



## NEET Activation Scheme I and II

Improving employment prospects through tailor-made intervention for NEETs with social difficulties, identified as needing greater professional support.

**MALTA**

**Title of the practice (in original language)**

NEET Activation Scheme (NAS I and II)

**Who is/was implementing the practice?**

Jobsplus, Malta's public employment service (PES)

**Which other organisations are/were involved in the practice?**

- Ministry for Education and Employment (NAS I and II)
- Malta College for Art Science and Technology (NAS I)
- Institute for Tourism Studies (NAS I)

**What are/were the main objectives of the practice?**

The NEET Activation Scheme I and II provides young people under the age of 25 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) with personal/professional training, mentoring and support, thereby facilitating their transition into education and to gainful employment for those identified as needing this extra support. This supports their employment prospects, quality of life, and social integration.

For more work-ready young people, the youth guarantee is able to refer them directly to jobs or they can use the on-line job matching service to find appropriate employment.

**When was the practice implemented?**

Since 2013 (ongoing). Based on the findings of the Census on NEET Youths and experience in the delivery of services under NAS I changes were introduced from 2016. Thus, NEET Activation Scheme II (NAS II) places greater focus on psychosocial services to young people.

**Who is/was targeted by the practice?**

Young people under 25 years of age who are residing in Malta or Gozo, and are:

- Unemployed (regardless of whether they are registered with PES), and;
- Not enrolled in any education or training institution.

NEETs on the youth guarantee programme who have not found work 6 months after registration at Jobsplus the public employment service in Malta were formally invited to take part in NAS I. Whereas there was a conditionality linked to benefit receipt in NAS I, it was removed for NAS II. Unemployed youth who had been registering for more than six months, and youth dependent on social benefits were formally invited to participate in the NAS I.

## What activities are/were carried out?

NAS I and II consists of three different phases of intervention, and participants are required to undertake at least two (except in cases where the young person is judged to need only minimal assistance).

**Phase 1** ensures personalised assistance that is tailored to both the immediate needs of the participants and other personal issues.

- Participants are individually profiled by psychologists and subsequently assigned to a specific youth worker.
- In NAS II young people with behavioural and/or social difficulties receive more intense intervention. They have access to several psychosocial and medical professionals to better meet their individual needs. For young disabled people, support workers work within the PES to tailor the guidance provided to their specific individual needs.
- Based on this profile, participants are offered a six week tailor-made training to improve specific skills. This includes motivational and behavioural training, guidance on employment, development of communication skills, and CV writing and interview skills. In addition, in NAS II young people who tend to have emotional or impulse control difficulties are offered training focusing on social anxiety management, personal care and hygiene, anger management and improving attention.
- Participants have direct contact with a youth worker three hours per week throughout the training phase.

### Phase 2

- Participants can choose either:
  1. Continued education, and are given enrolment assistance into academic and/or vocational courses in one of Malta's accredited institutions.Or:
  2. 12-week work exposure in a simulated or actual place of work, incorporating on and off-the-job training to improve employability. Employers incur no financial cost for the work exposure.
- Under each option, participants receive an allowance of no less than 80% of national minimum wage (those on unemployment benefits must choose between retaining the benefits or the allowance. If their benefit is less than the allowance, a top-up of the difference is possible).
- Participants continue to have direct contact with a youth worker three hours per week throughout this phase.

**Phase 3** applies on completion of the 12-week work experience

- Employers can either directly employ participants or retain participants on for a six-month traineeship which includes a further theoretical component.
- Employers receive a subsidy of EUR 600 for each six-month trainee.

## What are/were the sources of funding?

The NAS I and II is jointly funded by the Maltese national budget and the European Social Fund (ESF) with co-financing rate of 80%. The total budget of NAS I was EUR 1 640 559 and EUR 2 745 000 was committed to NAS II.

## What are/were the outputs: people reached and products?

### People reached<sup>1</sup>

A total of 606 individuals submitted an application for the NAS I between 2014-2015. Excluding no-shows, a total 346 NEETs participated in NAS I, of which 75 undertook a traineeship, 32 exited to education, 33 were employed, and 77 were registered unemployed, with 129 unknown.

It is envisaged that by 2020, 600 NEETs will be reached in NAS II (approximately 150 NEETs per annum), undergoing training or further training, or training and work exposure.

<sup>1</sup> Jobsplus Annual Report 2015: <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=1234>

## What are the outcomes: medium-term results or effects?

By 2016, 342 NEETs participated in the NAS II, of which 289 left the scheme in the same year. Amongst the scheme leavers, the majority (269) undertook a traineeship, 3 exited to education, 6 were employed, and 7 were registered unemployed, with 4 unknown<sup>2</sup>.

Out of 269 participants undertaking a traineeship, 109 participants were in gainful employment six months after completing the traineeship. This indicates that the traineeships offered increase employability prospects for the participants.

An independent evaluation of NAS I from 2015 highlighted the following outcomes:

- The majority (84%) of participants stated that they had largely achieved their initial objectives.
- 75% of participants indicated that Phase 1 training was suitable to their level and found it interesting.
- 85.6% of participants would recommend NAS I to their peers.
- According to participants' feedback, Phase 2 component is the most useful to them.

## What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

### Lessons Learnt

- Professionals working with the young people were not always fully aware of all aspects of the NAS I, and implementation could have therefore been more effective.
- There was a lack of communication between the professionals working with participants in NAS I (e.g. between youth workers at PES and psychologists), suggesting either slow or insufficient transferring of information.
- As the target group includes highly vulnerable young people with volatile behaviour and psychosocial needs, resources were strengthened for NAS II. As a result, participants now have access to a number of psycho-social professionals, relevant for individual needs. These include (but are not limited to): clinical and educational psychologists, psychotherapists, general practitioners and youth workers.
- Outreach mechanisms should be consistently bolstered so that ongoing information effectively reaches the young people in general and specifically NEETs. Outreach of NEETs through the sharing of data on who and where NEETs are needs to be continued. Moreover, to address the methodological limitations linked to the identification of the inactive NEET population, from 2017, data is also being requested from private educational institutions.

### Success Factors

- Effective profiling of NEETs at the start of NAS ensures relevant training and work exposure for each participant.
- Cooperation between professionals is critical to the success of NAS. This ensures participants are joined-up and personalised assistance is tailored to their background and needs.
- Those working with young people must have good awareness of NAS and other Youth Guarantee programmes to maximise the benefits.
- The sending of a personal invitation to NEETs ensures that these individuals are reached directly and are aware of the benefits of the initiatives available under the Youth Guarantee scheme in Malta. This will be repeated in 2018.
- Social media can be very effective in reaching a number of people, particularly in this target age group, and this has been the case for the outreach efforts of the Youth Guarantee so far. Radio and newspaper advertisements are also effective communication tools, particularly for friends and family who are informed about the benefits of participation in the scheme. Outreach events also provide an opportunity for these young individuals to meet with organisers and raise any questions they may have.

<sup>2</sup> The figures are based on the 2016 Youth Guarantee Data collection monitoring exercise. Thus, the methodology is based on the Youth Guarantee methodological framework.

## What are key sources of information?

<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/youth-guarantee-scheme#NEET>

<http://education.gov.mt/en/youthguarantee/Pages/Main-page.aspx>

Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (updated 2015)

<http://education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Documents/Youth%20Guarantee%20Implementation%20Plan%20-%20Malta.pdf>

<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/traineeships>