



Activation measures for young people in vulnerable situations

Experience from the ground



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1 Introduction

There is wide diversity within the population of young people not in employment, education or training¹ (NEET). While for some young people being NEET is a temporary status (the time between jobs, or before finding a job following their studies), for others it can be a symptom of, often multiple, disadvantage and can indicate a deep-running disengagement from actively participating in society.

It is now more than five years since the European Youth Guarantee² was introduced. Providing tailored solutions to a diverse group of young people and targeting NEETs with complex needs proved to be something new and challenging in several Member States. Despite significant efforts, the most vulnerable young people tend to be under-represented among Youth Guarantee beneficiaries³. Engagement with those in the most vulnerable situations remains insufficient⁴. The principle of the Youth Guarantee has been reaffirmed by the European Pillar of Social Rights⁵.

Youth Guarantee interventions are often not sufficiently adapted to the needs of those facing multiple barriers, such as poverty, social exclusion, disability and discrimination. This is the result of a number of factors, including a limited knowledge of the specific needs of different NEET groups, lack of low-threshold offers, insufficient geographical coverage (often in rural areas) and complexity of registration procedures⁶.

More intensive and holistic support to address complex needs that go beyond the employment sphere (including housing and social welfare assistance) is often required to ensure measures can reach and effectively support young people in vulnerable situations. This diverse group of young people may also need a longer period of support, with multiple interventions, before they are ready to take up an offer of education, training or employment. It is therefore important to ensure they are given the flexibility they need rather than setting a fixed timescale within which to meet targets⁷.

The aim of this paper is to highlight lessons learned, challenges and success factors in designing and delivering effective activation measures to support young people in vulnerable situations. The paper presents well-developed practices that have proven to have real impact on the beneficiaries. It seeks to provide inspiration and ideas for policy makers on potentially transferable elements of successful youth policies.

The paper contains the following sections:

Section 2 gives a summary of the **key messages** of the paper.

Section 3 provides an overview of **key considerations** when it comes to supporting young people in vulnerable situations and engaging those furthest from the labour market.

Section 4 looks at practices of **profiling** to support key partners in planning appropriate measures for youth in vulnerable situations.

Section 5 explores practices to address the **initial obstacles** encountered when supporting young people in vulnerable situations, including integrated service delivery, non-employment focused activities, and the role of social benefits in incentivising activation.

Section 6 examines different types of **education and employment measures** offered to young people in vulnerable situations

Section 7 then highlights the need for **cooperation with employers** and different ways Member States have designed programmes directly targeting employer participation.

Section 8 provides key considerations when it comes to **monitoring and evaluation** of activation measures for youth in vulnerable situations.

The report finishes with an overview of the key challenges and success factors for activation measures that focus on youth in vulnerable situations in **Section 9**.

This is one in a series of five papers, the other four concentrating on different policy areas of the Youth Guarantee: outreach, and education, employment, and traineeship offers. Therefore, policies and practices addressing these types of intervention are not discussed in this paper. Nevertheless, there may be some overlap, which is in part due to the fact that multifaceted policies and flexible types of intervention for young people should be seen as a sign of high-quality services⁸.

2 Key messages

Providing individualised support to get 'back on track'

- Some NEETs, such as the very low skilled, young people with disabilities, young people with health or family issues, or those from a migrant background, face specific barriers to stay or re-engage in education and training, and to access the labour market.
- Whilst each of them will require different support, as a whole, supporting these young people entails a shift in mindset. The goal is not only to support them back into education and training or work, it is also to get them 'back on track', in various ways. This means helping them to address different types of barriers, ensuring that they are not at a disadvantage because of their individual circumstances, and building up their self-confidence and motivation.
- Successful schemes are very much centred on listening and responding to the individual needs of the young person.
- Young people in vulnerable situations often have personal challenges that could affect their engagement (e.g. being homeless or having childcare responsibilities). These challenges need to be addressed before proceeding with any work on improving their skills or thinking about getting a job.

Supporting early activation and engagement of young people

- Early activation should include **orientation/profiling** to assess young people's interests, aspirations and options in terms of education, training and employment opportunities, and to help them understand the reality of the world of work.
- **Individual action plans** are needed, containing recommendations tailored to the situation of the young person and outlining the next steps for their progression.
- Providing **financial support is an important safety net** for vulnerable young NEETs taking part in a measure. A monthly allowance or other forms of financial support (social benefits, coverage of costs related to the measure – e.g. commuting costs) increases the retention rate of NEETs in active labour market programmes (ALMPs).
- **A combination of counselling, mentoring, and guidance** delivered by dedicated and specifically trained professionals has proved to be very effective for youth at risk, including work in focus groups with people facing similar problems.
- **Holistic and person-centred approaches to counselling are important** to identify not only individual barriers but also strengths, and contribute to the motivation of young people.
- A **trusting relationship** between young people and advisors as well as the provision of intensive support are key to engage at-risk youth.
- **Co-designing** and **co-delivering** the services has a positive effect in terms of reaching and engaging young people and in ensuring better tailored provision.

Facilitating transitions

- Concentrating less intensive youth services in **one-stop-shops** in local communities tends to help with the quality of information, guidance and counselling services, as well as ensuring retention.
- It is important to develop an **understanding of how the young person learns** in order to choose the right pathway and maintain their engagement. This is particularly important in the case of those young people who might have had negative experiences with education.
- **Offering some degree of flexibility** and second chances (e.g. offering guidance to those young people who have temporarily dropped out of the scheme or interrupted their pathway) can help to build trust and re-engagement.
- **Engaging employers** is essential to finding sustainable employment for young people and creating training opportunities. A link between services and employers is also important to make employers aware of issues that young people in vulnerable situations might face and offer support to employers to understand and address those issues.

Measuring success

- When dealing with young people in vulnerable situations, it is important to measure the **'distance travelled'** by the individual since accessing the support, rather than purely focusing on the outcome achieved, i.e.: whether they have integrated into the labour market, returned to education or become socially active.
- The design of **innovative performance indicators** such as 'level of autonomy' are important to guard against the likelihood of NEETs re-entering support programmes and to allow for the adjustment of programmes to improve their cost-effectiveness.



3 Supporting young people in vulnerable situations

Engaging with young people who are furthest from the labour market **as early as possible** is crucial in order to avoid long-term inactivity⁹. It often requires pro-active, intensive interventions with a broader range of partners to address the different barriers they face, including behavioural, social, educational and health-related barriers¹⁰.

Four main elements are essential to effectively supporting young people facing multiple obstacles:

- Building strong multi-stakeholder partnerships;
- Ensuring pro-active engagement with vulnerable groups;
- Adopting holistic approaches;
- Improving monitoring¹¹.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are key in supporting young people facing multiple barriers. They enable the provision of well-rounded support services that can tackle the variety of obstacles that a young person may have to employment/education. They also ensure that the individual is supported at all stages of their pathway into education/employment, helping to maintain trust in the system, and motivation. To be successful, such partnerships must bring together not only public employment services (PES), the education sector and local employers, but must also involve youth organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and social and health services¹².

The UngKOMP measure in **Sweden** provides a good illustration of such partnerships. Co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), it aimed to support 5 000 young people who are long-term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment, focusing on those with complex needs. The PES and municipalities created multi-skilled teams which included an employment advisor, a psychologist, an education advisor and a social worker. This approach is especially effective for young people with complex needs and who display low motivation to engage with public authorities. The multi-skilled team provided the young people with holistic, coherent, and individualised counselling and support so that the young person only had to deal with the team (rather than a series of institutions and agencies). The package of support was adapted to the young person's specific situation, through co-working with the various public agencies and services that are involved (e.g. this can range from prison psychiatrists to national health insurance). The average duration of a young person's engagement with the multi-skilled team was eight months. The measure started in 2015 and ended in March 2018, in 19 Swedish municipalities. Early evaluation is positive and shows that 63 % of UngKOMP participants left the project to enter employment or education¹³. In addition, between 2015 and 2017, disabled participants represented 29 % of beneficiaries, compared to 18 % registered with the PES¹⁴.

Proactive engagement with vulnerable young people is key to avoid drop-out and long-term inactivity¹⁵, which can further damage their individual prospects and is costly to society as a whole¹⁶. This requires preventative measures, and pro-active, intensive interventions to address the barriers young people are facing¹⁷. One of the common approaches to reaching disenfranchised or marginalised young people is through developing trusted relationships with youth workers and NGO representatives who can provide valuable advice and knowledge on how to approach this target group¹⁸. Young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are likely to prefer voluntary participation, a non-judgemental approach and may respond better to mutual respect. These principles not only ensure that more young people engage successfully with public authorities, but that they are also empowered to make informed choices about their futures¹⁹.

In **Spain**, the PULSA Employment (PULSA Empleo) project uses non-standard methods (e.g. theatre workshops, group games, robotics) to identify young people's strengths and to empower them. The project, which is co-financed by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the ESF, targets 18 to 29 year olds, in particular those at risk of social exclusion, including those with low qualifications, disabilities, and facing poverty. Through individual and group activities, and educational and professional guidance, the project aims to motivate the young person and identify their skills, in order to inform and match them with an appropriate offer. The project helps its beneficiaries to develop their professional, communication and numeracy skills, as well as build their self-confidence before they enter the world of employment²⁰.

Holistic approaches are another way of broadening and differentiating the range of Youth Guarantee support, according to the specific needs of different categories of NEETs. Such approaches include developing personalised pathways, offering income support (based on the principle of mutual obligation) and access to services, and providing counselling, mentoring and post placement follow-up to avoid drop-out²¹. For vulnerable young people, the four-month time limit for an offer may be too short as they may need to receive other additional individualised interventions before being able to take up and benefit from a Youth Guarantee offer.

The Guarantee for Youth (Garantie Jeunes) in **France** combines different types of holistic support. Co-financed by the YEI, it specifically targets young vulnerable NEETs aged 18-25 to provide them with financial support and a first professional experience. The measure is delivered by local organisations called Local Missions (Missions Locales), which provide a range of support activities to facilitate the social and professional integration of young people under the supervision of the PES. Vulnerable young people are identified through specific partnerships with municipalities, schools, social workers and outreach workers. When designing personalised support, the measure takes into account the degree of vulnerability of the participants by assessing for example their financial situation and family relations and connections. Participants receive a means-tested monthly allowance that is close to the minimum income for one single person and decreases with remuneration above a certain threshold. The monthly allowance acts as a safety net for participating young people who are likely to have limited rights to social protection schemes. The Guarantee for Youth enables vulnerable young people to build their professional projects through interaction with other participants and through professional mentoring. Results have been encouraging: 43 % of the participants moved into employment or training after leaving the measure and a further 9 % gained at least three months of professional experience during participation²². The higher degree of vulnerability of the Guarantee for Youth target group explains why these results are lower than those achieved at the level of the national ESF Operational Programme, where 52 % of exits were considered 'positive' into employment, education or training²³.

Finally, **monitoring** is important to fully understand the profile of young people and the extent to which they have moved further towards education or employment. Ideally, it entails the collection of participation data on NEET groups based on vulnerability. Beyond gender, there is currently no such breakdown in the Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee²⁴ at EU level. Moreover, it involves tracking young people's progress in overcoming specific barriers through the Youth Guarantee²⁵.

EU financial support for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee

The **YEI** is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. It exclusively supports young people who are NEET, ensuring that in parts of Europe where the challenges are most acute, young people can receive targeted support.

The total budget of the YEI is EUR 8.8 billion for the period 2014–2020. This funding is being used for a variety of measures that underpin the Youth Guarantee, ranging from outreach to vulnerable groups and activation, to hiring subsidies for employment of young NEETs.

By the end of 2017, the YEI had supported approximately 2.4 million young NEETs. The impact of these interventions is positive with around half of the operations financed by the YEI leading to a positive outcome – that is, a qualification or a move into education/training, or employment (including self-employment). The assessment of many Member States, therefore, is that the YEI is having a significant impact on the coverage and design of employment policy in their country²⁶.

The YEI is complementary not only to other actions undertaken at national level, but also to actions financed by the **ESF**. The ESF can reach out beyond individuals, helping to reform employment, education and training institutes and services – reforms that are often crucial for effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Over the 2014–2020 programming period, the ESF— in addition to the YEI — directly invests at least EUR 6.3 billion to support the integration of young people into the labour market across Europe. Many successful projects under the Youth Guarantee have been financed by this investment. Furthermore, the ESF also supports young people in other ways through a total of EUR 26 billion to tackle early school leaving and invest in vocational education and training.



4 Understanding the individual: Screening and profiling

Sophisticated profiling and screening tools and systems have been applied by PES in their work with jobseekers across Europe for several years²⁷. Profiling systems are well developed and diverse, including the use of quantitative (e.g. based on key socio-economic characteristics of the jobseekers such as age, gender, education background) or qualitative (structured interviews, capability tests) diagnostic tools to identify the jobseekers' needs, risks and their future pathways. In practice, profiling is aimed at helping PES counsellors ensure the right mix of support measures is given to jobseekers in the most efficient and cost-effective way.

In the context of Youth Guarantee implementation, profiling consists of systematically recording and analysing the characteristics of NEETs with a view to understanding their needs and providing them with relevant and tailored support in a holistic way. The personalised profiling approach leads to individualised pathways and activation measures for young people.

Determining the 'level of vulnerability'

In **Greece**, profiling is part of the overall personalised PES approach to supporting the young person²⁸. It starts with a personal interview carried out by the employment counsellor, to develop trust and cooperation between the counsellor and the young person. The focus of the interview is on profiling as well as on identifying the right measures to take in each different case, according to the level of support each unemployed person needs and their professional objectives.

Another example is **Italy**, where the likelihood of being in the NEET status is calculated based on individual characteristics and the territory²⁹. Depending on this likelihood, the young person is assigned a profiling level, i.e. belonging to one of the low, medium-low, medium-high and high 'risk classes' indicating, respectively, the distance of the young person from the labour market. It also identifies four disadvantage bands (low, medium, high, very high), taking into account the following variables: age, gender, education level, employment status one year before, region of origin and language skills.

The profiling level is one of the elements that guides the design of personalised support for the young person. It may, for some types of intervention, condition access to the measure and the amount of payment due to a service provider (PRES) where a brokerage service is provided. For example, the young NEET must take an online self-assessment test when they opt for the self-employment and entrepreneurship measures. The test assesses self-employment and entrepreneurial ability as well as the soundness of the business idea. Only if this test is successful, can a specialised training and the request for funding under the SELFIEmployment Rotation Fund follow. The SELFIEmployment Fund was started with the YEI and Regional Resources under the ESF³⁰. By 10 November 2017 2 203 young NEETs had undertaken the specific training measure (Growth Entrepreneurs – Crescere imprenditori) having passed the self-assessment test. By this point, 530 applications for finance had been approved and funded, at a total value of EUR 17.7 million.

Another example of the use of profiling to categorise young people into discrete categories can be found in **Portugal**, where young people are placed in high-, medium- and low-risk categories, depending on their risk of remaining unemployed within a year³¹. The PES counsellors can choose to support the young people with the appropriate measure, according to the category they fall into.

Defining the trajectory needed

In **Luxembourg**, profiling outcomes determine the further trajectory and mix of support measures for the young person³². There are different profiling approaches, depending on the initial intentions of the young person:

- If the young person intends to work, their first contact point is the PES. The PES carries out a profiling exercise in order to identify the specific needs and employability of the young person. If they are ready for the job market, they register with the PES and receive personalised assistance from a PES counsellor specialised in working with young people.
- If the young person intends to return to school, they are assisted by the department for vocational education and training (SFP/ALJ) within the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth. A profiling is carried out to clarify the intentions of the young person and to make sure that their education plans are realistic. If this is the case, the young person receives personalised assistance during the search and with the application for an appropriate school.
- If the young person is unsure of whether or when to work or to return to school, they are guided towards the National Youth Service (SNJ) which undertakes a profiling exercise in order to find out the intentions of the young person. If the activation-oriented trajectory seems to be the best option, the SNJ continues to work with the young person.

This approach assumes the young person is capable of realistically formulating such intentions, which might be challenging for some vulnerable youth. Hence, the system has feedback and adjustment loops: if the profiling that is done at the beginning of each of the three trajectories shows that the intended pathway (work / education / activation) is not realistic, the YG partners discuss the case in their regular meetings to find the best option for this person.

In **Latvia** too, a NEET profiling system has been developed (in the PES and other agencies) to provide the most appropriate measures as well as to determine the intensity of the support required³³. As a result of this profiling, an individual job search plan is prepared in the State Employment Agency (SEA), and an individual work programme is developed in the Agency for International Programmes for Youth (JSPA) which provides support to inactive young people. Young people are enrolled in the most appropriate measures, sequenced in a way that would ensure the most effective labour market outcome. This assessment is based on appropriate job opportunities for the individuals according to their demographic characteristics, as well as self-esteem and motivation to look for a job and cooperate with the SEA advisor or mentor assigned to the young person.

In **Romania**, profiling is used to establish the level of employability, as well as the level of ability and self-confidence of jobseekers to guide their own career. Local experience shows that profiling can highlight the characteristics that young NEETs or the young unemployed have that may increase their risk of becoming long-term unemployed. These results can be used to support decision-making in order to adapt and update the set of activation measures to the needs of the unemployed³⁴.

Capturing a range of skills and abilities

For young people in vulnerable situations, it is important that profiling focuses on their whole range of skills and abilities. For young people who have struggled at school, skills may not be immediately evident by looking at their formal qualifications. However, a skilled adviser who has created a trusted relationship with them can help to draw this information out. Often this requires a profiling approach which goes beyond the realm of vocational skills or skills formally learnt at school³⁵. Holistic profiling means capturing formal skills and achievements, as well as soft skills and abilities that are not be immediately visible, even to the young people themselves.

In **Ireland**, for example, the nationwide profiling scheme assigns a specific score to each young person who signs up for the service³⁶. This score captures both objective characteristics as well as subjective traits and barriers which may prevent the young person from getting ahead, including self-awareness, resilience, employment motivation, hope and adaptability.

Another such example from Ireland is the training and employment programme established in 2008 by the Cork Simon Communities for young homeless people who have multiple needs³⁷. After expressing an interest in training, the participants undergo an assessment where they highlight their desires, what they want to learn, where they want to work and what they want to progress towards.

Avoiding overwhelming the beneficiary

Another emerging consideration is the need to avoid multiple profiling tools used by the different partners involved in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee³⁸. A diverse range of partners is needed to address the multiple needs of young NEETs. But from the user perspective, this means the young person needs to engage with a number of different service providers, each of which will conduct an initial assessment of that young person – often gathering the same basic data which has already been collected by other partners. These multiple profiling experiences are time-consuming and inefficient and act as a further deterrent to young people, particularly if they already have mistrust and negative views / experiences of dealing with public agencies. Hence, whilst respecting data protection rules, more profiling data and outcome sharing should be encouraged between Youth Guarantee partners.

For example, in **Malta**, within the framework of the pilot project on NEETs, the young people received an individual profiling and competence assessment, which also included recommendations and suggestions for the beneficiary's future development and to further improve their capacity³⁹. Data protection regulations allowing, the profiling of the dropouts was shared with relevant stakeholders in the sector for further action.

The **Spanish** PES has also recently introduced one integrated system (beneficiary register) for the Youth Guarantee which is shared by all stakeholders⁴⁰. Previously, the Youth Guarantee in Spain had over 17 databases, one for each region. Now, data feeds in to the register from all of the regions, covering registrations, actions and tracking. In order to overcome data protection issues, each young person is asked when they enter the system if they give explicit permission for the sharing of their personal data, with the particular aim of making them an employment, education or training offer.

Another example of data sharing is in **Belgium** (Flanders) where, when in training or counselling with a partner organisation, the jobseeker has to give permission to this external organisation to access his or her personal VDAB file⁴¹. Then, the PES and partner employees access the files via the My Career for Partners variant and counsellors can register visits, counselling sessions, job coaching, internships, work experience and training courses.

Light-touch profiling to ensure trust

Another way to ensure the young person is not overwhelmed and thus deterred by the profiling process, is to apply profiling in a 'light-touch', less formal way to avoid discouraging youth in vulnerable situations further and to promote easy and supportive ways of working.

In **Finland**, the country-wide Ohjaamo approach of a single point of service for young people does not gather client data at the first meeting⁴². Some users drop in and receive support without any further intervention or profiling. The remaining users are referred on for further support and this is determined by a light-touch assessment process conducted informally with a guidance professional⁴³. Throughout the profiling, the emphasis remains on the young person being in control and steering the process. This creates a sense of autonomy for the individual, which is key in successful activation. The guidance centres originated from a pilot project funded through ESF.

Experience from the Youth Guarantee pilot projects⁴⁴ shows that profiling has the potential to streamline the collection of information, especially in the case of undecided clients, and offer a more comprehensive overview of clients' skills and capabilities. However, over-reliance on computer-based assessment needs to be avoided, leaving discretion for practitioners to choose appropriate actions to support their clients' needs. Furthermore, many users benefit from being guided either through the profiling process, or at least through the results, in order to get the best out of the process.

In addition, individualised counselling, profiling and skills mapping should be delivered by specifically trained or specialist staff with experience of addressing the challenges facing young people; indeed, the key front-line Youth Guarantee staff, such as PES advisers, school activity coordinators and project personnel, require training and support to take on new responsibilities. For example, staff involved in profiling should receive training on how to use profiling tools (from the perspective of users as well as practitioners), how to guide users through the profiling process, how to explain and illustrate the results of the exercise to clients, the added value of profiling and the implications for the work of practitioners, and the results of evaluations/studies on effective profiling⁴⁵.

Top tips



Consider how best to capture the whole range of hard and soft skills and abilities in the profiling



Reflect on how to genuinely involve the young person in the profiling process and outcomes: do the assessment with the young person and ensure its outcomes speak to them



Whilst respecting data protection regulations, consider sharing profiling outcomes with other agencies involved to avoid the young person having to do similar profiling processes several times, thus minimising the risk of further disengagement

5 Addressing the first obstacles to education and employment

Supporting young people who are furthest away from the labour market often requires interventions with a broad range of partners to address the barriers that they face⁴⁶. These include barriers that are often not related directly to education, training or employment but fall under the remit of other services, such as social, health or housing services. Addressing these obstacles, often as a priority, is key to getting the young person back on track and eventually back into education or the labour market.

Spotlight on: Youth homelessness

For many homeless young people who are already experiencing social exclusion and living in extreme poverty, their homelessness needs to be addressed first before further re-integration into society and the labour market can be supported.

The Housing First model, advocated by FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, highlights the importance of a holistic approach when supporting young people in vulnerable situations⁴⁷. Rather than imposing a staircase model - which grants housing once a 'staircase' of mandated programmes and expected behaviours have been met - the service user receives the housing first, in addition to a suite of coordinated support to tackle other challenges they may face, such as social inclusion, overall wellness, health, employment and educational opportunities. The Housing First approach is based on five core principles:

1. A right to housing with no pre-conditions. This requires a culture change amongst housing service providers, as well as sufficient availability of accessible housing for young people.
2. Youth choice, youth voice and self-determination. This requires support to the young person to make informed choices, clear understanding of the reasonable housing possibilities and listening to the young person's needs and expectations.
3. Positive youth development and wellness orientation requires a recovery orientation, placing emphasis on the young homeless person's strengths but also accounting for their vulnerabilities. This means allowing the young person to take control of the transition, accounting for individual and unique needs and focussing on key life skills.
4. Individualised and client-driven support. This requires service providers to allow flexibility, and appropriate tools to allow the young person to articulate their support needs.
5. Social and community integration to provide meaningful education and employment opportunities often requires housing which is not labelled with stigma, opportunities for social and cultural engagement, building natural supports, such as reconnection with family, and engagement in meaningful activities.

The Housing First approach addresses the complex needs that users face as well as homelessness itself. It is considered that this could be achieved by providing a stable environment, intensive support and taking a holistic approach to life improvement.

5.1 Collaboration with relevant service providers

Integrating all relevant services for young people, including social, health, family and housing services, makes support more accessible, more user-friendly, and more customer-focussed. Crucially, it enables a support process that can address the range of obstacles a young person may face. Establishing such integrated services requires the relevant actors to share information and coordinate service delivery across institutions, in order to enable a single point of contact for young people. Integrated services can come in different forms and to varying degrees of intensity.

Several countries offer **one-stop-shop services**, addressing all the needs of young people in one single location. In some countries, PES have also put in place specific job centres for young people to address their needs in terms of guidance and support.

In 2012, **Luxembourg** established a one-stop-shop approach called the House of Guidance (*Maison de l'Orientation*). This brings together employment, education and guidance agencies to provide training information and job or career guidance to young people aged 12-19 years old. Likewise, **Finland's** one-stop-shop guidance centre for youth (*Ohjaamo*), mentioned previously, works across administrations to provide tailored and personal advice and guidance with regard to various dimensions including life management, career planning, social skills, and education and employment support. This network of partner organisations is available both physically and digitally and avoids a duplication of services, thus simplifying the process for young people⁴⁸.

In **France**, a large number of young people contact and receive support from Missions Locales which are associations created by municipalities (or groups of municipalities). Their role complements the actions of PES and includes the provision of information services, guidance, support to access education and training opportunities, coaching and mediation with employers⁴⁹.

The **German** Youth Employment Agencies bring together front-line staff from different services: youth work, youth welfare services and career guidance (PES)⁵⁰. Cooperation with schools aims to reduce early school leaving and to support young people into employment. Although all actors involved still operate according to their own mandate, cooperation is facilitated by local cooperation agreements and information exchange between the different services about individual cases. In many German Youth Employment Agencies, professionals from the different services work physically under one roof. This helps to engage young people, because they can access relevant services more easily and do not need to go from one organisation to the other. In the Youth Employment Agency, young people are then signposted to the relevant contact person within the agency, depending on their profile, status and needs. Externally, actors of the Youth Employment Agency work also with organisations supporting young people, for example, the Youth Employment Agency in Hamburg organises meetings with all relevant organisations to discuss local needs, but also to avoid a duplication of tasks. Thanks to the Youth Employment Agency in Hamburg, the number of school leavers who started an apprenticeship immediately after leaving school has risen continuously from 2012 onwards: 1 338 out of 5 307 school leavers in total in 2012, 1 443 out of 3 731 in 2013, and 1 893 out of 5 059 school leavers in 2014.

The establishment of **Ireland's** Intreo offices also involved merging the relevant actors delivering welfare, employment and activation services in order to provide a one-stop-shop service.

Local, close and informal

Experiences from these countries show the value of concentrating low-threshold youth services in one-stop-shops in local communities. This can help to ensure the quality of information, guidance and counselling services. It can also improve retention because the participants are able to access most services in one place, rather than having to access services in different offices. However, separating services linked to financial (potential welfare benefits and penalties) and non-financial supporting services was found to be a useful approach for the Youth Guarantee pilot projects when the clients were less likely to associate their case worker with potential (financial) benefits or penalties⁵¹.

There is also added value in ensuring that such one-stop-shops provide a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which staff interact with young people in an informal environment, as opposed to looking like a typical PES office. In the case of the aforementioned **Swedish** *UngKOMP*, the design of the office was intended to have a 'lounge-inspired' feel, where there is always someone from the team present who can be approached at any time by the participants without having an appointment. The aim is to foster an environment that encourages open dialogue and exchange, and this has increased young people's active participation and willingness to remain in the programme.

Setting up one-stop-shops can however be time-consuming, resource-intensive and expensive. As a result, not all Member States have established them. However, collaboration of different services, be it through information-sharing, the creation of joint networks, or cooperation through working together on issues of common concern, does not necessarily have to occur in the same location. Alternative ways in which integrated support may be organised and delivered include case management, where multiple professionals coordinate to meet the user's needs, as well as multi-skilled teams. A single contact person for service users, who oversees the available services and works in a person-centred way, is often essential in case-management and multi-skilled teams.

An example of the use of case management is the **Flemish** PES, VDAB, which encourages jobseekers who are in training or counselling with a partner organisation to give permission to this external organisation to access his or her personal VDAB file. The PES and partner organisations can register and have an overview of all the young person's activities, such as counselling sessions, job coaching, work experience, training sessions etc.

While integrated services are beneficial for all young people, their high level of accessibility and their ability to tackle several issues at the same time makes them particularly effective in supporting the most vulnerable, who often face multiple barriers to integration.



Spotlight on: Supporting young refugees

Young refugees can face a number of barriers to joining the labour market: poor knowledge of the host country language; lack of social networks; uncertainty around residence status and discrimination. Some young refugees may already have completed their education, whereas others may have interrupted their schooling to flee their country of origin, leaving them with low levels of skills and / or qualifications. Moreover, those who do have existing qualifications, skills or work experience do not have their skills and competencies gained abroad or in their country of origin recognised.

Knowledge of the host country language is probably the most important factor in finding quality employment for refugees. There is evidence that **combining language training** with vocational training is a particularly effective way of supporting labour market integration⁵². Some Member States already have vocational and language training measures in place⁵³. In **Germany** the pre-apprenticeship training programme, which involves 6-12 month subsidised job placements, together with basic skills and vocational training, can be combined with additional measures such as language courses for socially disadvantaged migrants⁵⁴. The Deutsche Bahn (German railway) 10-month 'Chance Plus' programme for young refugees offers language training alongside vocational training, leading to a B1 level of German language on completion as well as the opportunity for a job with the Deutsche Bahn. The programme also includes support from cultural mediators, who provide help with administrative procedures and in resolving cultural conflicts⁵⁵.

Supporting the social labour market integration of refugees is not just about the refugees themselves. Resistance from employers and communities towards the integration and employment of refugees in some areas makes it more difficult to support young refugees in the current climate. Integration measures therefore need to be accompanied by efforts to tackle reservations towards refugees within communities and amongst employers. **Employers** must be made aware of the benefits of having a diverse workforce, as well as measures to ensure community cohesion. Experience from Australia suggests that **involving the community** in the integration of young refugees, for example through volunteer mentor roles, can bring benefits both to the young participants and to the wider community⁵⁶.

Subsidised employment can help ensure that employers are willing to employ refugees. **Lithuania** offers a subsidy of 75 % of the salary of refugees, over a 24-month period. Targeting sectors of the economy where there is a need for workers can also help. For example, in **Sweden** there are now 'Fast tracks' (Snabbspår) for around 30 professions, which combine work experience, Swedish for the workplace lessons and/or a supplementary education programme at a higher education institution⁵⁷.

It is important to remember that young refugees, like all young people, are a **heterogeneous group** and will have different needs, competences and aspirations. For example, young refugee women who are mothers will need childcare on their path to labour market integration. Others may not be ready to enter employment at all, and may need to pursue an educational pathway first. Engaging the young person's family (if they are in the host country) may help to ensure their buy-in to supporting the young person in his/ her education, training or employment pathway⁵⁸.

5.2 Collaboration with other partners

A single stakeholder cannot successfully engage and support the different groups of NEETs on its own. Cooperation with other partners such as employment services, education, social services, NGOs and community groups helps to tailor service delivery to the needs of each young person and to consider varying influences such as the family environment, illness or reduced capacity to work.

There is particular value in carefully choosing partners who have the required knowledge of working with specific groups of young people. Those who are furthest from the labour market require engagement over a long-term period; they need to be repeatedly re-engaged with, as their circumstances are often 'chaotic'. Specifically, gaining the trust of a hard-to-reach young person depends on more than regular contact; it requires tailored support, which partners must have the capacity to provide in an effective manner. For instance, involving youth and grassroots NGOs means that it is possible to capitalise on their strengths, attributes which a traditional PES might not have, such as relevant contacts and specialised workers with in-depth knowledge of young people. They also bring additional resources which PES might lack due to the size of caseloads or the experience and skills of their staff. These NGOs find it easier to build a trusting relationship with hard-to-reach youth through their regular activities.

Partnership work differs depending on the national, regional or local context. For example, the PES in Wallonia, **Belgium** has set up mixed teams consisting of professionals from the PES, NGOs and trade unions who work on different projects supporting young NEETs and those with more complex needs. In **Germany**, a systematic partnership approach is used. Cooperation agreements are in place on a local level between the Employment Agency, Job Centres and Youth Welfare Services to ensure that activities are coordinated and there is a common understanding on how services are to be delivered.

A designated case worker is crucial when working with multiple partners, not only in securing the flow and effectiveness of the agreed individual action plans but also in helping the young person to navigate their way through the services. This means that the case worker has the responsibility to monitor the entire process from the beginning to the end of the service. Quite often, support to young NEETs can last a long time, from outreach to a placement in a job, often via several intermediary phases, such as placement in activation workshops or rehabilitation. The process involves several people, and institutions. Good case management is challenging to establish, as it relies on having the appropriate tools, such as good databases, to guide the process between services and follow up the process with the young person. There are also often data protection challenges when it comes to sharing information but there are practical solutions to these, such as obtaining consent from the young person that the information can be passed on to another relevant service⁵⁹.

Experience on the ground highlights the need to agree common objectives and a clear strategy; to define clear responsibilities for each partner involved; communicate effectively with all partners; secure the necessary finances and monitoring of outcomes and cost-effectiveness.

Top tips



Make sure that partnerships:

- have robust agreements in place from the beginning, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
- are based on a shared and understood commitment;
- include shared and understood targets;
- contain mutual support mechanisms to help delivery;
- and have in place regular monitoring arrangements



Provide accessible support services in a relaxing, informal and welcoming atmosphere



A designated case worker should guide the young person through the different service providers, whilst allowing the young person to make informed choices



Ensure the various services use a common approach and agreed criteria

5.3 Building confidence, motivation and soft skills

A key obstacle to engagement and activation of young people in vulnerable situations is related to issues of low trust and low confidence. Offering additional engagement activities such as motivational workshops and psychological/social assistance, as well as more intensive personalised support, are therefore crucial for service providers to be able to reach and activate those facing multiple obstacles.

Non-employment focused activities

In cases where young people are de-motivated or have been disengaged from the labour market for a long period of time, activities which are not focussed on employment may be a useful starting point to engage them in developing their soft skills and helping them to find out about their interests and skills.

In **Lithuania**, the 'Gates' youth centre (Atvirasis jaunimo centras 'Vartai'), which has been running since 2006, works with young people according to the principles of 'open youth work' - focusing on non-formal ways of engaging young people through mutual learning and giving young people a large degree of autonomy. The youth centre provides support for young people facing difficulties, helping to address their problems and develop life skills. Particular attention is paid to young people who find it difficult to fit into a peer group or adult society, demonstrate a lack of motivation to learn and inability to manage their daily routine, are prone to crime, or substance misuse. Young people visiting the 'Gates' acquire practical skills needed for independent life and engage in activities voluntarily, which increases their motivation to learn. An equal relationship between the staff member and the young person is promoted and responsibility for the learning and educational process is assigned to the young people themselves. This enables them to learn to think and assume responsibility for themselves and for their actions. In 2017, 13 different initiatives were organised at 'Gates' by young people themselves. Moreover, in the long term, it was reported that young people become more self-reliant, are able to think critically and are better at staying in employment. They also become more responsible members of society. Those young people who attend the centre for longer periods of time also have better oral communication skills, are able to compromise and express their opinions, and are better equipped to solve conflicts in ways different from those they are accustomed to. They are better at listening to others, engaging in discussion and at personally assuming responsibility for their environment⁶⁰.

One-to-one support

Providing the right intensity and amount of support is important for those who are facing more complex needs. Experience from the ground shows that this group requires a considerable amount of '**hand-holding**' from support providers. This means that often organisations working with more vulnerable groups need to dedicate higher than planned levels of staff time and other resources (e.g. organising transport, providing incentives, making sure the participants are up on time to attend job interviews and courses, additional interviews/mentoring and motivational work). This is often deemed essential to making sure participants attend activities and job interviews, and to follow up in cases of no-shows.

In fact, this level of commitment was one of the key success factors behind the high completion rates and positive outcomes of some of the Youth Guarantee pilot projects. For instance, the project in **Cartagena, Spain** supported young people who were highly demotivated, many of whom were disengaged. Securing engagement required the counsellors to be fully available throughout the day, often outside working hours, and to support the young person in every aspect of their lives, including social aspects such as their personal relationships. The ongoing support made them aware of their own potential and capacity, built up their self-esteem and showed them that they were able to use their skills, thus opening up new opportunities that they would not have considered otherwise. The support was effectively personalised to the needs of the individual, so it was also empowering. The project achieved an outcome figure of 83 % into employment, education and/ or training (101 out of 121). This is a positive result given the profile of the young people targeted, most of them from hardest to reach groups. The feedback on the counsellors was also high, at 4.25 out of 5⁶¹.

Similarly in **Denmark**, 'Building Bridges to Education' seeks to prepare young people academically, socially and personally to start and complete vocational education. An important element of this project is the close ('hand-held') guidance the young participants receive during their transition from social assistance to education, thus building bridges between the two systems. Key success factors are the close cooperation between the job centres and the educational institutions, and the dedicated training of the project's mentors⁶².

Young people from vulnerable groups may know little about the process of getting and keeping a job, whilst their existing networks often lack the capacity to help. The provision of one-to-one support through a case worker for a young person is key. The case worker, often a social worker by background, plays an active role, building a relationship with a young person and offering activities such as mentoring, advocacy, counselling and guidance. As the young person moves closer to the labour market, the case worker might need to change his/ her approach, moving from a youth work approach that focuses on emotional/personal and social development, to placing more emphasis on getting the person job-ready and providing career guidance⁶³. Young people can face multiple disadvantages that are long-term, complex and dynamic – holistic approaches are important in that context, but stability of contact is also essential.

Moreover, this case worker should remain as a point of support once a young person has found employment or further education. For example, in the 'Coop de Boost' project carried out by the PES in Wallonia, **Belgium** in partnership with trade unions and NGOs, a young person is offered a range of activities such as workshops, training, and individual coaching. At the end of the programme, the young person ideally finds a job or further education and stays in touch with the project team, in order to address problems he or she might encounter during employment or training.

Peer support

Experience on the ground also highlights the value of peer support and working in groups in which members share the same experiences. This strengthens the participants' identity as they can see their individual experience within a wider perspective, as well as learn from other people in similar situations⁶⁴. For instance, the **Lithuanian** PES implemented the programme 'Trust Yourself' (*Pasitikėk Savimi*) during 2013 and 2015, where participants were placed in groups with similar peers, as determined by assessments at the start of the project by the project counsellors. Participants stayed in these groups for the duration of their time on the programme. Participants also undertook informal social activities designed to improve cultural and soft skills, such as theatre trips⁶⁵.

Co-design and co-production

Empowering young people to make informed choices and to take charge of their own future is often key to ensuring sustainable engagement. Taking this a step further, genuine involvement of young people in **co-designing** and **co-delivering** the services can have a positive effect in reaching out to and engaging a high number of 'hidden' youth and in ensuring better and wider feedback on the services provided, thus better tailoring provision.

For example, the Equity, Participation and Decision-making Laboratories (EP-DeM Labs) project, co-funded by Erasmus+, worked with disadvantaged young people aged 16-24 to co-develop and co-deliver projects and measures to improve their level of education and employability.

The project was delivered in four European cities /regions from 2016 to 2017. In Dublin, the project labs facilitated conversations between:

- Young people about education, training and employment, allowing them to express their views about the options available to them and the changes they would like to see;
- Policy makers and practitioners, to facilitate an inter-agency exchange of experiences and learning;
- Young people and the agencies, through a facilitated conversation and listening process.

The same themes were discussed in each of the different lab types. These interactive sessions lasted 2-3 hours each and included small group discussions, methods such as group art work (for the youth labs) and group work (for the mixed labs). Youth workers played an important role in the project, in recruiting young people, supporting them in between the sessions and contributing to the facilitation.

The ultimate goal of the EP-Dem Labs project was to enable young people to have an influence on future youth training, education and employment initiatives. As a result of the project, a city action plan was developed for each of the four cities involved⁶⁶.

Experience from the UK Talent Match⁶⁷ programme, described in the box below, illustrates the benefits of co-production.

Spotlight on co-production in the talent match programme

The core belief of the Talent Match programme is that co-producing employment services with those who need those services the most helps to ensure they are appropriate for their intended participants. Talent Match has supported hundreds of participants to take part in partnership boards and youth panels. In this way they are able to monitor, scrutinise and provide feedback on new plans and are involved in key decision-making regarding commissioning, service design and delivery, and quality assurance as equal partners.

As an example, the Youth Panel members of Talent Match in Greater Manchester sit on the Partnership Board, Steering Group and Commissioning Panel. They also evaluate the performance of front-line staff by interviewing beneficiaries and challenge staff to look at things differently. The youth leaders of Talent Match in the North East have been involved in recruiting staff across management teams and partner organisations. The Young People's Panel of Talent Match in Middlesbrough has led the commissioning process and funding of new services based on the issues and gaps they have experienced themselves and through understanding the needs of their peers.

"I believe without young people's input, feedback and influence, the funding decisions made would have been completely different and perhaps not as beneficial as we think to unemployed young people", explains a project representative.

This approach significantly contributed to the success of the project. Co-production helps with wider efforts to influence policy and practice – for example, local authorities, job centres and private employers have started to invite and even commission Talent Match beneficiaries to give feedback on their strategies and services. Co-production can also have a positive effect on the transversal and soft skills of the young people who are involved in co-designing and co-delivery. Positive effects on self-belief, well-being and confidence have also been reported.

"At Project Board meetings there is no condescension from Managers towards the young people. They treat us as adults... Everything the young people say is listened to and we get recognition for the things we achieve".

A representative of the Young People's Participation group at Talent Match Nottingham (D2N2)

Source: *The Big Lottery Fund (2018) Talent Match: Achievements and lessons for policy and programme design.* A number of Talent Match projects are co-financed by YEI/ESF.

Top tips



Provide a 'package of services' that include 'core services' such as face-to-face support, with additional 'add-on services' specific to the needs of the young person and their barriers



Have a designated case worker to support the young person through their journey and the different services and support provided. Ideally, that contact point should remain once the person has accessed a Youth Guarantee offer, particularly for those who have more complex needs



Ensure that motivational-related activities and psychological/social assistance to support the young person are carefully selected and tailored to his/her specific needs



Show young people that they themselves can contribute to improving the quality of their lives and take charge of their future by treating them as equal partners

5.4 The role of social benefits in activation

There is growing evidence that offering young people financial incentives increases engagement rates and can help them to overcome barriers to participation. A number of countries are thus using social benefits to encourage re-engagement with the education system or pathways to employment. This is taking place in line with the broader trend within PES to use access to benefits in a more pro-active way, linking it to active job search activities⁶⁸. This requires integrating adequate income support and other benefits provided to young people, into a whole package of support in the context of Youth Guarantee services. This integration takes various forms, including linking out-of-work and in-work benefits, advising young people to access the benefits they are entitled to and /or making access to benefits conditional on fulfilment of certain conditions on the road to employment / education.

In **Germany**, in order to better support young people in difficult situations, a new form of assistance was introduced in 2016 as part of the basic income support for job seekers (Book II of the Social Code). According to the eligibility criteria for the new assistance, young people who are very likely to be entitled or are in principle entitled to benefits under Book II of the Social Code, and are not yet over the age of 25, can be provided with assistance to overcome their personal difficulties, without having to submit an application. This assistance is to obtain an academic training-related or vocational qualification or to enter the workforce and apply for or accept social benefits. Assistance is therefore provided to young people who, at least temporarily, cannot be reached by the established assistance systems or who turn their back on them. In advance of this new statutory provision, similar approaches were piloted from the end of 2015 as part of a federal programme called *'Respekt'*⁶⁹.

Many PES also now follow up on young people who drop out of activation schemes, or who no longer access social benefits⁷⁰. Thirteen PES reported this approach in 2017, compared to 11 in 2016. Follow-up is done either 'in-house' (through PES special services and staff roles) or in cooperation with social services, municipalities, or other actors with relevant responsibilities, as well via 'tracer studies', labour market research, exchange of relevant information between institutions, or through mentor support to young people in their transition to education or employment, etc.

Sanctions

Monitoring of how young people respect the mutual obligations of their individual action plans is also now undertaken by most PES. Many have also moved to apply sanctions if young people (similar to all jobseekers) do not comply with the requirements to ensure they do not become dependent on benefits and discouraged from seeking work⁷¹. The severity of sanctions differs between countries. In some countries, non-compliance can lead to the complete cancellation of benefits. In others, benefits are reduced by a certain rate or for a certain period.

For example, the aforementioned 'Building Bridges to Education' project, delivered by the **Danish** Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment, in cooperation with 12 state schools across the country, targets young people who are receiving cash benefit and who have left education with very few or no qualifications. Each participant is deemed as the PES' responsibility, therefore during their time on the initiative they receive an 'Education Help benefit' of around EUR 900 (DKK 6 000) each month. Sanctions are in place to ensure that participants meet certain expectations. If they continually do not meet these expectations, they may lose their 'Education Help' support.

Balancing between the carrot and the stick

However, countries have also found that too restrictive sanction regimes are counterproductive, since they lead to more NEETs and young people disengaging from the support system at points when they need most support. Hence, corrective measures are adopted to ensure an optimal balance of sanctions and access to benefits.

For example, **Slovenia** amended the Labour Regulation Law in January 2018 to introduce a gradual, rather than complete, sanctioning of breaches of obligations for active job search. According to the new regulation, the person will be temporarily suspended from the register of unemployed only at their second violation of the obligations arising from the active job search. At the same time, the unemployment benefit will only be reduced by 30 % of the last paid amount, instead of the immediate termination of the right at the first violation, until the expiry of the right. This change was implemented as the previous regime of sanctioning breaches of obligations was deemed to be too strict (it entailed immediate termination of unemployment benefit and suspension from the register of unemployed for six months). In particular, suspension from the register was counterproductive and resulted in a higher number of non-registered NEETs.

Another example of corrective measures is from **Denmark**⁷². As part of its commitment to continuous service improvement, Copenhagen Job centre 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 job centre 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 re-design exercise. Some important messages emerged from consultations about the reasons behind the high number of sanctions: these young people found the system very confusing; they did not feel welcome when they came into the job centre; and the language and bureaucracy often overwhelmed them. Consequently, the PES developed 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.

However, it must of course be recalled that the use of social benefits as an incentive to activation will remain limited as long as the number of NEETs accessing benefits remains low⁷³. On average in the EU, only 11 % of NEETs receive benefits, although this increases slightly with age⁷⁴. The share of NEETs receiving benefits rises from 7 % of those aged 15–19 years, to 12 % of those aged 20–24 and to approximately 14 % of those aged 25–29. At Member State level, the highest share of NEETs receiving benefits is recorded in Belgium, Finland, France and the UK, where in 2014, 20 % or more of NEETs were receiving benefits. Hence, more work is required to ensure that a higher proportion of NEETs are accessing the benefits they are entitled to and can benefit from.

Top tips



Integrate benefits within the wider range of support on the pathway to employment / education



Use access to benefits as a carrot and stick mechanism to attract NEETs to the public services in a careful and balanced way, in order to avoid further increases in NEETs due to strict sanctioning



Monitor why NEETs do not access benefits they are entitled to and follow this up with corrective measures

6 On the road to education and employment

6.1 Second chance education

Some young people who leave education and training early require extra support to develop their skills, before they can (re)engage in an apprenticeship or other type of formal education programme. The reasons for early school leaving are varied and diverse - but often these young people have lost motivation and faith in learning and in education systems. Successful measures to support early school leavers (ESL) must therefore have a value to the potential participants and give learners a sense of empowerment and control over their learning, so as to address their loss of intrinsic motivation⁷⁵.

Second chance schemes tend to be holistic and personalised. Some second chance schemes provide the opportunity for the young person to gain formal upper-secondary qualifications; others focus on preparing young people for VET or employment. Provision can vary in terms of the intensity of support provided, in line with the young person's specific needs.

Second chance systems for ESL offering alternative training/teaching environments and methods can be found in most European countries. It is important that such schemes are of a practical nature, focusing on soft skills as well as personal and social development, to overcome specific issues for young participants such as the lack of confidence in their ability to learn, or a lack of direction. Such schemes have also typically been most effective where they have been clearly distinctive from mainstream schools, by avoiding negative associations with initial education whilst ensuring learning opportunities are presented as a credible pathway. For example, some second chance schemes have created a 'university' feel, which has proved to be an effective way of counteracting negative stereotypes of alternative education amongst the general public. This is a key success factor as the motivations of young ESL adults aged 18-24 can differ from the motivations of school-age learners⁷⁶. Their motivation to re-engage is influenced by their personal development since leaving school and the extent to which they have experienced the negative consequences of dropping out, for example reduced employment prospects⁷⁷.

Since September 2014, [Latvia's](#) Ministry of Welfare in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science and State Education Development Agency, has been running second chance vocational education programmes for young NEETs (IVEP) (Sākotnējās profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošana Jauniešu garantijas ietvaros) helping young people to complete vocational training through education programmes, guidance services and financial support. The main objective of IVEP is to help young NEETs (aged 17-29) gain vocational skills needed in the labour market. Programmes are implemented either as work-based learning or as traineeships with a work-based component, which is a key success factor of the programmes, enabling a close connection to the labour market. Important to success is also the fact that the educational and training process is accompanied by vocational guidance services (including exposure to a real work environment and study visits to companies). This gives young people exposure to the occupations they are interested in and greater motivation to find employment. These features have contributed to the programme's success: at least 50 % of all participants are employed in the first six months after completing IVEP⁷⁸.

Cooperation with initial education

Some second chance programmes have developed referral networks with local mainstream schools to ensure that young people do not 'fall through the net', whilst others have links with local schools for the purpose of awarding qualifications or providing staff secondments⁷⁹. An example of such cooperation is found in **Romania's** second chance programme in Cluj county, where second chance provision has been co-located within mainstream schools.

In **Ireland**, Youthreach centres provide second-chance education for unemployed early school leavers aged 15-20 who are educationally disadvantaged and in some cases socially marginalised, particularly in the case of young Travellers. The centres aim to keep them from drifting into a cycle of unemployment and deprivation. Youthreach Co-ordinators work closely with local schools, Junior Liaison Officers (from the police) and Education Welfare Officers to ensure that a young person does not spend long out of school before they receive support. The centres provide the learners with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and to progress to further education, training, and employment. While Youthreach is a national programme, centres are locally managed and programmes reflect therefore the particular social, economic and cultural environment in which they operate. Guidance and counselling is also an integral part of the programme. The out-of-school centres are small, with about 50 pupils each. The duration of stay in Youthreach is an average of 18 months. Youthreach provides formal education with the main objective of supporting pupils to pass the school leaving certificate. In addition, Youthreach provides medical treatments, psychological and family support; self-development activities helping young adults to handle emotions and frustration, to build their assertiveness, nutritional education; and sport and leisure opportunities⁸⁰. Evaluations have shown that Youthreach is successful and particularly strong in improving soft skills. The key success factors reported are the supportive, secure and structured environment where the education is learner-centred. Young people are treated with mutual respect and are, in turn, expected to respect others. There is also substantial one-to-one input⁸¹.



In **Luxembourg**, the E2C (Ecole de la 2e Chance) opened in 2011 and offers a regular school programme with a specific pedagogical approach in order to allow ESLs to complete their education in school with an official diploma. The second chance school supports early school leavers, aged 16-30, who dropped out of school or failed to find an apprenticeship. The evaluation of the pilot reported that out of the 47 students involved in the original pilot project, 81 % made a 'positive' transition right after leaving the school by either reintegrating into the mainstream education system or entering employment. The majority - 90 % - of all students completed their studies at the E2C and successfully reintegrated into mainstream general and VET education, or found a job. Longitudinal evaluations show that two years after leaving the E2C, 70 % of all students are in a 'positive' situation where they have either reintegrated into education or entered employment. Interviews with the students highlighted the following success factors⁸²:

- Student motivation: the selection procedure ensures school placement for students showing the highest motivation and who are, therefore, most likely to benefit from the personalised pedagogy provided by the school.
- Personalised pedagogy: the students' education and personal wellbeing and development are at the heart of the E2C pedagogy. This pedagogy is supported by a high educator/teacher-student ratio which allows for a personalised support of students.
- E2C's size and decision-making autonomy: a purposeful policy is to keep the size of the school below 300 students and simultaneously ensure the school's decision-making autonomy.
- Students' autonomy and responsibility: prospective students are informed of their rights and obligations within the school and once a place has been offered to a student, they are asked to sign a contract, in which they commit to actively and assiduously participate in classes, respect the discipline of the school, as well as their timetable. This pedagogical rigour provides students with a structured environment, which they often lack at home.
- Sense of cooperation and mutual support among students: students are encouraged to cooperate and support each other. This sense of togetherness is instilled by putting an emphasis on team work (in practical workshops and classes) and encouraging students to help each other.
- Collaboration and diversity of professional backgrounds among E2C staff: a diverse mix of professional backgrounds among E2C staff brings a richness and diversity to the pedagogy of the school and allows for holistic solutions when approaching challenges and supporting students.
- Student financial support: since the average E2C student is 21 years old, many no longer live with their parents and cannot rely on financial support from their families to return to school. Consequently, 25 % of E2C students receive financial support which covers their basic living costs. This financial support is provided by the school and awarded based on each individual's family and financial situation.

Top tips

The European Commission's Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving has highlighted the following key considerations when planning and implementing second chance schemes

Second chance schemes should:



Be easy to reach and accessible to all people interested in continuing their education and training



Provide a distinctive learning experience and offer flexible curricula that are adaptable to the specific situation of the learner



Be responsive to the diversity of the youth population and the local labour market



Provide targeted support to teachers, so that they can cope with their broad range of tasks



Offer qualifications that are valued and recognised on the labour market



Ensure a close cooperation between second chance education and mainstream education



Provide a personalised and holistic approach to supporting young people and help them to re-develop their relationship with learning, the world of work and society

Source: Reducing early school leaving (ESL): key messages and policy support. Report from the Thematic Working Group on ESL

6.2 Bridging programmes and pathway approaches

Apprenticeships and vocational training are generally considered to be effective in labour market integration of young people. However, when it comes to young people in vulnerable situations, particularly early school leavers from a disadvantaged socio-economic or migration background, the chances of accessing and completing an apprenticeship are much lower.

Pre-apprenticeship training

Pre-apprenticeship (and other vocational training) bridging schemes, which combine work experience and vocational training, are a useful approach to prepare those young people who are not ready to complete a formal apprenticeship programme and prevent them from falling into NEET status. Such pre-apprenticeship/pre-vocational training programmes often include: improvement of the young person's basic skills and key competencies; improvement in self-confidence and soft skills; some basic vocational skills; workplace related experience; the provision of individualised educational and vocational guidance and orientation; mentoring; and, where necessary, socio-pedagogical support in order to ensure that at-risk youth such as early school leavers and the low skilled reach the required level of knowledge and skills to undertake an apprenticeship.

An interesting example is Germany's pre-apprenticeship training (*Einstiegsqualifizierung (EQ)*). The PES offers this **entry-level vocational training measure** for applicants who have still not found an apprenticeship training place, for those looking for a training place who are not yet ready for training, for socially disadvantaged youth and young people with learning difficulties. The content of the training measure is oriented to the requirements of recognised training occupations. After concluding the entry-level vocational qualifying measure, participants are given a company report on the knowledge and skills that were gained and a certificate from the competent agency (chamber). Companies that carry out an in-company entry-level vocational qualifying measure can receive support through grants towards payment for the work experience, plus a lump-sum share of the average total social insurance contribution. The support covers work experience from 6 to a maximum of 12 months⁸³. According to the evaluation of this measure, almost 70 % of EQ participants were in a regular apprenticeship training 18 months and 30 months after their EQ period, respectively, and 12 % had taken up regular employment. The following success factors are based on the testimonies of participants in the measure interviewed under a Cedefop study⁸⁴:

- 'Trial period' with low cost to employers: the fact that companies get the opportunity to try out working with 'weaker' applicants at low extra cost makes them more likely to offer regular apprenticeship placements to them afterwards, thus enabling learners who are at risk of dropping out to become fully integrated in the regular labour market.
- Collaboration with Chambers: the close cooperation with Germany's biggest chambers of industry and trade ensures promotion among companies and a wide provision of EQ placements.
- Cooperation with other support programmes: the programme collaborates closely with other support programmes, such as AbH or VerA, for at-risk apprentices in order to get each EQ participant the support they need (EQ "plus").

In **Austria**, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection launched the 'training guarantee' for school leavers up to the age of 18 in 2008. A key measure of this guarantee is workshop-based/supra-company apprenticeship training for young people who are unable to find a suitable apprenticeship in a firm or who dropped out of an apprenticeship ('Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung – ÜBA'). The apprenticeship mirrors the contents of the company-based apprenticeship and thus offers at least a temporary training place to young people before they find a company-based apprenticeship, thus helping to prevent them from dropping out of the apprenticeship.

Finland is also developing a supported apprenticeship training, which prepares young people to access apprenticeships. This provides individual support and help before and during the apprenticeship for young people needing supplementary support for training (e.g. immigrants, people with learning difficulties or mental health problems).

A critical success factor of such training is the **individualised approach** used in these schemes. This individual approach is exemplified in the aforementioned 'Building Bridges to Education' programme in **Denmark**. It targets young people, who are receiving education benefits and who have registered with the PES, aiming to prepare them for vocational education. Individually designed programmes are designed at the standard vocational education institution and consist of a fixed schedule with various short internships at vocational schools and enterprises. Each young person is provided with a mentor to support them through their time and to provide them with follow-up support. The length of the initiative differs depending on the needs of the young person. The 2015 evaluation of the scheme showed 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.

Ensuring clear progression routes

Another critical point is ensuring that such bridging schemes clearly delineate the learning pathway after the completion of the scheme; meaning that they are not ad hoc modules, but are connected to the country's education and training system, as well as the labour market. In this way, young people completing bridging schemes have clear progression pathways available to them. In the examples of bridging schemes in Germany and Austria, the expectation is that the participants proceed to the typical vocational apprenticeships offered in the national contexts.

The experience of Malta also shows the importance of structured pathways and clear progression routes. In **Malta**, NEET Activation Scheme II aims at encouraging the re-integration of NEETs through targeted intervention. The scheme is divided into three phases. During the first phase participants are individually profiled. During the second phase, participants are requested to choose whether to further their education prospects through enrolment in one of Malta's institutions, to undergo an academic or vocational course, or to progress with a twelve-week work 'exposure'. Following the work exposure phase, participants can proceed to phase three. Phase three consists of a traineeship, where participants put into practice what they have learnt.

Mentoring and follow up of participants after starting a regular apprenticeship (or other training placement) increases the likelihood of sustainable integration, first in the apprenticeship training (or other training) and, second, in employment.

Top tips



Use an individualised approach



Mentor and follow up participants after starting a regular apprenticeship



Ensure the young person has a clear progression pathway after completing the programme

6.3 Job-specific training and work experience

Job-specific training is one of the key offers of activation policies in the Youth Guarantee. This is either as a first step towards or taster of a full vocational training course, but mostly as a recap and/or supplement to existing VET education and work experience⁸⁵. The short-term, informal nature of training related to specific jobs distinguishes it from other training forms oriented towards full vocational apprenticeships, labour market training, traineeships or start-up training⁸⁶. In this way, job-specific training can offer a first step for young people in vulnerable situations as it provides a first possibility to get activated and inspired, in the real world, for example through workshops and/or voluntary work. The training can be offered first as smaller, or bite-sized, modules, since commencing a long training course can be an unrealistic or unsuitable option for many young people in vulnerable situations. Success in this job-specific training can inspire the individual to undergo further training without the pressure of obtaining a full certification or qualification. This is especially critical as research has shown a high proportion of young people may not respond well to a standard traditional 'training' offer⁸⁷.

Several countries provide job-specific training to help acquire, upgrade or update skills, which can eventually lead to further training or activation.

For example, the '*Contrat d'insertion*' (integration contract) implemented by PES Actiris in **Belgium** provides an opportunity for young people (who are low qualified, with a qualification not in demand on the Brussels labour market, or who are facing discrimination in employment) to obtain their first professional experience⁸⁸. Also in the Brussels region, the Stage First measure offers a traineeship contract of a minimum duration of three months and maximum six months for young people under 30 who have at most a high school diploma, and who have been registered for at least 78 days with the PES.

In the **Belgium** Flanders region, VDAB workplace learning tools (IBO ('*Individuele beroepsopleiding*' or individual vocational training), internships, apprenticeships, '*instapstages*' (federal integration traineeships), etc., are becoming a standard module of the trajectory of unqualified young people. The length and intensity of support reflects the needs of the young person.

In **Malta**, as mentioned above, as part of the NEET Activation Scheme II, participants are requested to choose whether to further their education prospects through enrolment into one of Malta's institutions to undergo an academic or vocational course, or to progress with a twelve-week work exposure. Such work exposure is conducted either in a simulated workplace or in an actual workplace. To gain the necessary employability skills and to increase the chances of accessing the labour market, participants are provided with both on- and off-the-job training. Following this work exposure phase, participants can proceed to the following phase which consists of a traineeship where they can put into practice what they have learnt during the previous phases.

In **Ireland**, Intreo offers a Training Support Grant (TSG) which provides quick access to short-term training that is not immediately available from a state provider. In this way, young people can still access the training suitable to their needs in a flexible and immediate way.

Importantly, job-specific training needs to offer tasters of professions and jobs that are in demand in local labour markets and are likely to continue to be so in the future. Otherwise, young people may think of future careers with few labour market prospects, which can be even further discouraging. In this respect, the **Luxembourg** PES has introduced a new guidance tool for young jobseekers who have not yet defined their professional career path. The PES is also participating in a new project called 'Start & Code'⁸⁹, co-financed by the ESF, which aims to introduce young job-seekers without professional experience to ICT and coding. The project provides basic training and allows access to further intensive training measures such as 'Fit4Coding'⁹⁰.

Collaboration is key

Job-specific training is typically provided in collaboration with schools, VET education providers and employers, hence good relationships between the stakeholders involved and strong collaboration are crucial.

The Ballymun youth guarantee pilot project in **Ireland**⁹¹ focused on working with employers to provide good quality offers to young people aged 14-24. The project developed and delivered new ways of working with employers to provide work-based training experiences. The project showed that it was important to offer a 'menu of options' to employers, listing several ways for employers to get involved in the project. This ranged from giving a short talk at a job fair and hosting a visit and tour of their premises, to offering a work placement, apprenticeship or job. In addition, the PES learnt that it was important to define what the PES ultimately wants from employers and send out clear and concise messages that were tailored to their circumstances (e.g. large employers or SMEs).

In **France**, a new partnership was concluded with the Ministry of Defence through their experimental 'Voluntary Military Service'⁹². The aim of this cooperation is to support, through training and other activities, young people (aged 18-25) who are facing great difficulty in getting employment.

Furthermore, the 'Building Bridges for education'⁹³ project of the Danish PES (already mentioned above) also targeted vulnerable young people in education through a joint approach with other stakeholders. This initiative includes mentor support and practical training through an enhanced cooperation between local municipalities and education institutions.

Similarly, the PES in **Iceland** invests significant effort into partnerships with accredited vocational education providers and with enterprises willing to offer workplace training and/or work experience placements for young unemployed. One example of a new project is a 180-hour course named 'Stökkpallur' (Springboard) which aims to increase the skills of participants and their awareness of their own strengths.

Ultimately, job-specific training works best when it is integrated within a package of support measures aimed at the activation of young people in vulnerable situations. In this respect, it is important to provide young people with appropriate follow-up and further trajectories after job-specific training, in order to support clear transitions and further integration.

The **French** PES supports the young jobseeker as long as they are registered at 'Pôle emploi' and in cooperation with 'historical partners' such as 'Missions Locales' or 'Cap emploi'. The 'Accompagnement Intensif des Jeunes' (AIJ) ensures a follow-up of young beneficiaries into work or training beyond their initial period of support. This lasts until the end of their 'work trial' period, or during their first two months of business creation or training. In case of social difficulties, young people may be referred to social assistance delivered in partnership with the 'Department Councils'.

Ensuring sustainability of placements

Another aspect of this follow-up approach is working with employers to ensure there are opportunities for young people to continue with the same employers after initial placements. The Rubikon Centrum in the **Czech Republic** supports offenders, including by providing them with work prior to their release from prison⁹⁴. This work includes the Probation Programme, which offers a package of pre- and post-release support, combined with a training and employment opportunity. The intervention, running in the prison at Vinařice, 35 km west of Prague, includes a training and employment opportunity in a car seat sewing plant located within the facility. Participants have the chance to continue the same job with the company after they are released. This project is funded through ESF.

Top tips



Offer job-specific training in small modules as part of broader interventions



Involve a range of partners, especially employers



Offer job-specific training in jobs and industries that are in demand



Provide follow-up support and a clear trajectory for the young person after completing the job-specific training

Spotlight on: Supporting young people with disabilities

Young people with disabilities may face one or a number of barriers to accessing the labour market, ranging from negative perceptions and misconceptions held by employers, to inaccessible working environments⁹⁵. In fact, disabled young people are over 40 % more likely to be NEET⁹⁶ and more likely to leave school early⁹⁷.

Measures to help young people with disabilities to access the labour market range from supported training and employment, to practical adjustments to the workplace, as outlined below.

Supported employment may be provided, for example, through a social enterprise. This is the case of Finland's Job Bank and the Füngeling Router initiative in Germany, where young people are able to gain work experience and skills via a real job, which is suited to their abilities. The social enterprise, Füngeling Router, provides supported employment at workstations in mainstream labour market companies, on behalf of the relevant provider of occupational rehabilitation that financially supports the participants. Füngeling Router also employs young persons with disabilities temporarily itself, and hires them out to mainstream labour market companies. The aim is to train these young people until they obtain a sustainable job, ideally in the same company.

Supported training pathways can help disabled young people to make the transition from school to work. In **Germany**, for example, incorporated training with vocational training centres is a form of supported dual (apprenticeship) training. Enterprises and vocational training centres provide assisted job placements.

Adapted training pathways can make it possible for disabled young people to acquire a qualification which is recognised on the labour market. For example, the **Austrian** Integrative Vocational Training (IBA) programme allows young people to complete accredited apprenticeship training over a longer period of time, or to follow partially accredited curricula in a workplace setting. This programme was specifically designed for young people with disabilities (and others who would find it difficult to complete an apprenticeship on the open market)⁹⁸.

Mentoring and coaching can provide the one-to-one support young disabled people need to make the transition into employment. **Austria's** Youth Coaching (Jugendcoaching) programme offers individualised support on a case management basis, until the at-risk young person is integrated in education or the labour market⁹⁹.

To support young people to build up their confidence and identify their own strengths, **alternative approaches** may be needed. For example, as mentioned above, the **Spanish** PULSA Employment project, which includes young disabled people among its target groups, uses non-standard methods such as theatre workshops, group games and robotics to identify young people's strengths and to empower them¹⁰⁰.

Income support is an important complement to activation measures. For example, in Germany, transitional allowances are paid to the disabled person (Ausbildungsgeld) when they have no right to vocational training grants – which is typically the case for young people with disabilities as they have not usually been in employment before. This provides the young person with income support while they pursue vocational and pre-vocational training.

Financial incentives for employers can also help to encourage the employment of disabled youth. In most EU countries, wage subsidies and dispensations are available for employers who take on individuals with disabilities. However, it is important that jobs continue when subsidies are limited in time.

Finally, measures to **change attitudes amongst employers**, or to help them make practical adjustments, can help to improve access to employment for disabled youth. For example, in the **Netherlands**, some collective agreements aim to focus on capacity for – rather than barriers to – work and to improve support for employers.

Sources: This box builds on: Hadjivassiliou, K. (2016) Mutual Learning Programme Thematic Paper: What works for the labour market integration of youth at risk. European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, pp. 21-23. Additional sources are cited within the text.

6.4 Working with employers

Engaging employers is essential to finding sustainable employment for young people and to creating training opportunities. A link between services and employers is also important to make employers aware of issues that young people in vulnerable situations might face, and to offer support to both the young person and employer.

Supporting employers proactively

As part of the aforementioned Guarantee for Youth in **France**, the counsellors of the Local Missions are proactively reaching out to small companies and local employers to better understand their needs and to explain how they might benefit from taking on NEETs for a placement or recruiting them. As a result, employers are informed about the initiative, the financial assistance available to them, and the benefits of potential participation (i.e. that they are able to take on a young person at no cost and test their suitability for a job in the company). The measure is also complemented with the CIE Starter initiative which subsidises employers to hire NEETs¹⁰¹.

In the PES in Hamburg, **Germany**, a dedicated team offers guidance for employers and arranges various financial and non-financial support, such as mentoring programmes when employing young NEETs and young people in vulnerable situations. There are also several national initiatives to support disadvantaged young people and their employers. For example, one instrument is 'Assisted Vocational Training' which is a funding instrument provided by the PES to prepare young people with learning disabilities or disadvantaged young people for vocational training (for example, by job interview assistance or internships) and support them throughout the training (for example, support with tests that need to be taken during the apprenticeship). Employers which offer vocational training to a vulnerable young person receive also individual support in regular meetings. Supporting measures depend on the needs of the company, such as coaching for workplace mentors or the establishment of vocational training plans.

Changing employer perceptions of young people

Employers may be reluctant to hire young people (in particular NEETs and those in vulnerable situations) because they perceive them to lack work experience, soft skills and, in some cases, believe that school education has little relevance to the world of work. In the case of the **French** Guarantee for Youth, the advantage of the counsellors working with both groups (employers and NEETs) in a proactive manner is that they have a better understanding of expectations on both sides, and are hence in a better position to reconcile them¹⁰².

Recognising and sharing positive experiences amongst employers through the establishment of awards and employer charters could be particularly effective to secure engagement. For instance, in the **UK**, the Talent Match Mark was initiated by the Talent Match partnerships and co-developed by Talent Match London together with Youth Employment UK and Movement to Work. It is an award framework that recognises and celebrates small and large employers who support young people. It has involved 1 800 employers until now, including large international and national organisations as well as SMEs. Employers can get involved by offering a range of activities such as light-touch job or career exploration opportunities for young people (i.e. hosting workplace visits, taking part in career days, offering mock interviews, taking part in question and answer (Q&A) and coffee and chat sessions with potential applicants); providing two- to six-week work experience placements to allow young people to delve into a particular career path whilst developing skills; and offering job opportunities and apprenticeships.

Top tips



Proactively reach out to small companies and local employers to better understand their needs and explain how they might benefit from measures targeting NEETs



Provide alternative means of support such as regular mediation, as opposed to financial incentives only. Indeed, wage subsidies or grants sometimes entail a level of bureaucracy and may be connected to formalities



Collect testimonials from business ambassadors or champions, to help change employers' perceptions about young people in vulnerable situations and young NEETs



Offer short-term work placements so that the employer can get to know the young person. This can also encourage more inclusive hiring practices as a result



'Mentor' the companies so that they understand what the young people need and how they can support certain groups. This could for instance include:

- Providing support and advice for employers to work with young NEETs;
- Support to in-company teachers and trainers, and close collaboration between guidance professionals and in-company teachers and trainers;
- Providing support, advice and pre-selection services for employers to gain better access to the labour pool and to improve their recruitment practices;
- In-work support to the young person to help them get used to the workplace

Work customisation through job carving and crafting

Whilst many young people with complex needs such as disabilities can compete for and obtain jobs through traditional routes, others may not be able to complete all of the tasks defined in a job role by an employer. Although they may be defined as lacking the skills necessary to compete in the open jobs market they can however be successfully integrated if employers introduce work customisation.

Work customisation involves designing a role to fit a person, rather than seeking to fit a person into a job. It can involve many elements, including adjusting hours and location, duties and responsibilities, and expectations. Work customisation strategies can both help employers to recruit suitable workers and enable young people with complex needs to take advantage of work opportunities. This can support a variety of employees to work in ways that are tailored to meet their individual circumstances and needs and assists employers frustrated by labour shortages, especially in tight markets. Customisation involves two key elements: Job Carving and Job Crafting. Job Carving is often applied in order to specifically provide employment opportunities for disabled people. It involves breaking a job down into a number of work steps which are analysed to identify functions that can be performed by a disabled person for whom a job role is carved.

Job Crafting allows employees themselves to further adapt a job to take advantage of opportunities to customise their role. This is a departure from classic top-down job design theory and can be beneficial to an organisation through enhancing a worker's performance and motivation.

Applying these approaches can maximise the utilisation of the skills and strengths of disabled workers who possess the relevant competences.

In **Malta**, the Maltese PES (Jobsplus) established a partnership with the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF), which specialises in the labour market integration of jobseekers with disabilities. LSF set up a corporate relations unit to support enterprises in the recruitment of disabled people. The corporate relations executives identify existing occupations within the enterprise which are potentially suitable for jobseekers with disabilities. Tasks and job descriptions are then ‘carved’ to suit the jobseekers with disabilities. This enables the creation of valid and person-centred vacancies within a given organisation whilst promoting inclusion. The ‘carving’ exercise is driven by the enterprise requirements and the existing competencies and skills of the registered jobseekers with disabilities. This is coupled with pre-employment efforts such as training and work exposure schemes offered by Jobsplus to improve the employability and preparedness of the registered disabled jobseeker. By April 2018, it was possible to create 278 jobs suitable for jobseekers with disabilities by making use of the job-carving approach¹⁰³.

In the **Netherlands**, Maastricht University and the Dutch Employee Insurance Agency (UWV) are developing a method called the Inclusive Redesign of Work Processes (IHW). The method identifies options for reorganising the workplace or work processes in order to create jobs suitable for young people with a disability, especially if low-qualified or low-educated due to a chronic mental illness, psychological disorder, developmental disorder or a learning disability. As the method reallocates some simple tasks from a qualified worker, to create a position that can be filled by a worker with lower qualifications, the employer may potentially incur some savings on the wage bill. The IHW method was tested in practice with the participation of youth with disabilities in a hospital between 2010 and 2013. During the pilot project, about 100 recipients of disabled assistance started working at the hospital. The qualitative evaluation of the project shows that the IHW method proved efficient in creating appropriate positions for disabled young people. The cost-benefit analysis also suggested that enabling people with disabilities to enter employment may be cost effective for the employer, despite a greater need for guidance. This approach of job creation has been successfully implemented in a variety of private and public organisations, due to the support in applying this method by a nationwide network of consultants of the Dutch PES¹⁰⁴.

Creating a job in this way is labour-intensive and requires time, energy, and commitment. It also requires particularly skilled staff who can support the process. But it creates opportunities for those young people who need specialised support and contributes to meaningful and long-term integration.

Top tips



Ensure there is a specialised employment advisor who can support both the young person and the employer



Negotiate with the employer using their own language, clearly explaining how this process is going to help their business



Ensure a deep understanding of the desires, aspirations and skills of the disabled young person through career planning as well as getting to know the workforce needs of the employer beyond the existing job descriptions

Continuing to support the young person once in work

Experience shows that employment support needs to continue once the young person has taken up a job offer, particularly for those in vulnerable situations. This support could be offered not only to the young person but also to the employer. Experience from the aforementioned UK Talent Match¹⁰⁵ programme shows that personalised support needs to stretch all the way into employment as in-work support improves retention. From the experience of the programme, this involves giving advice on a range of issues rather than taking action on behalf of young people, for instance:

- Practical support e.g. help with arranging transport to work, appropriate clothing or assistance with organising caring responsibilities;
- Support with non-work related issues that impact on keeping a job e.g. advice about making hospital appointments, dealing with probation;
- Guidance on work-related matters including work-appropriate behaviour and managing working relationships;
- Assistance provided to an employer to support a beneficiary's job retention such as in the case of young people with disabilities, providing practical support on resolving issues during the recruitment by redesigning the interview process to give them the best chance to showcase their skills and abilities.

This in-work support needs to be tailored to the beneficiary and employer, with good communication between the parties involved.

Top tips



Continue support for the young person (and employer) after he/she has accessed further education or employment



Facilitate ongoing dialogue with the company, providing assistance when necessary



Ensure a personalised approach that takes into account the needs of the young person and the employer

7 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of different programmes and measures can help build a better knowledge base of what works and what does not work (and for whom), which can in turn serve to strengthen design and target services and measures.

When dealing with youth in vulnerable situations, it is important to consider effective ways of monitoring performance to ensure that measures targeting those young people at risk have a lasting positive impact on the participants.

Assess the bigger picture

The **French** Guarantee for Youth's performance is measured based on a comprehensive and innovative set of indicators. Some are 'traditional' (e.g. number of participants, number of drop-outs, number of days spent in companies) while others are new and more innovative, such as time taken for the participant to reach the company; skills acquired through on-the-job training; NEET integration into the professional environment; autonomy of the young person; changes in the amount of financial assistance for the participants)¹⁰⁶.

One particularity of this measure is that once the young person signs an employment contract, support continues to be provided. Even those who sign a permanent employment contract stay in the measure. After 12 months, the counsellors assess the young person's ability to be autonomous. If the assessment shows that the young person can work and find work on their own, then they are taken out of the measure¹⁰⁷.

The basis for assessing autonomy is the young person's ability to cope without support or to know where to find support if they need it. The idea is to assess the extent to which young people can cope with life circumstances, in a professional context and beyond. How an individual might improve more generally without necessarily improving their labour market situation first is an aspect which is taken into account in the concept of 'autonomy'¹⁰⁸.

There are four indicators for measuring a young person's level of autonomy:

- **social competency** (finding accommodation, managing finances, and social skills);
- **key competences** (reading, writing, numeracy, communication and IT);
- **professional competences** (transversal competences, work skills); and
- **general maturity** (knowing where to find support / resources when needed, a positive and engaging attitude).

The evaluation mechanism of the French Guarantee for Youth has a strong **qualitative dimension**, since mentoring is an important part of the measure. The method used was cohort evaluation, whereby the characteristics and trajectories of the participants are compared to those of a control group. This is particularly interesting in the case of measures targeting NEETs or youth at risk. For instance, in **Ireland**, a counterfactual evaluation of the 'Back to education' second chance education programme produced negative results with participants having 48 % less chance of going into employment than non-participants. This informed a complete overhaul of the programme's processes and content¹⁰⁹.

Focus on distance travelled

When dealing with young people, using 'employment situation at the end of the programme' as the main indicator determining success could be misleading. This is particularly the case for young people in vulnerable situations. They may require longer-term support, or a series of interventions – all of which may help them make crucial progress towards the labour market, but not necessarily get them into it. In the case of the Talent Match programme in the UK, the formative evaluation reported that young people were better prepared for the world of work as a result of their time on the programme. The evaluators created a measure of 'proximity to the labour market' to quantify the extent to which young people have been moved closer to the labour market. It was reported that *"over half of all TM participants (55 %) are in the two categories classified as furthest away from the labour market at the start of their time on the programme. After three months, this goes down to 43 % of participants, and reduces further to 35 % after 6+ months on the programme"*.

Top tips



Measure the 'distance travelled' by the individual since accessing the support, rather than purely focusing on the beneficiary's integration into the labour market or their return to education



Favour the design of innovative performance indicators such as 'level of autonomy' to guard against the likelihood of NEETs re-entering support programmes, and to allow for the adjustment of programmes to improve their cost-effectiveness



8 Challenges and Success factors

The following challenges and success factors have been identified for activation measures for young people in vulnerable situations:

Challenges	Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of young people's situations • Complex and multiple needs that take time to address • No one organisation able to address all these needs • Lack of skills, motivation and self-esteem of the individual • Securing enough engagement in a measure to avoid a risk of dropping out • Disengagement and negative experiences with education that take time to overcome • Lack of integrated service at point of delivery making it complicated for a young person to navigate support • Lack of capacity or skills of counsellors/ case workers to support those with complex needs • Heavy workloads for case workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on prevention • Intensive and personalised support and mentoring • Mapping and reflecting on people's needs, expectations and wishes • Programmes, policies and measures that are either designed with enough flexibility to cater for the different needs of specific sub-groups of NEETs, or that are specifically targeted a particular sub-groups • Involvement of key organisations which have a say in the lives of young people, particularly those with clear links to youth in vulnerable situations • Partnerships for the provision of integrated service delivery at local level • Cross-agency working • Strong cooperation with employers to address multiple needs and ensure sustainable job integration • Multi-skilled teams and sharing caseloads • Pre-apprenticeship / pre-vocational training to upskill, as well as increase confidence and self-esteem • Second chance education / 'bridging' programmes to prepare young people in vulnerable situations to enter mainstream education • Use of monitoring and evaluation information to improve services and support

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Since its launch in 2013, the **Youth Guarantee** has supported millions of young people across the European Union to find a job, a traineeship, an apprenticeship or to continue in education. Yet despite this, too many young Europeans are still without work. Across the EU, more effort is needed so that all young people can benefit from quality offers under the Youth Guarantee.

This report is one in a series of **five reports** on Youth Guarantee delivery, presenting existing practices from the ground from the first five years of its implementation. It outlines lessons learnt, challenges and success factors, aiming to inspire and help all actors involved in delivering the Youth Guarantee.

The report **Activation measures for young people in vulnerable situations** looks at measures that support young people facing multiple obstacles to employment and who may need more tailored and holistic support to enter the labour market.

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