needs attention, as self-employment, micro-entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial careers are becoming more and more common. Starting business is a tall order for most NEETs, but the possibility can be an important one in some cases, particularly for the NEETs who already have some work experience, higher education, good self-esteem and communication skills. Also, it needs to be realised that many NEETs with low educational attainment and a troublesome history can in fact be very resourceful, based on their hobbies or talents. If given a good chance to prove themselves at the right point, entrepreneurial careers can be a good option. Overall, offering all customers opportunities to acquire entrepreneurial skills can be helpful in their career, as careers are becoming more and more 'hybrid' or mixed, involving alternating spells of salaried or entrepreneurial employment. PES can help former NEETs into self-employment by offering *start-up information, training and start-up funding*.



PRACTICAL TIPS

What can you do in-house; where should you involve partners in the end phase?

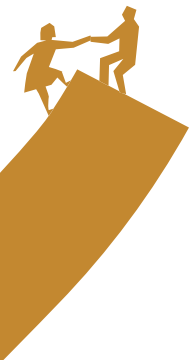
Key in-house implementation activities in the end phase

- ▶ Vouchers
- ▶ Employment subsidies
- ▶ Subsidies for adjusting working conditions for disabled jobseekers
- ▶ Self-employment support and business start-ups

Key collaboration activities in the end phase

- ▶ Job fairs and events
- ▶ Internships and work trials
- ▶ Apprenticeships
- ▶ Job placement support





Step 3.

Monitoring and evaluation

The final phase in developing a NEET Action Plan is to design monitoring, evaluation and feedback, which will feed into improving the design and implementation in place. This will help to make the activation strategies sustainable.

Feedback and data coming out of monitoring and evaluation activities should be prepared and edited in a way that helps the **PES NEET team or designated unit, and managers of PES to improve their activities based on evidence**. However, partners should be included, as they can both provide valuable information and insights, and also benefit from the PES data and evidence gathered.

Monitoring and evaluation can be differentiated as follows:

- ▶ **Monitoring** means data collection and exchange concerning the NEET situation, post-placement follow-up, and short-term and long-term results.
- ▶ **Evaluation** means overall analysis of the NEET activities and results based on internal and external observations, feedback, dialogue and data, and reflection and interpretation of the various data and observations.

Monitoring and evaluation should cover three key aspects:

- ▶ Data exchange and monitoring of NEET data (like size and prevalence);
- ▶ Follow-up of NEETs after placement: to measures (like ALMP), to education or to work;
- ▶ Evaluation feedback and dialogue to inform redesign and implementation.

The basis for designing NEET monitoring and evaluation, i.e. what to follow and analyse, is the **PES NEET Action Plan**. The priorities set in the Action Plan (problem statement and solutions, focus on NEET subgroups and risks, and the focus of PES efforts on the NEET path) form the key matters to be monitored and evaluated.

3.1 Data exchange and monitoring of the NEET situation

Exchange of data on NEETs between different organisations, both on an overall level and individual level, is essential for prevention, timely interventions, and to avoid repeated 'restarts' with the customers. In the case of the Youth Guarantee, an Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee has been set up,



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

In this step, you will learn:

- ▶ How to gather data and monitor the NEET situation
- ▶ How to evaluate the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the NEET interventions
- ▶ How to continuously update and improve the Action Plan, based on data and evidence



KEY MESSAGES

PES practice should be based on data and evidence on what works and what doesn't. This step shows how you can improve your evidence-base, and build a system of monitoring and evaluation that helps the team and management responsible for NEETs in your PES to better understand the effectiveness and efficiency of practices.

which PES have to feed annually with national data, so that progress can be monitored.⁵² Examples of key monitoring data concerning NEETs are obviously the overall national and regional NEET rate. Many countries monitor NEETs registered with PES on a monthly and/or annual base, and prepare statistics on entries, exits, duration of unemployment, etc. These data are often broken down against specific indicators (age, gender, disability, etc.). Moreover, usually there are data available on date of entry and exit into ALMP measures, reintegration figures, and data on the status six months after leaving the ALMP measure.

Yet, to enable early intervention, information about the numbers and groups of students who leave school early without a definite next step in mind (and do not register with PES) would also be useful. Moreover, to identify drop-out and reintegration rates, and make estimates on sizes of subgroups of NEETs and vulnerable groups, aggregated data are necessary. This often entails the need for exchange between the education system and PES in particular, which may run into legal and/or practical obstacles.

Despite these difficulties, the exchange of aggregated data, without personal information, is possible in many ways. The main way of avoiding a part of these problems is getting the **customer's consent** to data exchange, in written form. This makes it possible for multi-institutional teams, for instance like the ones set up between PES, social work organisations, youth work organisations, and NGOs, to exchange customer data for the benefit of holistic and smooth service. Anecdotal is the description of a team member saying, 'we come to team meetings with everyone having a PC-stick hanging from our necks, with the customer data, and consent paper in hand for sharing it', in order to be able to share data.

But solving these data issues also depends on national legislation, and can be facilitated by solutions agreed between ministries and organisations. As previously mentioned (Section 2.1), for instance, in Croatia, a legal agreement was signed between the Ministry of Education and other partners (Ministry of Labour, Croatian Employment Service and the Croatian pension author-

ity). This allows the partners to gather data, share data and track students' progress through the education system. It clearly explains the different roles and responsibilities of each partner. The results are used to identify and support those who are likely to be early school-leavers, and thus the PES is able to provide assistance as soon as possible to help young people make a smooth transition from school into the labour market, or to further training.

3.2 Follow-up of NEETs after placement to measures, education and work

There are different practices in PES on the monitoring of completion of ALMP measures, which are recorded in PES databases.⁵³ Typical follow-up periods are three and six months after completion of a measure. Most PES also monitor reasons for deregistration and termination of unemployment benefits. This can give valuable information, but tends to be often incomplete. PES do not always have processes in place to monitor young people's status after they leave the unemployment register, or have processes that only yield partial information. In some countries (e.g. Nordic countries and Germany) the PES customer register data has been combined with other administrative data, affording more detailed analysis and a longer time-span.⁵⁴

Yet, your designated NEET team can also do more 'project-based' follow up, and have meetings and workshops with partners, linking database data to a detailed follow-up survey, and getting information from partners, in order to get a more complete picture on what actually happens (see section 3.3.2 on 360 degree feedback and evaluation).

The efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of results of NEET practices can be measured in terms of transition to employment, job retention, and long-term employment effects. In addition to your internal monitoring, to gain a more complete and scientifically sound view on the effects of your practices, it may be advisable, from time to time,

52 Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee, https://www.google.be/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwisu40V8ej0AhXJD8AKHUEWAt4QFgggMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Fsocial%2FcontentAdmin%2FblobServlet%3FdocId%3D13402%26langId%3Den&usq=AFQjCNF_4bHRYrVoWphqIswK0md8pVVVA&sig2=RO5GeTgWbXIN_pxrPjCT7g

53 More on this topic: European Commission. (2012). Alex Nunn: *Performance management in Public Employment Services*. Brussels.

54 Cf. European Commission. (2015). Second assessment report on the PES capacity to implement the Youth Guarantee. Brussels. Page 15-16.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Following up on a young person's 'level of autonomy' in the French 'Guarantee for Youth'⁵⁵

Sustainable labour market and social integration is the outcome which determines the success of youth employment support programmes. The French 'Guarantee for Youth' (see section 2.2.5) aims to support young NEETs in gaining 'autonomy', hence the extent to which they can cope with life circumstances, in a professional context and beyond.

Hence, the goal of the French measure is not to simply get a young person into a job. More ambitiously, the measure aims to foster the young person's ability to (ideally) no longer need support; or, to know where to find support. This concept of 'autonomy' is based on the idea of 'distance travelled', hence includes a broad range of possible improvements of the individual situation, depending on where the young person was when s/he entered the measure, and where s/he is now. Advancement is thus not restricted to improving professional competences and the labour market situation, but also to social competences, key competences, and general maturity.

Consequently, young participants who get a job through the 'Guarantee for Youth' do not leave the measure right away. Signing an employment contract does not mark the end of the collaboration between local PES ('Missions Locales') and young people. Even those who sign a permanent employment contract stay in the measure, and support continues to be provided.

After 12 months, the counsellors assess the young person's ability to be autonomous against four indicators: social competency (finding accommodation, managing finances, and social skills); key competences (reading, writing, counting, clear communication and IT skills); professional competences (transversal competences, work-related skills like rigour and seriousness); and general maturity (knowing where to find support/resources when needed, a positive and engaging attitude).

Only if this assessment shows that the young person can work and find work autonomously, is s/he taken out of the measure.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Invest in following up on NEETs after they leave the unemployment register and get employment

Processes to ensure follow-up after placement by PES should be expanded to a wider range of young people. While many PES have established processes to ensure follow-up of young people after placement (either directly by the PES or in cooperation with another provider) such processes are often restricted to follow-up of those who have been placed in active labour market programmes or measures rather than in open labour market jobs. Follow-up needs to be expanded to include those who actually gain employment – to support their long-term integration and ensure that young people are being placed in jobs which are sustainable.

to commission a specific study from an independent research institution.

This can also be helpful to review the design of the measure and the PES services (see for instance the example from Denmark in the next section).

3.3 Evaluation feedback to design and implementation

Evaluation is different from monitoring, although they are interlinked and overlapping. Good monitoring is a basis for good evaluation, but evaluation needs to use several channels to get a more comprehensive picture, and it needs to be made both in an internal and external dialogue. Evaluation is about understanding the real results of the NEET efforts, what has worked, why, and with whom.

Ideally, an evaluation should also report on the impact of an activity, hence the change brought about by an intervention. Impact evaluations should always start with a review of the theory of change which explicitly or implicitly underpins the intervention. It should then try and gather data – through surveys, interviews and feedback – if and to what extent this change has actually been achieved through the intervention.

Ideally, impact evaluations also require a 'counterfactual'. In the context of NEETs, this can pose a methodological challenge: If the aim of an evaluation is to measure the impact of an intervention on NEETs' transition to employment, the validity of the results is much higher if the data for participants of the intervention are compared to a control group of non-participants with similar characteristics. However, as NEETs are usually not covered in the administrative data sources, a control group may be hard to identify. Therefore, data collection has to be planned well in advance and before the start of the intervention.⁵⁶

3.3.1 Evaluation sources

The NEET Action Plan should include a plan for getting and processing evaluation feedback. Feedback can come from:

⁵⁵ For more information, see: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/action/la-garantie-jeunes> (in French language).

⁵⁶ European Commission: Guidance on Evaluation of the Youth Employment Initiative. Brussels, September 2015.

- ▶ NEETs via interviews, focus groups and surveys;
- ▶ Internal peers in team meetings;
- ▶ External partners in meetings and workshops;
- ▶ PES (and other) managers in meetings and workshops;
- ▶ Independent research and evaluation or 'unusual suspects', i.e. using some outside eyes to look at the service;
- ▶ National and transnational sources, e.g. the European PES Network.

In **regular customer service**, knowledge about performance with NEETs accumulates in daily monitoring, and can be gathered in personal notes. This can then be complemented with special feedback interviews, NEET focus group discussions (using the NEET subgroups identified as a basis), and sometimes conducting surveys, in-house or outsourced.

Internal team meetings provide on a continual basis a possibility to quickly assess the performance, but as NEET work is a part of other PES work, it is necessary to get and give feedback to other colleagues and teams in PES.

Evaluation discussions with external partners – teachers, youth workers, NGOs, health officials and employers are vital because getting genuine feedback from different angles provides a richer and more robust picture of what really works, and what does not. It can be arranged as focus groups or as multi-actor workshops, where all of the key partners are represented.

Discussion with PES managers is essential in evaluating NEET work. This can be a part of regular development discussions of PES, or as a special workshop, as needed.

Daily work routine can make it difficult for you to study the broad picture, and assess the results in the longer term. Independent research and evaluation can be essential at times. For instance, an independent evaluation using standard methods of econometric analysis to assess the impacts can support the comparison of the effectiveness of measures across different types of ALMPs, or practices of a particular type. Independent research will also enhance the credibility of results to external readers. All of the above – customer, staff, outside and management feedback – can also be combined in a creative way.

57 Antropologerne, www.antropologerne.com/?lang=en

EXAMPLE



Redesign of youth services in Denmark (Copenhagen PES)

As part of its commitment to continuous service improvement, Copenhagen Jobcentre examined the relatively high number of young unemployed people who incurred sanctions within the system. These were customers who, for unknown reasons, failed to show up for appointments and dropped out of the system. Many of them were NEET. The Jobcentre adopted a new approach to this long-standing problem by engaging a firm of anthropologists who were briefed to work with these customers as part of a service redesign exercise. The firm⁵⁷ has been working since 2003 on the redesign of public and private services, in health care, employment, social services, education and others. Their work is a combination of applied anthropology, human centred design and co-creation with the customer.

Their approach involved working closely with a selection of the target group, building trust and creating a picture of how the users perceived the service. This involved meeting them in the Jobcentre and at home. Some important messages emerged: these young people found the system very confusing; they did not feel welcome when they came into the Jobcentre; and the language and the bureaucracy often overwhelmed them.

'Antropologerne' designed a series of collaborative processes to involve staff and customers in tackling these issues. The results were a package of products and service changes designed to address the problem. These included the production of a travel guide through the system, a service blueprint, the development of posters explaining the service and changes to make young vulnerable jobseekers feel more welcome. The latter included the introduction of a 'host' system to meet and greet customers – and serve coffee – on arrival.

The Head of Copenhagen Jobcentre, was pleased with the outcomes: 'This work shows that innovation has to start by listening to customers, especially those shying away from PES, and that relatively small adjustments can achieve major results.'⁵⁸

3.3.2 Getting the big picture: 360-degree approach to feedback and evaluation

Evaluation information and data can come from several channels, and may not always be compatible. Many PES struggle with the question of how to design evaluation in a way that allows them to get the big picture about their performance in meeting the NEET challenge.

58 Quoted from: Adams, E. and Amkil, R. (2013). *Stronger Together – Supporting Urban Youth Through Social Innovation*. EU. Urbact.

This can be done by adopting a **'360-degree' feedback** approach, used quite commonly in different forms for performance management⁵⁹ and in various ways often referred to as a 'radar chart method'.⁶⁰ In the case of PES and NEET groups, 360-degree feedback needs to be received and given from basically four key dimensions: PES customers (the NEETs), PES internal peers, outside partners and PES management. The results of the evaluation can be summarised in a 360-degree tool, depicted in Figure 7. The same approach can be used in the design-phase, as a way to plan and summarise the ideas from the 360-degree stakeholders, as pointed out in the beginning.

You can think of your NEET team being in the middle of a 360° circle (see Figure 7). The basis for good evaluation is a well-functioning PES NEET team. The 5-point scale on each dimension represents an assessment scale, where 1 means 'poor' and 5 means 'excellent', and 3 'in between' performance, or results. Various evaluation information received can be summarised in the tool in a holistic way, combining both information obtained as figures (like employment rates), and information obtained via

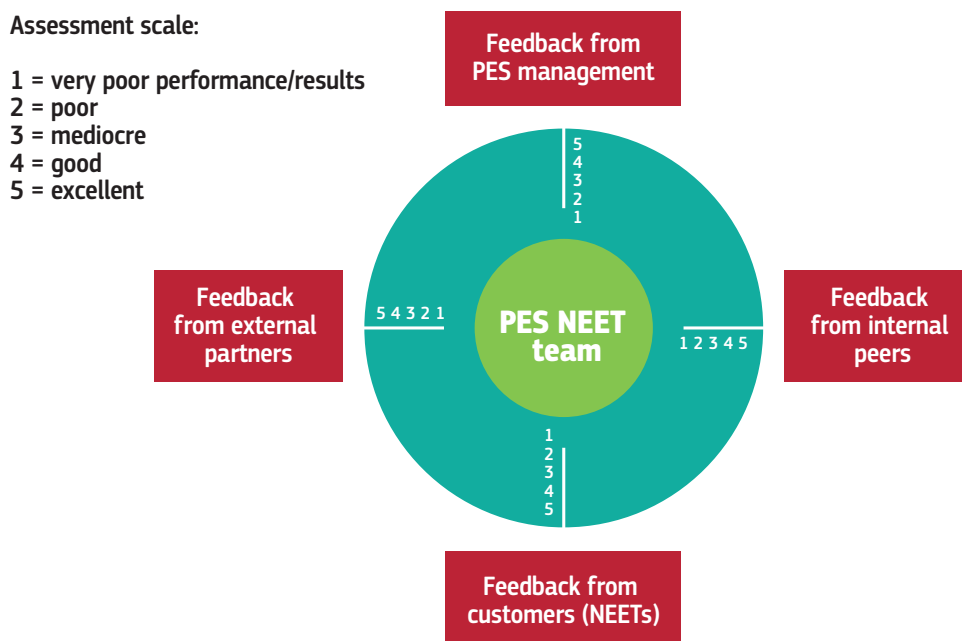
dialogue with stakeholders. The customers, internal peers, various partners and management can rate the performance on the 1-5 scale individually, or for instance in a focus group or workshop.

The combined evaluation information from various sources can then be summarised by the NEET team in a holistic way. They discuss the various information and then give a consensus score. The key here is to be open and attentive to a full range of feedback, and arrive at an honest and constructive evaluation – and use this to instruct the next round of a NEET Action Plan.

3.3.3 Well-functioning teamwork as the basis of good evaluation

At the core and centre of this type of evaluation lies the discussions within the designated NEET team (as depicted in figure 7). Good quality of teamwork, good personal relations, and conflict management in the team are the basis of good communication, and thus also evaluation. **The NEET Action Plan** can serve as a common reference point for feedback within the team.

Figure 7 Tool to summarise a 360-degree evaluation



59 <http://www.whatishumanresource.com/360-degrees-performance-appraisal>

60 <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Present-your-data-in-a-radar-chart-16e20279-eed4-43c2-9bf5-29ff9b10601d>



PRACTICAL TIPS

3.3.4 Feedback from customers

All well performing services are attentive to customer feedback and use customer satisfaction measurement tools, listen to customers, and – the most advanced – include customers in constructive critique, redesign and co-creation of services. The customers should not be treated as a passive ‘target group’, with plans about activation being made over their heads. The NEETs in particular have probably had their share of being treated only as a problem and a target. This is why PES should make efforts to involve NEETs in making the services better. Working with the different NEET subgroups could serve as a starting point by really getting to know their needs and getting ideas of how to make the service better.

The basic instance to get this feedback is of course within the NEET and PES customer service process, where **listening** to the customer and getting genuine feedback are the basis of a good relationship. Beyond that, customer **focus groups**, **customer panels**, and **customer surveys** are used.⁶¹

3.3.5 Feedback from other internal PES peers

NEET work can be arranged in different ways in the PES, as full-time, part-time, or as a mixed internal-external team. Whatever the arrangement, the performance of NEET work needs to be assessed in the framework of the entire PES performance, to make sure the services are well aligned, and balanced in relation to other tasks of PES.

3.3.6 Feedback from external partners

The same basic good teamwork and communication qualities form the basis for getting and giving feedback to partners. Partner feedback can be obtained through interviews, focus groups, workshops and surveys. A powerful way of getting feedback – and also saving time – is to have representatives from key partners at the same time in an evaluation workshop, as the partners hear each other’s opinions, and can react to them to form a deeper understanding.

3.3.7 Feedback from management and decision makers

This feedback can be obtained in different ways – as a part of PES development discussions, or/and

Teamwork in multi-disciplinary NEET teams

The NEET challenge can only be addressed through team effort. When everyone is using their own abilities to work toward a common goal, the result is greater than the efforts of a single person. Yet, as NEET teams are often multi-disciplinary and diverse, teamwork may require specific attention and efforts beyond the usual. The following guidelines could be helpful:

- ▶ A **shared mission** can help a diverse group of people to work together and create enthusiasm. Hence, before starting their collaboration, NEET teams should develop their own mission statement.
- ▶ For a team to work, everyone must understand what their role is and how to use it to contribute to the team’s success. A well-functioning team uses each person’s complementary skill sets. To achieve effective **collaboration and mutual respect**, each person must figure out how his/her skills and talents fit with those of the other team members.
- ▶ Working with NEETs requires patience, resilience and the ability to contain frustration and conflicts. An effective team must develop its own strategy of **problem solving** and conflict management, in order to avoid regressing into internal disputes.
- ▶ **Open communication** is the basis of teamwork. Each team member must be able to communicate with the rest of the group for project updates, questions, ideas and general input. This includes inviting and being open to internal and external feedback.

in designated workshops, and it would be good if PES managers could be present at times in cross-partner evaluation workshops, as this gives a better picture beyond just figures (‘seeing is believing’). The same holds for the upper layers of management and decision makers, where it is good to combine facts from monitoring, to a multi-voice feedback.

3.3.8 Feedback to redesign

The circle of the NEET Action Plan has now closed, and a new round starts. The results of monitoring and evaluation are fed to redesign and updating of the NEET Action Plan – based on evidence of what works and what doesn’t. The basic assumption in this toolkit has been that a more detailed plan is made for a year, whereas a rough sketch is made for perhaps three years. Therefore, an evaluation check would be done yearly with a specially designated workshop or team meeting, or as a part of overall PES assessment.

⁶¹ More on this can be found in the PES Network’s ‘Practitioner’s Toolkit to assist PES with the development of customer satisfaction measurement systems’ (European Commission 2015).

Summary: The PES NEET Action Plan

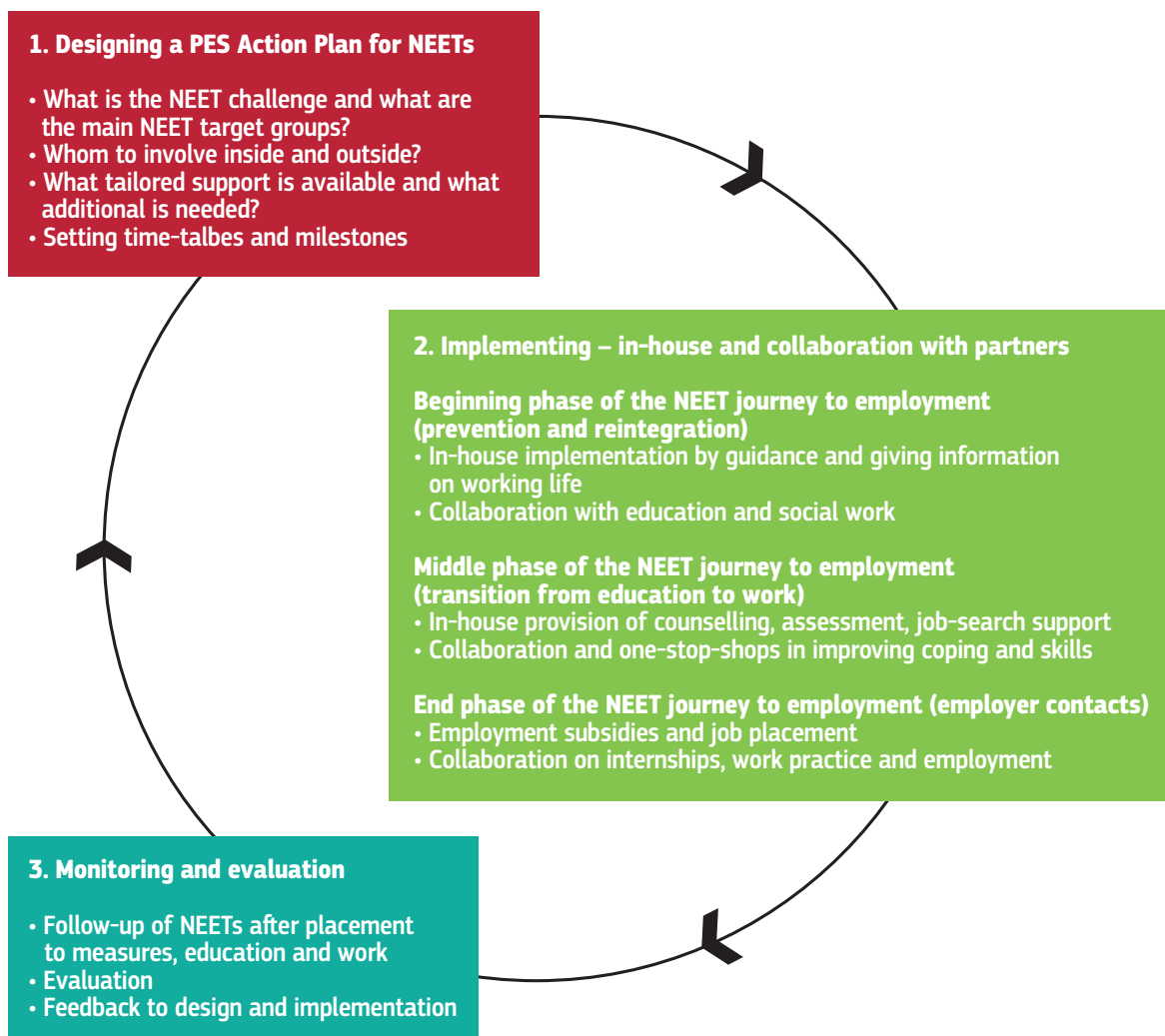
This toolkit provides guidelines for drafting a NEET Action Plan. It outlines three steps: designing the Action Plan, implementing the Action Plan (in-house and in collaboration with partners), and monitoring and evaluating the Action Plan to ensure continuous improvement.

– giving individual counselling, improving job-search in practice, upgrading skills and providing work practice. At every point of the path PES service needs to be open to taking up any chance to promote the situation of the customer. Hence, customer needs and opportunities must be the focus, not the path as such.

In reality, these steps overlap, so the process and service delivery **is not always linear**. Many things can (and often should!) **happen in parallel**

Figure 8 below gives an overview of the three steps and shows how they build on each other.

Figure 8 The three steps of sustainable activation of NEETs





PRACTICAL TIPS

Drafting your NEET Action Plan

The tool table below summarises the steps presented in the toolkit. It provides a way to draw up the outline of the PES NEET Action Plan. Collecting the notes from the steps in the toolkit, and from other sources, you can check how you have covered the NEET Action Plan aspects given in the left column, and then discuss the questions in the centre column, and make notes of the outcome of your discussion in the right column. The right column can then serve as the outline for drawing up the Action Plan, which then can be written and used in ways deemed appropriate.

Furthermore, a basic assumption of the toolkit is that a designated PES NEET team draws up the PES NEET Action Plan, under the leadership of PES management. The case can also be that the plan is drawn – *mutatis mutandis* – by a cross-institutional NEET team, where PES is a partner. In both instances the toolkit and the final table should be useful. In other instances, such as with regional or national actors, the toolkit hopefully provides useful material for work concerning NEETs.

Summary tool table

Drawing up the PES NEET Action Plan

NEET ACTION PLAN ASPECT	KEY QUESTIONS TO NOTE	NOTES FOR ACTION PLAN
Step 1: Designing a PES Action Plan for the sustainable activation of NEETs		
Problem statement and proposed solution for NEETs	What are the key NEET problems and solutions in the Action Plan period?	
Subgroups	What priorities are set in terms of NEET subgroups?	
NEET risks	What priorities are set in terms of overcoming the NEET risks?	
PES and NEET journey	What priorities are set in terms of PES role in the NEET employment path?	
Step 2: Implementing the Action Plan		
Beginning phase of journey (Prevention)		
In-house	To what extent does the beginning phase need attention?	
Collaboration	What measures can possibly be used (information on working life, PES visits, campaigns, events)?	
Collaboration	What measures can possibly be used (data-sharing, collaboration with youth outreach...)	
Middle phase of journey (Transition to employment or further training and fostering employability)		
In-house	To what extent does the middle phase need attention as a priority?	
In-house	What measures need attention? (Personal advisors, skill assessment, job-search...)	
Collaboration	What measures need attention? (Improving coping skills, language skills, one-stop-shops, job-specific training...)	
End phase of journey (Work practice and employment)		
In-house	To what extent does the end phase need attention as a priority?	
In-house	What measures need attention? (Employment subsidies, vouchers...)	
Collaboration	What measures need attention? (Internships, work trials, job fairs, apprenticeships...)	
Time-table	What are the key milestones of the Action Plan?	

NEET ACTION PLAN ASPECT	KEY QUESTIONS TO NOTE	NOTES FOR ACTION PLAN
Step 3: Monitoring and evaluation		
Based on the PES NEET Action Plan priorities, time-table and evaluation plan:	<p>What will be <i>monitored</i> on NEETs, when and how?</p> <p>What will it be <i>evaluated</i>, when, and how to cover key dimensions: NEETs, PES peers, partners and PES management?</p> <p>How do we <i>follow-up</i> to stay in contact, support next steps and monitor long-term effects?</p>	

Reference list and further information and resources

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- ▶ ILO. (2016): *What works on wage subsidies for Young People: A Review of Issues, Theory, Policies and Evidence* (forthcoming).
- ▶ OECD LEED (2015): *The local implementation of Youth Guarantees: emerging lessons from European experiences*.
- ▶ Public Employment Services' Contribution to EU 2020: PES Strategy Output Paper.

In addition, the PES practice examples cited in this paper can be found on the [PES Practice Repository](#).

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