



Mutual Learning Programme

Learning Exchange on 'Integration of NEETs'

27-26 September 2016, Brussels

Summary

The Learning Exchange explored effective strategies to reach out, engage and support young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) back into education or employment. The event, hosted by the Public Employment Services (PES) in Belgium, Actiris, VDAB and Le Forem brought together government representatives from Luxembourg, Germany and Norway as well as representatives of Belgian non-profit organisations supporting young people and the European Commission.

The aim was to showcase the 'Find - Mind - Bind' approach implemented in Belgium. Partners work with youth associations and community organisations to 'FIND' and identify young people by going out to meet them in the streets, sport clubs. An outreach worker builds up trust with the young person. Secondly, the outreach worker spends time with the young person to build up a trust ('MIND') relationship with them so that they are confident and willing to develop a career plan with the outreach worker. Lastly, the outreach worker works with the young person, and partners, to support them to achieve their career plan ('BIND').

Key messages from the event were as follows:

- NEETs are a **heterogeneous group**, ranging from motivated to unmotivated, high qualified to low qualified young people, including individuals with varying language skills, young people with disabilities, health issues or care obligations and very vulnerable groups who face multiple problems. There is high diversity within the group and across different countries. This requires different levels of support and intervention as well as close working collaboration across all the organisations that have a say in the lives of young people.
- Cooperation with the education sector and schools is important to **ensure early identification** of disengaged young people and thus intervene early. For example, in Norway, tutors from the PES work in Upper Secondary schools and provide support (also in cooperation with other services such as health care or child welfare) and signpost PES activities. This practice started as a pilot project and has been rolled-out because it helped to reduce school drop-outs and contributed to a more positive image of PES services amongst young people.
- National strategies are valuable to enhance partnership working, such as agreements on data sharing or cooperation agreements, but also to share experiences on challenges and success factors on a national level. However, a **bottom-up process** is important to consider local conditions, needs and ways of working together. For example, the national initiative to set up Youth Employment Agencies as a cooperation between local PES, the youth welfare offices, the Jobcentres and education across Germany is implemented differently at local level, depending on socio-economic conditions and needs.
- Projects are being funded in order to test innovative solutions to support NEETs or to fill in gaps in service provision. Therefore, **evidence on project outcomes** is needed to enhance the sustainability of the activities and to roll-out effective project practice. For example, evidence on the effectiveness of projects partly funded by the European Social Fund can support structural reforms on a wider scale.

In terms of identifying and reaching out NEETs, during the '**Find**' phase, key learning points were:

- The situation of every young person not in education, employment or training varies and the composition of this group might be different across countries. Therefore, a **mapping of the target group and the different situations of NEETs** is important to understand who they are, the problems they face and to plan services accordingly. For example, the National Youth Service in Luxembourg differentiates between NEETs who are currently not available for work

due to care responsibilities or disability and NEETs who are available for work, but face various barriers to enter the labour market. The groups of NEETs are then differently approached by services.

- There are **different methods** that help to **identify NEETs** or young people at risk, such as tracking systems, referrals from other bodies, youth work, cooperation with schools or national or local agreements to share data. For example, in Luxembourg there is a national register of early-school leavers in secondary schools who are then contacted and supported by the Local Action for Youth staff, offered services (individual mentoring and coaching) or being referred to other services when appropriate.
- In order to reach out to young people **local cooperation** between employment services, education, social services, NGOs and community groups is essential. Active outreach work is particularly important to approach vulnerable young people in a non-judgmental way that builds up trust. For example, NGOs in Brussels work with vulnerable young people in the area where they live and employ street workers with a wide social network in the city.

With regards to in the '**Mind**' phase, engaging and supporting NEETs, key learning points were:

- Partnerships are needed to provide services that address multiple needs a young person might face. Depending on the national, regional or local context, **partnership working differs**. For example, the PES in Wallonia has set up mixed teams consisting of professionals from the PES, NGOs, trade unions who work on different projects for NEETs. In the German Youth Employment Agencies, the staff from different sectors working with young people in the agency have frequent meetings to discuss individual cases.
- A **single contact person** for a young person enhances mutual understanding and trust as well the ability to assess the individual situation and provide tailored services. Moreover **one-stop-shops**, that gathers front-line staff from relevant services, facilitates access to services and keeps young people engaged. For example, the Youth Employment Agency in Hamburg provides coherent support by fostering cooperation between different sectors: youth work, career guidance, youth welfare services and PES. In addition, cooperation with schools aims to reduce early-school leaving and to prepare young people for employment.
- Once NEETs are in contact with the services, they need **different engagement strategies** based on an individual assessment of their needs, skills and interests. This can be a combination of mentoring, advocacy, counselling and guidance delivered by specially trained professionals. Moreover, 'Peer to peer support' can also support the lack of a social and family network. These different services empower young people to make informed choices and help to build self-esteem and their ability to identify their 'hidden' skills.
- In order to provide services in a continuous and holistic way that reduces the administrative burden for a young person and facilitates cross-collaboration, different organisations **need to share data and information**. This can be often done by a simple arrangement, for example in Germany and Norway young people are asked to sign an agreement that services share their data.
- The **progression of support** provided to young people, in particular for the furthest away from the labour market, is important. Individual coaching and mentoring, peer-to-peer support, informal and non-formal education and leisure activities are often helpful to build up confidence and trust amongst vulnerable youth.

With regards to the '**Bind**' phase, providing follow-up support to NEETs, key learning points were:

- It is important to understand how the young person learns in order to choose the right pathway. The combination of guidance, training and '**on-the job**' learning, including apprenticeships, traineeships, work trials, and other blended models between work and education help to build up skills and to bring young people closer to the labour market. For example, the 'Work inclusion' programme in Norway combines work experience with training whilst young people still receive benefits.
- Engaging employers is essential to find employment for young people and creating training opportunities. Mentoring employers becomes important to make them aware of issues NEETs might face and how they can support certain groups. **Specific services for employers** will facilitate the identification, contact and engagement. In the PES in Hamburg, Germany, a

dedicated team within the PES offers guidance for employers and arranges various financial and non-financial support, such as mentoring programmes when employing vulnerable NEETs.

- When working with some vulnerable groups and those furthest away from the labour market, it is key to consider the 'distance travelled' by the young person, **measuring progression**, not only a purely outcome based assessment.

Further information

Full report and speaker's presentations will be available here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1073&eventsId=1166&furtherEvents=yes>

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