



Equal on the labour market

Developing young people's professional and social skills through the provision of general and vocational education

POLAND

Title of the practice (in original language)

Równi na rynku pracy

Who is/was implementing the practice?

'Equal on the labour market' and 'An idea for yourself' are two projects implemented by the Voluntary Labour Corps (Polish: Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy (OHP)), state-run organisational units working to prevent the social exclusion of young people. The OHP is structured into 721 organisational units and branches throughout Poland and supervised by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. These facilities are open institutions which implement state activities for the local community in cooperation with local self-government authorities, employers, associations, and foundations operating in a given area.

The facilities consist of:

- 217 shelter and educational units, where young people can supplement their general and vocational education;
- 504 units implementing labour market initiatives, where young people may benefit from vocational counselling and guidance, job matching services, and vocational training and information.

Which other organisations are/were involved in the practice?

No other organisations were involved in the implementation of the practice.

What are/were the main objectives of the practice?

The main objective of the practice was to improve the situation of young people (15-24-year olds) who were not in employment, education or training (NEETs) by:

- Supporting their return to education or training,
- Supporting the development of professional and social skills,
- Supporting access to professional qualifications,
- Increasing their employability.

When was the practice implemented?

'An idea for yourself', supported by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and European Social Fund (ESF), was implemented from 2014 to 2015.
'Equal on the labour market', supported by YEI and ESF, was implemented from 2014 to 2015.

Who is/was targeted by the practice?

The target audience was 15-24-year olds who were not in education, employment or training (NEET); who experienced difficulties due to family and environmental conditions (e.g. low-socio-economic status) and faced social exclusion.

What activities are/were carried out?

Equal on the labour market (18-24-year olds):

- The project provided individualised assistance aimed at building confidence, self-value, social skills and other skills useful for applying for jobs.
- Vocational counsellors and psychologists provided career guidance, allowing participants to choose an appropriate vocational training or alternative course.
- After completing the vocational training or alternative course, participants were directed to professional internships allowing them to acquire practical skills. Each of these internships lasted six months, with work time limited to a maximum of 40 hours per week and eight hours a day.
- Participants with a significant or moderate degree of disability were able to participate in internships which had reduced hours (36 hours per week, seven hours per day).
- Internships were supported with a monthly scholarship.
- Additional courses and training sought by employers such as foreign language, computer skills (including ECDL - European Computer Driving License, European Computer Skills Certificate) and category B driving licence were also provided.

An idea for yourself (15-17-year olds):

- Participants were broken into two groups: 15-16-year olds and 16-17-year olds. Both groups received comprehensive support from the OHP.
- Vocational counsellors provided individualised support, developing an Individual Action Plan for all participants.
- 15-16-year olds received compensatory classes in school subjects which included courses in foreign language and basic computer skills.
- 16-17-year olds gained or improved their professional qualifications by participating in vocational courses. This included the ECDL course. Additional workshops focused on employability, supported young people interested in entering the labour market.
- Among the courses, additional training was provided to include: prevention of aggression and violence, education for family life and entrepreneurship.

What are/were the sources of funding?

Both projects were funded by the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund.

Total funding by project¹:

- 'Equal on the labour market' EUR 22.6 million (PLN 97 274 400)
- 'An idea for yourself' EUR 4.4 million (PLN 19 147 500)

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

People reached in the project 'An idea for yourself':

- Out of 1 320 participants 1 214 completed the programme in line with their Individual Action Plan (686 under the YEI and 528 under the ESF).
- 1 206 participants obtained qualifications in their chosen profession and in computer courses, i.e. ECDL (European Computer Driving License, European Computer Skills Certificate) (686 under the YEI and 520 under the ESF), 87.56% of the planned target value.
- 1 245 participants returned to education or training or obtained a qualification (703 under the YEI and 542 under the ESF), 117.90% of the planned target value.

¹ Conversion rate from PLN to EUR on 25 July 2018

People reached in the project 'Equal on the labour market':

- Out of 6 180 participants, 5 505 completed the activities as per project outline.
- 1 590 participants went into employment (944 under the YEI and 646 under the ESF), 128.64% of the planned target value.
- 4 887 project participants completed vocational internships lasting six months (3 085 under the YEI and 1 802 under the ESF), 98.85% of the planned target value.
- 5 763 project participants raised their vocational qualifications, as a result of completing vocational courses (3 632 under the YEI and 2 131 under the ESF), 108.33% of the planned target value.

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

Project participants acquired competences to navigate the labour market through their participation in group workshops for active job search. Participants also acquired entrepreneurial and social skills. Thanks to this, their self-acceptance and self-confidence grew.

What are/were the lessons learnt and success factors?

Lessons Learnt:

- Individualised support was needed for the different age groups of the NEET target group. A single strategy is not effective for all young people as they are at different stages of their lives. For example, 15-16-year olds needed compensatory school classes to gain appropriate knowledge and skills, whereas someone aged 18-25 may need career guidance and vocational training to enter the labour market.

Success Factors:

- More than 50% of employees at OHP consist of young people with several years of experience, who have received training in assisting young people. This format allows for mutual respect between staff and participants and generates peer-to-peer learning.
- Long-term cooperation with local employers provided OHP with a range of pre-employment vocational training choices; approximately 60 courses were on offer. This provided young people with a diverse selection of occupation choices and additionally supported labour market needs.
- Participation in both projects was completely free with associated costs such as accident insurance covered. Participants were also reimbursed for travel and meal costs. Young people often do not have the financial capacity to support their participation in courses/projects that require fees and additional costs. Removing this barrier serves as an incentive to engage young people in participating in such beneficial programmes.

What are key sources of information?

An idea for yourself (Project Webpage) https://ohp.pl/?page_id=564
Equal on the labour market (Project Webpage) https://ohp.pl/?page_id=570