



IN ORDER TO INTEGRATE NEETS (YOUNG PEOPLE BETWEEN 18 AND 30 YEARS OF AGE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING) SUCCESSFULLY INTO THE LABOUR MARKET, EDUCATION OR TRAINING, ACTIRIS SUPPORTED NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN PARTNERS WHO OFFER A VARIETY OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TARGETED AT THE SPECIFIC SITUATION OF NEETS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS.

## Flexible and creative partnerships for effective outreach strategies and targeted support to young NEETs

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### BELGIUM

Key challenges addressed by the project are the high NEET rate of young people from 15 to 24 years (12.9%) and the high school dropout rate (11.8%). Another important challenge was the feedback from youth workers that a lot of young people were not looking for (legal) work and didn't feel that the traditional PES pathway offered to young people (the Youth Guarantee) was made for them.

- ▶ To address this situation, Actiris launched a call for projects based on the evaluation of a pilot project as well as additional inputs received from various youth actors. The objective was to propose a new framework that could best meet the needs of the NEETs. To reach out to this public which is disconnected from the PES and its classical offer to young people, Actiris called upon the services of various partners in the field and grassroots organisations (youth centres, street educators etc.) who are in contact with these young people to actively identify those in need (inactive, lost, demotivated...), to reach out to them and build a relationship as a first step to getting back in touch with the PES and integrating the labour market or returning to school. Outreach is an essential activity that requires financing.
- ▶ Actiris gave enough space and freedom of methodology to the partners to develop new solutions based on their expertise (for instance remobilisation through performing art projects, sports activities, exploring nature, etc.) so that the young people renew contact and confidence both in themselves and in the institutions, and that they define and realise a professional project.
- ▶ The focus is put on the needs of the young person: each partner offers personalised support based on the needs, desires and passions of the young person. This implies that the proposed actions and methods evolve with the young person and can be different from one young person to another.
- ▶ A key element is to "open doors" for the young person to support services but also to positive experiences and opportunities whether or not they are work-related.
- ▶ The young person has the right to make mistakes and the partner motivates him/her to continue on the road. The partner never gives up on them. While classical guidance by PES or partners is stopped if the jobseeker doesn't participate during a certain period, the NEETs guidance stays permanently accessible. A young person can disappear off the radar for several months and return to pick up the guidance when ready.
- ▶ Some young people may take longer than others to find a job, therefore there is no maximum time limit for the participation of the young person in the project. This is different from the traditional PES or partner services which limit participation to a certain period (6, 12, or 24 months for instance).
- ▶ As the young person is at the centre of the project, a new approach to realisation and performance indicators was set up. While the traditional calls for projects predefine the expected outcome (realisation and performance indicators), the NEET partners were asked to define their own realisation and performance goals so as to be in line with their methodology and specific target group. Also, the definition of performance indicators was widened. Next to the classical "positive results" (employment, return to school, training, traineeship), other "positive actions" are taken into account to mark a positive evolution towards socio-professional integration (such as agreeing to an individual action plan with the PES, doing a skills assessment, following short language or IT training, doing volunteer work, taking part in group coaching on tools and methods to find work, participating in a mentoring activity, etc.). Partners can suggest activities to be added to this list of positive actions.

Name of the PES

Actiris

<p>Scope of measure (a pilot project or a national reform)</p>	<p>Regional roll-out of the measure after positive experiences in a successful pilot project. The measure is implemented through an open call for projects (with a contractual duration of five years) launched by the PES to allow for a diverse panel of relevant actors to offer services to this heterogeneous target group.</p>
<p>When was the practice implemented?</p>	<p>A pilot project was carried out between 2015 and 2018. On basis of positive results, the regional roll-out of the project started with a call for projects in 2018. The call led to partnership contracts. Projects started in 2019, and the end of partnership contracts is foreseen in 2023. An evaluation of the measure will be done before the end of the contract in order to determine whether a new call for projects will be launched. The project has been reinforced in 2020 to invest more in improving outreach and follow-up activities, to broaden the partners involved (more partners of different backgrounds) and increase the number of participants to cover the entire Brussels-Capital Region.</p>
<p>What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?</p>	<p>The driver for the launch of the pilot project was the implementation of the Recommendation establishing the Youth Guarantee in Belgium and the Brussels-Capital Region. The decision was taken to use part of the available ESF (European Social Fund) and YEI funding (Youth Employment Initiative) to address the challenge of the high NEET-rate in the Brussels-Capital Region by testing the “Find (outreach activities)-Mind (remobilisation, support and personalised guidance) –Bind (aftercare and follow up support)” method with a selection of employment operators. The pilot proved successful and was rolled out over the entire region in 2019.</p>
<p>Which organisation was involved in its implementation?</p>	<p>The pilot was a joint project of the Flemish ESF agency, Actiris and the Brussels Dutch-speaking public training agency (VDAB Brussel). Four partners were selected to test the projects: JES, Groep Intro, Manpower and In Brussel.</p> <p>After the pilot, it was decided that Actiris should become the sole responsible for organising this partnership measure. Actiris is now in charge of launching the call for projects, selecting partners, monitoring the projects, connecting them to the other PES services and evaluating the partnership measure.</p> <p>Eleven partners (and sub-partners) such as NGOs, youth organisations, social economy organisations, coaching and career development agencies, sports clubs and ethnical-cultural associations, Cité des Métiers, etc.<sup>1</sup> were selected to implement the projects.</p>
<p>Which groups were targeted by the practice?</p>	<p>The target group consists of young NEETs between the ages of 18 and 30 living in the Brussels-Capital Region, be they registered with the PES or not. Many of them may have no (regular) work experience, problems at home, a troubled relationship with official institutions (school, police, social care, ...), psychological problems, or issues with substance abuse. They may also have left school without a diploma, been a victim of discrimination, or experienced other barriers for their integration into the labour market and society in general.</p>
<p>What were the practice's main objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reaching out to young people who are disengaged from institutions, hard to mobilise, unemployed or inactive for various reasons, and facing multiple barriers.</li> <li>▶ Developing a tailored service.</li> <li>▶ Enabling reconnection with the institutions (PES and others).</li> <li>▶ Developing a career project, returning to school, starting a training course, an internship or a job.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Project partners and sub-partners are: ART2WORK, Backstage.Network, CASABLANCO asbl (since 2020, not a project partner anymore), D'broej, Dispositif Relais, Groep INTRO vzw, InBrussel, JES vzw, POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ, Randstad Belgium sa (RiseSmart), SBS Skill BuilderS, Cité des Métiers, Tyn (Talented Youth network) asbl, and Ras-el-Hanou.

<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Outreach activities (active identification and search for NEETs).</li> <li>▶ Remobilisation and support (working on barriers to socio-professional integration, motivation, career assessments, action plan for professional goals).</li> <li>▶ Personalised guidance (preparation for suitable offers, jobhunting, job-matching, etc.).</li> <li>▶ After-care activities once the young person enters employment, training, traineeship or education (continuous coaching, post-placement follow-up and re-entering the project in case of abandonment of the job or traineeship contract/training/school).</li> </ul> <p>As the 11 partners have freedom of methodology and are asked to bring in their own expertise and to adapt their offer to the specificities of the young person, a very wide range of approaches and activities are being carried out.</p> <p>If useful for the young person, they can also take part in activities with more than one partner, as long as their original partner remains the “coordinating partner” overseeing the entire trajectory/pathway.</p>
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Total allocation (2019-2023): 3 218 390 €</li> <li>▶ Additional allocation in 2020: 1 480 000 €</li> </ul>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>Regional budget co-financed by ESF/Youth Employment Initiative.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>End of 2020: +/- 1 000 young people are being accompanied.</p>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>Although the partner projects only started in 2019, they have already reached encouraging results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ In 2020: 26% of the participants who ended their participation in the project returned to education or started training, and 39% have entered employment.</li> <li>▶ It is envisaged to offer effective integration to 80% of participants. This integration can take the form of a “positive result” or a “positive action” (see “short summary” above for a definition of both).</li> <li>▶ Partners were able to adapt quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic and to carry out outreach and support activities using digital channels (such as WhatsApp etc.).</li> </ul>
<p>What are the lessons learnt and success factors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Outreach activities are promising investments and should be financed as such.</li> <li>▶ It is recommended to keep access to guidance open for NEETs as long as possible.</li> <li>▶ It is important to give partners freedom of methodology, to best use their expertise and adapt to the needs of the young persons. Young people should be at the centre of the project!</li> <li>▶ It is crucial to adapt other PES procedures so they contribute to the measure/goals. For instance, Actiris adapted the procedure evaluating the commitment of jobseekers to their job search to the specificities of the young NEETs who are enrolled in the project. The young NEET can for instance be accompanied by a partner during the first evaluation interview and if there are enough positive actions in the young person’s file, they automatically get a first positive evaluation.</li> </ul>



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