

Track-IN

Public employment services
tracking effectiveness
in supporting rural NEETs

Manual on PES' development of good practices to support NEETs

Elaborated by TRACK-IN Project:
Public employment services tracking effectiveness in supporting rural NEETs



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BACKGROUND

What is this manual?

This Manual was developed under the project Track-IN: Public employment services tracking effectiveness in supporting rural young people Not in Employment nor in Education or Training (NEET). The Manual is designed to offer some guidance to case managers, career counsellors and other professionals working with Rural NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) on how to develop an impact analysis of Public Employment Services (PES). The document deals specifically with the question of selecting the most important factors to include in a PES impact model. Some suggestions are made about the methods that should be used in an impact analysis in this context, but the methodological apparatus of a PES impact assessment is beyond the scope of this document.

Why is this manual important?

Rural NEETs are at the core of the Youth Guarantee –a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. The professionals implementing the Youth Guarantee in EU are faced with serious challenges: they need to identify, reach out to and activate vulnerable young people, to refer them to an employer or get them to register with the Labour Office Directorates, where they should be offered employment, training or continued education. The choice of specific measures is based on a good understanding of the risk factors leading to a NEET status, the social and demographic characteristics of the group, the group's heterogeneity and the trends in the group's evolution, as well as on good knowledge of these individual's profile. Given the complexity and the expected social relevance of these challenges, it is key to understand if PES impact measures are relevant, do that they can provide effective and sustainable measurement models. For this purpose, this Manual stresses some measurement guidelines while detailing the core PES factors and individual outcomes that should be considered in PES impact assessment. At the same time, the manual contextualizes these factors in a multilayered model of PES assessment -going from policies to rural young people.

Who can use this Manual?

This Manual is primarily intended to serve as a resource for practitioners in charge of directing, supervising, operating and/or evaluating PES administered by government agencies and public or semi-public bodies and entities.

In what context was this manual prepared?

This manual was developed in the context of project Track-IN – Public employment services tracking the effectiveness in supporting rural Rural NEETs. The project ambition is to deliver an evaluation model of the effectiveness of PES tracking support types - digital, human-mediated or mixed - in improving employability among rural Rural NEETs aged 25-29. This ambition collapses into three specific goals: (a) to broaden knowledge of the effects of employment initiatives targeting rural Rural NEETs, by creating a cross-country model of how policies influence PES tracking deliverance; (b) to enlarge the capacity to evaluate effects of employment initiatives for Rural NEETs in rural areas, by validating impact assessment protocols for the most replicable programs of on-the-ground PES tracking support types, considering overall and specific groups of Rural NEETs and (c) to further target is to increase transnational use of impact studies among policymakers and researchers, by supporting their participation in developing/incorporating evidence-based impact methods for PES tracking evaluation.

The consortium relies on a sound multidisciplinary, theoretical and methodological approach, by concentrating on Baltic, South and Southeastern States with disparate Rural NEETs' proportions and different degrees of PES digitalization, adding meaningful variability to comparative analyses.

The project outputs will be streamed into a working group dedicated to PES tracking impact evaluation to tie in with a parallel initiative, the Rural NEET Youth Observatory, by 2024. The Observatory work and results can be consulted at <https://euryo.org>

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The situation of NEETs aged 25-29 years over the last decade (2011-2021) in the six beneficiary partner countries

Youth unemployment in **Italy** has risen dramatically since 2011, reaching a peak of 26% in 2014, which then decreased until 2021. The trend has been linear with regards to rural areas, towns and suburbs. However, the cities call for a separate discussion as the rates of de-occupation have remained relatively high, reaching 20% in 2021. The NEET rate in the country is one of the highest in the EU and increased overall from 2011 to 2021 (Marzana et al., 2022). There are considerable differences in the different national geographical areas. The southern regions have much higher NEET rates than the historically more industrialised northern regions (ISTAT, 2020).

At the same time youth unemployment in **Portugal** is systematically higher among young people than in the general population. Young people are particularly affected by the framework conditions of the country, in particular the economic-financial crisis of 2013 and the recent pandemic crisis due to COVID19. During both periods the unemployment rate rose significantly, especially in 2013, when it peaked to 21.9%. The effects of the pandemic crisis would also be felt in 2020 and 2021, albeit with less impact than in 2013. Rural areas were an exception, insofar as the unemployment rate continuously decreased after 2016 and recorded the lowest unemployment rate among all degrees of urbanization (9.7%) in 2021 (Ferreira & Ribeiro, 2022).

To put the data into context in terms of rural NEET youth in **Spain**, it is important to understand that the autonomous communities of Spain tailor their own policies on factors such as population, family and employment to their own regions, and as such there is no centralised Spanish policy in this regard. When analysing the population trends in Spain, it should be noted that depopulation trends in rural areas are not homogeneous. Some of the autonomous communities of Spain are statistical outliers, in that these trends are far more pronounced in locations such as Castilla La Mancha and Castilla Leon, and as a result the average Spanish depopulation trends

in rural territories are lower and are not necessarily representative of the entirety of rural Spain. There are more female NEETs than male NEETs, although the overall NEET rate has decreased in the last 10 years (Agahi & Prieto-Flores, 2022).

In **Lithuania** youth employment has been on the increase whilst over the last 10 years, youth unemployment in the country has been on a downward path. NEETs in the 25-29 years age bracket differ significantly. Employment figures for males have decreased, with the exception of the pandemic period, while an increase has been observed for females, with minor fluctuations between 2017 and 2019 and continuing to increase since 2021. Moreover, NEETs in rural areas have continued to decrease visibly (Vyšniauskienė, 2022).

Some of the biggest challenges facing **Bulgaria** between 2010 and 2021 were related to demographic trends and the development of related processes. The deepening demographic crisis and its associated unfavourable quantitative changes in demographic parameters has been characterised by very high intensity over the past three decades. Young people are an at-risk category in the Bulgarian labour market, with high unemployment rates. Youth unemployment in Bulgaria is also a low-skill and regional problem that mostly affects those aged between 15 and 19 years. The unemployment rate in the 25-29 years age bracket remained high for the 10-year period (Lendzhova & Milanov, 2022).

Like many European countries, **Estonia** has a noticeably aging demographic profile. The number of young people and the youth population ratio has been gradually decreasing over the past decade across many of the youth subgroups. Even the decreasing trend of the youth population is similar in all areas, however when comparing 2012 to 2021, cities' populations aged 25-29 years have decreased more than rural, town and suburb populations. The employment rate of young people decreased over the period under study. The unemployment rate was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, but recovered rapidly to a lower level. Comparing the NEET share in the 25-29 years age bracket in different areas in Estonia, Tallinn (capital city region) has the lowest rate while the highest rate is recorded in North-East Estonia (Kõiv, & Saks, 2022).

FAQs



What is the role of PES in the implementation of employment services addressing NEETs?

The role of Public Employment Services (PES) in the implementation of employment services addressing NEETs is critical. In the 6 beneficiary countries where the surveys and case studies were conducted, PES plays a fundamental role in helping NEETs.

PES offices are often responsible for **identifying and reaching out** to NEETs within their jurisdictions. They use data and research to understand the characteristics and needs of NEETs, including their demographics and reasons for disengagement from education and employment.

PES offer **guidance and counselling services** to NEETs to help them identify their strengths, interests, skills and potential career paths. This may include providing information on educational and training opportunities, job search strategies, and career development.

PES can **connect NEETs with training and skill development programmes**, including vocational training, apprenticeships, and adult education, to enhance their employability and career prospects.

PES **assist NEETs** in finding suitable job opportunities by matching their skills and preferences with available job openings. This may involve maintaining job databases, hosting job fairs, and providing job placement services. PES agencies often offer support services to address the various barriers that NEETs may face, such as lack of transport, childcare, or mental health issues. These services can help individuals overcome these obstacles and reengage with education or employment.

PES **collaborate with various partners**, including educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and employers, to create a comprehensive support network for NEETs. This collaboration can lead to the development of tailored programmes and initiatives to address the specific needs of this group. PES agencies monitor the progress of the NEETs they serve and evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes and interventions.

This data-driven approach helps to refine strategies and ensure that the services are meeting the needs of NEETs effectively. PES may also engage in policy advocacy to influence government policies and initiatives that can address the root causes of youth disengagement and promote youth employment.

1.2. Youth employment challenges

Connecting young jobseekers to their first job and ensuring quality employment poses different challenges than for adult workers. The latest collected data shows that young people are still three times more likely than adults to be unemployed (ILO, 2022). Transitions into employment negatively affect a young person’s long-term career and income. Labour market trends point to an increase in different youth groups experiencing labour market difficulties and decent work deficits, albeit with strong variations across regions (WEF, 2023). These difficulties experienced by young people provide an insight into why labour market interventions by employment services providers require more refined and adapted instruments for their diverse needs. Additionally, change drivers such as climate change; the sharing economy; robotics; rapid urbanization; and a prominent pool of young talents in emerging markets competing for qualified jobs in the global job market, will have an impact on labour markets and in the supply and demand for labour in the future (WEF, 2023).

FAQs



How can public employment services respond to young people’s challenges?

Young people’s profiles vary considerably in terms of age, gender, place of residence, civil status, income, skills and occupation, education and culture. In an increasingly competitive global economy, employment services **need to be more accessible and readily available** to young jobseekers with very different needs, including today’s media savvy generation, and disadvantaged young people who often require a wider and extended range of services.

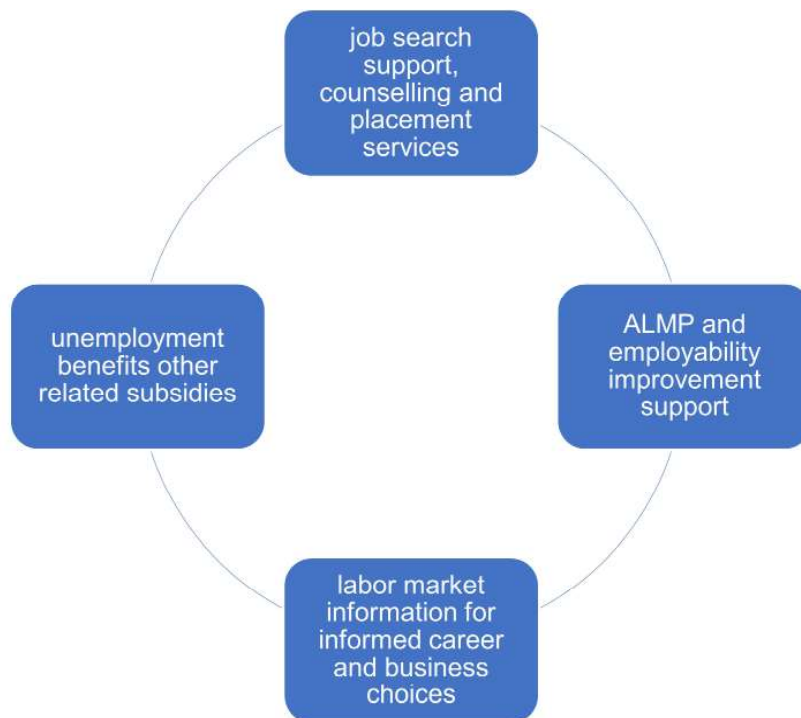
Employment services are designed to increase the promptness, efficiency, and quality of the match between jobseekers and available jobs. They are considered as the most cost-effective of the active labour market policies (ALMP), e.g., the cost per worker placed in a new job. Plenty of job matches are achieved, and should be, without the intervention of an employment service; but impact evaluations have shown that **well-run employment**

services can help youths to find a job faster, and often with better quality than if they looked on their own.

This impact is understandably achieved in the short-term – a better job or job found more quickly, while other interventions affect longer-term job prospects, such as education and skills training.

Mainstream provisions of employment services can be **oriented towards the needs of specific target groups**, including young people. A targeted approach helps to understand differential transition patterns into employment, and the combination of services that can be used to effectively support them.

Figure 1: Services provided by PES



1.3. Services provided by PES

The quantity and intensity of services provided will strongly depend on: the needs of the population groups requiring them, individual circumstances, and available resources (e.g., number and skill-mix of staff, funds,

equipment, and infrastructure). Mainstream provisions of employment services presented in Figure 1 can be oriented towards the needs of specific target groups, including young people. A targeted approach helps to understand differential transition patterns into employment, and the combination of services that can be used to effectively support them.. Given the declining resources in many PES including those from these six beneficiary countries, it is vital to deliver services in such a way that individuals can be connected effectively with the labour market while avoiding duplication and waste.

FAQs



How to “adjust” the employment services to NEETs?

PES are constantly **seeking** innovative ways to deliver more effectively to young customers. However, it is often a challenge to find the best means to reach young NEETs, particularly those most in need of their services. Many young jobseekers might not be aware of the support that is available to them and face a harder time in finding a job. Others become discouraged during the transition between school and employment and might withdraw from the job search and services offered in their country. It is crucial that young people feel they can rely on employment services providers to conduct an informed, organised, and more effective job search- whether they are: just graduating from high school, university or a technical school; in transition between early jobs; or returning to work after family obligations.

This can be **achieved by making conventional employment services more accessible, including through online tools**, social media platforms, and related activities that are modified or geared towards serving young people particularly. The challenge of reaching out to them cannot be addressed by the PES alone.

Multi-channelled approaches with the involvement of various partners and the young people themselves have shown positive results (ILO, 2023).

1.4. The importance of PES support to NEETs aged 24-29 years

Public Employment Services (PES) play an important role in the implementation of employment services addressing NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). The acronym NEET stands for young people who are ‘not in employment, education or training’, who – regardless of their level of schooling – are disengaged from both work and education. The role of PES involves various functions and responsibilities to effectively address the needs of NEETs and help them transition into education, employment, or training opportunities. Public employment services (PES) are core labour market institutions. Their main goal is to facilitate labour market participation to achieve full employment. They do this by improving fluidity, transparency and fairness in accessing job-search support and employability resources.

The importance of providing Public Employment Services (PES) support to NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) aged 24-29 years cannot be overstated. This manual aims to highlight existing good practices, lessons learned, challenges and success factors in improving the outreach of PES to NEETs in rural areas.

Public Employment Services (PES) across Europe are working with an increasingly diverse set of target groups. There is a growing expectation for PES and other organizations involved in the youth activation arena to identify and support non-traditional ‘customers’ such as inactive, unregistered youth. This pressure stems from concerns over high NEET rates and the potential long-term negative implications of inactivity at a young age both for society (burden for the welfare systems) and the individuals concerned (the potential ‘scarring’ effects associated with long and early spouts of inactivity). In most European countries, PES have diversified their service delivery, using innovative approaches to meet the needs of different target groups and increasingly establishing various partnerships with other labour market actors. The development of technology in public services has additionally transformed service delivery for PES by increasing digital accessibility, reducing waiting times for in-person services and, through the use of algorithms, enabling faster matches to fill vacancies or upskill job seekers (Scarano & Colfer, 2022). Digital technology and the diversification of services is helping to drive more customer-centric approaches to PES delivery (Aversa & Hueller, 2023). Finally, the context of the current services

provided by PES is influenced by the so-called Twin Transitions towards a digital and green economy: for example by exploring the implications of the increasing application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well as the modernisation of PES delivery systems or by looking at contributions to environmentally sustainable economies being transformed through the 4th Industrial Revolution.

1.5. Heterogeneity of NEETs

The heterogeneity in the experience of youth employment among the 6 countries may be a result of several different factors. According to Mascherini, the NEETs' area of residence should be taken into consideration when addressing the groups' heterogeneity(Mascherini, 2019).

Eurofound's recent report (2012) categorises NEETs in Europe into five main sub-groups:

- "the conventionally unemployed", the largest subgroup, which can be further subdivided into long-term and short-term unemployed;
- "the unavailable", which includes young carers, young people with family responsibilities and young people who are sick or disabled;
- "the disengaged"- those young people who are not seeking jobs or education and are not constrained from doing so by other obligations or incapacities, including discouraged workers as well as other young people who are pursuing dangerous and asocial lifestyles;
- "the opportunity-seekers" - young people who are actively seeking work or training, but are holding out for opportunities that they see as befitting their skills and status;
- " the voluntary NEETs" - those young people who are travelling and those constructively engaged in other activities such as art, music and self-directed learning" (Eurofound, 2012).

As a result of this disengagement, irrespective of other differences, all NEETs share a common status of not accumulating human capital through formal channels and therefore are at greater risk of future poor employment outcomes and social exclusion. Several approaches to identifying and categorising NEETs based on their main obstacles to entering the labour market already exist (Mascherini, 2019). The NEET population includes a long list of subgroups, each with its own characteristics and needs (Eurofound 2012), identified as five main groups: the conventionally

unemployed, the unavailable, the disengaged, voluntary NEETs and opportunity seekers. Each of these subgroups consists of a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people who are not accumulating human capital through formal channels, whether voluntarily or involuntarily (Eurofound, 2016). Addressing the heterogeneity of the NEET population is important when using the concept for policy making. While governments and social partners rightly set targets to reduce the number of NEETs through initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee framework, the heterogeneity of the NEET population must be taken into account when designing such measures. Effective intervention can only be designed if the NEET population has been disaggregated to identify the distinct characteristics and needs of each subgroup; each one is likely to have different welfare, training and activation needs (Eurofound, 2012).

USEFUL INFO



Classification of NEETs

NEETs are a diverse group, and may be classified into different categories based on their specific circumstances and characteristics. Here are some common classifications of NEETs:

Temporary NEETs: These are individuals who are currently not engaged in employment, education, or training but may have short-term reasons for their NEET status (Mascherini, 2019). For example, they could be taking a gap year, recovering from an illness, or in transition between educational levels.

Discouraged NEETs: These are individuals who have given up searching for employment or educational opportunities due to a lack of success or other discouraging factors. They may have lost hope and become disengaged from the labour market and education system.

Long-term NEETs: Long-term NEETs have been out of employment, education, or training for an extended period, often for six months or more. This group may face more significant barriers to re-engagement.

Educational NEETs: These are individuals who are not pursuing education but may be employed or actively seeking employment. They have disengaged from the education system but not from the workforce.

Employment NEETs: These individuals are not pursuing education or training but are actively seeking employment or participating in informal work, such as freelance or gig jobs.

Involuntary NEETs: These NEETs are not in employment, education, or training due to circumstances beyond their control. This category may include individuals facing structural unemployment, discrimination, or economic downturns.

Voluntary NEETs: Some individuals choose to be NEET for personal reasons, such as travel, caregiving responsibilities, or other non-traditional life choices. They willingly opt out of traditional education and employment paths.

Hidden NEETs: These are individuals who are NEET but are not officially counted in labour force or education statistics. They may be engaged in irregular or underground activities or be entirely disengaged from the system, making them challenging to identify.

Disconnected NEETs: This category includes individuals who have dropped out of education and disconnected from the labour market due to multiple and complex barriers, which may include mental health issues, substance abuse, homelessness, or legal problems.

Geographic NEETs: NEETs in this category are concentrated in specific geographic areas, often rural or economically disadvantaged regions, where access to education and employment opportunities may be limited.

These classifications help policymakers and organizations understand the diverse needs and circumstances of NEETs and design more targeted interventions to support them in their journey towards employment, education, or training. It should be noted that the reasons for NEET status can vary widely among individuals, and effective strategies should be tailored to address their specific situations (Mascherini, 2019).

II. IMPLEMENTING GOOD PRACTICES SUPPORTING NEETS

2.1. Good Practices supporting NEETs in EU countries

NEETs' employability prospects face some challenges in rural areas, due to inadequate formal support (e.g. lack of PES resources) or informal support risks (e.g. families' lower socioeconomic status). These risks intensify individual barriers, such as early school-leaving or low-skilled precarious employment from a very early age and its well-known side-effects, including limited civic involvement and outmigration.

This section aims to track the implementation of good practices supporting NEETs in the six beneficiary partner countries, considering different levels of this support, such as:

2.1. 1. Individual counselling

Context: By providing career guidance and professional orientations, PES can better equip young people searching for jobs as well as employees to make multiple transitions during their working life and empower them to build a successful career. This helps PES in terms of reducing the likelihood of jobseekers returning to PES in short succession and it can contribute to enhancing PES' role and profile within the labour market. To such end, PES can either deliver these services themselves or they can work with different partners to provide assistance. Case Study 1 provides an example of how the Estonian PES have worked to deliver career counselling to young people.

Case Study 1 *Career services - Estonia*



Career services are the career information provision and career counselling. The main purpose of career services is to support individuals in making informed decisions in education and employment. You can meet a career specialist individually as well as in a group.

Main activities: Career information, individual counselling, group work, work clubs, workshops

The Career Services programme offers a wide range of services provided to NEETs that include different good practices. As an example, individual counselling allows greater exchange between professionals and young people. Other activities such as work clubs and workshops are also important for integrating young people into the reality of the job market. Such activities allow young people to improve their interpersonal and professional skills (boost skills), in addition to being an important source of feedback for Career services.

Professionals who work with young people have high professional training and can meet the demands necessary to encourage the professional progress of participants.

It should be noted that as it is an interconnected service with other PES services, this programme allows for greater affluence among the demands that arise.



<https://www.tootukassa.ee/en/services/career-and-training/career-services>

2.1.2. Digital counselling: PES and digitalization (Updating PES' capacities in a changing world of work and post-COVID-19)

Context: Multi-channels are an important aspect of PES' service delivery. Many European PES have already modernised their service delivery channels, offering a more diversified contact model with digital and remote options (Morte-Nadal & Esteban-Navarro, 2022). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid options have been introduced, acknowledging the changing needs of jobseekers (ILO, 2021). Digital technologies enable more flexible communication: customer services such as counselling, individual job placement and contact with employers can now provide rapid responses to online inquiries and more focused contact systems (ILO, 2021). This can support channel management approaches that digitalise the existing service portfolio while also upgrading service delivery structures with more channel options. Digital delivery refers to the accessibility and delivery of services through online tools such as websites as distinct from in-person services, delivered in an office with direct customer contact to staff. Hybrid delivery refers to service delivery where digital and in-person support is mixed according to individual customer needs

(NEETs in this case) and PES capacity. For several years, many PES have inclined towards user interface and user experience design for their services, with a rising use of apps and dashboards that allow jobseekers to navigate services and manage profiles without the direct help and supervision of a PES advisor. However, even before the pandemic, several PES (e.g. Estonia) noted that digital services are challenging to access for customers that are distanced from the labour market, as they often have low digital literacy or difficulties accessing internet facilities. This means that PES need to maintain some degree of face-to-face offering (Pieterse, 2011). Case Studies 2 and 3 provide an example of good practice and the digitalization of the e-services provided by PES for young people in Estonia and Portugal.

Case Study 2

Tööhõive programme 2020 - Estonia



As part of the Estonian Government initiative (Tööhõive programme, 2020), Career Counselling is an important tool to create contact with the person and foster a psychologically supportive environment where a person can talk safely and openly and consider PES options. Following the pandemic, the provision of digital counselling in Estonia became a regular feature in PES services. As an opportunity, **investment in digital tools** to improve non-face-to-face service is noteworthy.

(Good) practices: Activities related to career counselling are **highly adapted** to the public. Counselling changes according to demands, and can be conducted in person, online or by telephone, and this contributes to the possibilities of alternatives for young people in different contexts. It is worth noting that despite the advantages of remote counselling, the possibility of **digital counselling** makes it possible to reach young people from more remote locations or those who are unable to directly access PES services. Two practices are highlighted: **adaptability**, and **digital environments**. As mentioned in the good practices, the counselling service is **adaptable** to contexts and can be carried out in different ways. Additionally, the use of **digital tools** also helps create different possibilities for customers.



<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/120032020003>

Case Study 3

Young + Digital - Portugal



The Young + Digital is part of a public policy initiative for vocational training aimed at developing digital skills in technologies and digital applications. Its primary goal is to enhance employment qualifications, address current and future labour market needs and, consequently, contribute to the development of a higher value-added economy. The programme is designed to provide specific digital skills and contributes to enhancing the professional skills of young adults, ultimately improving their employability prospects.

Main activities: Professional training (certified courses)

Young + Digital is a good practice due to the **training provision that increases employability**, the project's **replicability** capacity and aid in the form of grants for young NEETs who attend the courses, in addition to the **great offering of training courses**. These courses all have training certification that has a direct impact on gaining and maintaining employment. It is worth highlighting the fact that this programme directly promotes professional opportunities. Additionally, for young NEETs, the fact that Young + Digital offers **grants** to participants is motivating, and includes training, meal subsidies and accident insurance.



<https://portugaldigital.gov.pt/en/training-people-for-digital/available-training-in-digital-skills/more-digital-youth/>

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Key considerations

- Digital first contact strategies with an option for face-to-face contact where needed can provide a seamless and tailor-made customer journey which can empower jobseekers and employers to make their own choices as to how they want to be serviced.
- Automation can process repetitive tasks and free up time for more customer-centred personal services.
- Prepare PES staff for a more digital environment and frequent use of data-driven conclusions for the customer-centred service delivery.

PES should concentrate on developing the digital skills of those customers in most need, that is, those furthest from the labour market. This requires prioritising lower-educated and older workers, females, people in low- or semi-skilled jobs and employees in smaller-sized establishments. Training provision must be closely correlated with labour market inclusion needs. Regardless of whether public employment services opt to implement digital-first policies or to only digitalise selected services, they are well advised to make their services work for everyone. This includes investing in integrating technology, qualifying staff, and ensuring good digital governance as well as robust cybersecurity.

Alternative delivery channels should be provided for people unable to use digital means. Customers who are unable to make full use of digital services need to be able to make use of other channels, such as face-to-face or phone contact.

2.1.3. Mobile services

Context: Mobile PES services allow PES to move their youth services to where those most in need are located. This can render accessing PES services much easier for those NEETs who have such problems, in particular young people in rural areas. In addition, mobile services can make it easier for PES to reach out to NEETs who are not yet registered, as the service can be taken to places where a large number of people can be reached, i.e. job fairs or schools. This is the principle behind the Bulgarian PES mobile counselling service. A key factor for the implementation of these services is the partnership with local actors. Case Study 4 provides an example of how the Bulgarian PES has worked to deliver a mobile counselling service to young people.

Case Study 4

Mobile Employment Office service - Bulgaria



The Mobile Employment Office service works with teams of mobile experts to provide a range of services to employment offices, with the aim of reducing the proportion of discouraged and inactive people, as well as helping job seekers. The emphasis is on informing, consulting, and motivating for

registration and use of the intermediary and specialised services of the Employment Agency to provide employment or inclusion in training.

Main activities: Support and guidance (information and consulting)

(Good) practices: As it is an itinerant and mobile practice, the Mobile Employment Office service makes it possible to deconstruct one of the main problems for the rural population, **intermobility**. As highlighted in the document itself: “the Mobile Office expands on the existing outsourced jobs aimed at unemployed people from vulnerable groups and economically inactive people from rural regions and communities. It enables the **formation of external meeting spaces** by mobile teams of labour offices and social assistance directorates for the provision of complete services within operational employment and social support centres”.

Practices to adopt (dos): The practices that stand out in the project refer to **Support and guidance** (information and consulting) which are carried out as a result of the Mobile Office’s mobility capacity. Through **intermobility**, the programme promotes **intermediate** services and individualised assistance to stimulate hiring.



<https://ukraine.gov.bg/bg/access-to-the-labour-market-in-bulgaria-for-citizens-of-ukraine/>

2.1.4 Development of soft skills and competences

Context: Some young people may not be ready to go directly into the labour market and may need additional support to improve their soft skills, or to reskill or upskill with a view to developing skills that are appropriate to current labour market needs. Support that focuses on developing work-related soft skills may be suitable for those furthest away from the labour market (e.g. long-term unemployed, young people who have dropped out of education or other disadvantaged groups who are facing multiple barriers to work). Increasingly, some PES are using skills-based profiling to find out more about individual jobseekers’ skills, including soft skills and transferable skills. This can also help to understand more about jobseekers’ levels of self-awareness, self-confidence and their potential. Skills-based profiling works best if there is a common understanding and language regarding skills and competencies within the national context and,

where possible, these are linked to existing national occupational classifications.

On the other hand, this begs the question: what services can PES provide to improve young people's employability and help prepare them for the labour market?

PES should deliver a range of services that help young people improve their employability and help prepare them to participate in the labour market. This support can make sustainable transitions from unemployment to work and, increasingly, work-to-work. The individual's needs are at the root of these services. The services delivered by PES should also improve employability and prepare young people for work. They should focus on providing information and assistance in job search techniques, work-related soft skills, work-related behaviours and expectations and could cover second-chance education and training for young people. Case Study 5 provides an example of an intervention that focuses on soft skills and maker skills for entrepreneurship for NEETs with higher education in Portugal.

Case Study 5

NeetMaker Programme - Portugal



The NeetMaker programme targets young people outside the labour market and educational institutions. It works at being a training and stimulus programme for employability and social inclusion for young people aged between 20 and 34 years, in the Centre region of Portugal (Pombal, Coimbra, Penela and Ansião). It is especially aimed at developing skills and competences for young NEETs and its capacity is reinforced in areas of the new economy, continuing the strategy and the Strategic Plan of the Municipality of Penela. This programme operated from June 2020 to December 2022.

Main activities: Bootcamps, workshops, residencies, and ideas contest.

(Good) practices: The NeetMaker programme was found to have different indicators that can be associated with good practices, and such practices are directly linked to the activities offered by the programme, namely Bootcamps, workshops, residencies, and ideas contest.

In the set of activities carried out by NeetMaker, goals and objectives are centralised to foster the development of three axes: **soft skills, digital**

capacitation, and entrepreneurship. The highlight of these three points is also characterised by practices that are conferred in the project, namely through **active listening (feedback) and progress report** practices.

In the specific case of **active listening**, the document (CS 1 – Neetmaker) highlights the existence of a positive relationship with an emphasis on listening, mainly because to create an entrepreneurial mindset it is necessary to work on trainees' soft skills.

Inappropriate or inexistent training for NEET care: From the NEET point of view, two criticisms are highlighted, namely that users do not feel heard, and a lack of empathy.

There is also an emphasis on demonstrating a lack of training regarding the quantity of training offered. Finally, it should be noted that there is also a lack of monitoring, which is reflected in some cases of backsliding when young people return to unemployment.



<https://www.neetmaker.pt/>

2.1.5. Training to promote employment and training courses

Context: Training programmes can be used as a 'preventative' measure for those young people at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEETs). This approach requires working closely with schools to identify at-risk young people and provide them with additional support and alternative forms of education and training. This introduces PES services to at-risk young people at an early age and helps to maintain contact with the young person as they make the transition from education to the labour market. These programmes also provide young unemployed people with no qualifications or low levels of schooling with training courses to improve their employability. Case Studies 6 and 7 outline an approach taken by the Spanish and Italian PES to identify at-risk young people and offer training programmes.

Case Study 6

SINGULARS Programme - Spain



The main objective of the Singulars programme is to provide a complete itinerary to young unemployed people with no qualifications or low levels of schooling and with more difficulties in accessing the labour market in order to improve their employability through training. This itinerary consists of two professional certificates from the professional areas of sales and commercial logistics and transport management.

Main activities: Professional Training (certified).

(Good) practices: The actions developed by the Singulars programme have indicators that can be considered good practices, particularly in relation to **innovation** as it is **adapted** to the local reality and offers professional training. It is argued in the document (CS 1 – Spain) that the programme is **replicable** in the territory due to its implementation capacity.

Additionally, the document highlights that the main strength of the Singulars programme lies in the courses offered, stating the following:

“A training course 100% adapted to the needs of the context. This increases the employability of the participants”

In former years of the project, **internships** were compulsory, which allowed for greater insertion of NEETs into the job market.

Due to the **singularity** of the project, there is an opportunity to adapt Singulars as a business model. This indication is mentioned in the document (CS 1 – SPAIN) as the project has proven to be adaptable to local contexts. Additionally, for the same reason, it is highlighted that it would be possible to replicate the programme across the entire country and other countries (**Expand the project - scaling**).



<https://www.cetpenedes.cat/actua-singulars/>

Case Study 7

Universal Civic Service - Italy



The Universal Civic Service represents an important opportunity for training and personal and professional growth for young people, who are an indispensable and vital resource for the country's cultural, social, and

economic progress. Young people who choose to participate in Universal Civil Service projects are entitled to general and specific training.

Main activities: Training courses (General and specific) and volunteer work.

(Good) practices: The Universal Civic Service offers young NEETs an opportunity to be part of **training and volunteering activities** during a period in which they **develop professional and personal skills** (soft skills). In addition to the professional certifications gained by the participant through the programme, volunteers who have enrolled in university courses may also request a refund of the training credits paid for by the programme (**training credits reimbursement**).

As practices to adopt, training and **volunteering** offerings were found to allow NEETs to establish new opportunities for professional and personal development. As it is an established, national-scale programme, participating in the Universal Civic Service provides NEETs with guarantees related to **Social Security** (e.g., National Civic Service Fund, free health care and recognition of a score in public competitions are provided), in addition to the possibility to request **training credits reimbursement** in the case of university students.

The dimensions of interconnection between the actors involved (**Partnership**) should be noted, which operate in partnerships between the public sector at national, district and local levels.



www.scelgoilserviziocivile.gov.it

2.1.7 Employability Knowledge

Context: Employability Knowledge refers to the understanding and skills that young people need to enhance their employability, making them well-suited to the labour market. It encompasses a range of factors that go beyond technical skills. The key aspects of employability knowledge are job-search skills, interview preparation, soft skills, digital competences and literacy, and entrepreneurial mindset, etc. Acquiring and continuously developing employability knowledge involves a combination of formal education, professional development opportunities, and practical experiences. Individuals who actively seek to enhance their employability knowledge are better

positioned to navigate the labour market and secure employment (Case Study 8).

Case Study 8

Let's move - Judam – Lithuania



The Let's move project (Judam in Lithuanian) was implemented by the Youth Affairs Agency. The goal of the "JUDAM" project is to reduce the number of people aged 15-29 years who are not working, studying, or participating in training by implementing activation and motivation measures. Particular attention is paid to the young people with fewer opportunities. Main activities. The following activities are carried out: counselling, guidance, and volunteer activities.

(Good) practices: Development of soft skills (social and working capacity; personal competences) and competences to reintegrate into educational and labour systems. These activities include counselling, guidance, and volunteer activities. It should be noted that the programme design is geared specifically towards NEETs with fewer opportunities (such as young people with family problems, living in shelters and foster homes, income deprivation, and addictions). Three distinct practices related to the programme were identified: Project mobility (reaching NEETs); acceptability; and innovation (type of target covered). Let's move captures young NEETs through mobility including rural areas, and consequently a face-to-face meeting. The document (CS 1 – Lithuania) highlights the acceptability of the project by both local and national communities. Finally, the innovative feature of the project is the target audience to be monitored. Young NEETs (aged 18 to 29 years) who have high degrees of sensitivity regarding their social conditions.



<https://www.jaunimogarantijos.lt/en/projects/lets-move-2019-2023/381>

2.2. Key factors for successful collaboration in the delivery of services for NEETs

2.2.1. Main stages in the process of working with NEETs

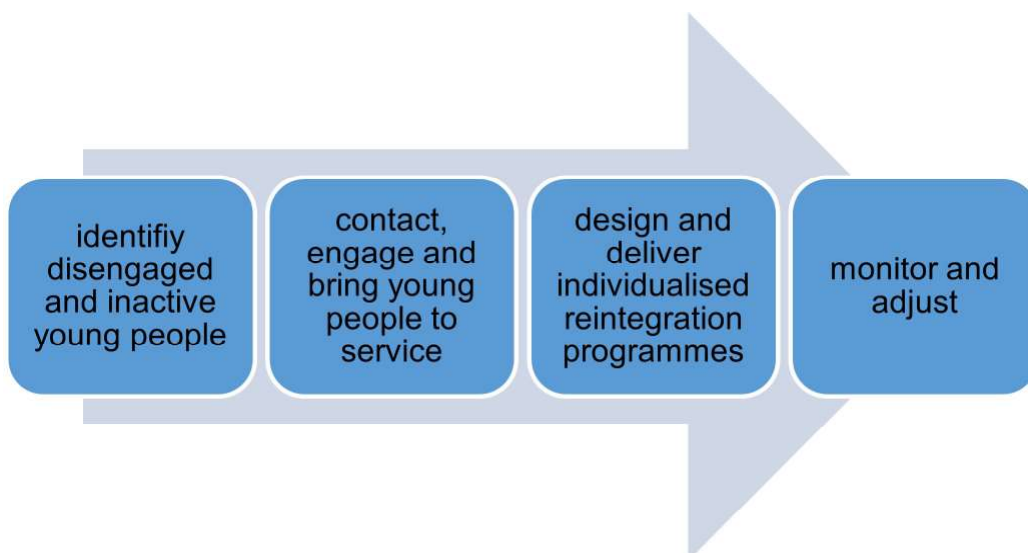
Identification. This stage articulates the approaches for identifying disengaged young people (such as tracking systems, data exchange and data warehousing, partnership agreements with youth organizations, and recruitment of outreach or youth workers).

Contact and engagement. This stage details the types of initial services to be provided to contact and attract young people

Programme delivery. This stage articulates the mix and sequence of services and programmes to be offered to disengaged young people (individual assessment, coaching, motivation training, self awareness, self-esteem training, communication, teamwork, work readiness skills, career tasters, advice and referral to specialised services), plans how the whole support system will operate on the ground and details the specific responsibilities of partner organizations (who will do what).

Monitoring and adjustment. This final stage of the model details the monitoring system to be used to verify progress in service delivery and how the findings can be used to adjust service and programme delivery Figure 2

Figure 2. Monitoring and adjustment



2.2.2. PES environment and skills of PES staff

Public Employment Service (PES) officers working with young people in rural areas need a unique skill set to effectively address the specific challenges and needs of this population. This includes:

Cultural Sensitivity- Understanding and respecting the local culture, values, and traditions is crucial for building trust and rapport with young people in rural areas.

Empathy- The ability to understand and connect with the challenges and aspirations of young people is vital. PES officers should be empathetic listeners and offer emotional support.

Effective Communication- Clear and concise communication is essential, especially when working with individuals with varying educational backgrounds. PES officers must be able to explain complex information in a way that is easily understood.

Active Listening- Actively listening to the concerns and needs of young people is key to providing relevant guidance and support. It helps build trust and rapport.

Problem-Solving- PES officers should be skilled in helping young people identify and solve problems related to employment, education, or training. They should be resourceful and creative in finding solutions.

Knowledge of Local Labour Market- Understanding the local job market, including its demands and trends, is crucial to offering relevant career guidance and matching jobseekers with suitable opportunities.

Networking- Building and maintaining relationships with local employers, educational institutions, and community organizations is essential for creating opportunities and collaborations that benefit young people.

Resourcefulness- PES officers should be resourceful in finding or developing programmes and initiatives that align with the unique needs of rural youth.

Data Analysis- Utilising data to understand trends and make informed decisions is increasingly important. PES officers should be able to analyse data to identify skills gaps, job opportunities, and areas for improvement in their services.

Digital Literacy- In today's digital age, being proficient in using online platforms and tools for job searching, skills development, and virtual counselling is crucial.

Conflict Resolution- Rural areas may have unique conflicts and disputes that need resolution. PES officers should be equipped to handle conflicts effectively and mediate when necessary.

Motivational Skills- Inspiring and motivating young people to pursue their goals, despite potential barriers, is an important aspect of the job.

Crisis Management- Some young people in rural areas may face crises such as economic hardship, natural disasters, or health issues. PES officers should be prepared to offer support and connect them with the appropriate resources.

Collaboration- Working with other agencies, organizations, and stakeholders is often necessary to provide holistic support to young people. PES officers should be skilled at building and maintaining partnerships.

Continuous Learning- Being updated on changing labour market conditions, available resources, and good practices in career guidance is essential for providing the most up-to-date information and services.

Flexibility- Rural areas may be subject to unpredictable challenges. PES officers should be adaptable and able to adjust their strategies to meet the changing needs of the community.

These skills and qualities, combined with a genuine commitment to helping young people in rural areas, can make PES officers highly effective in their roles. Training and ongoing professional development are also crucial to ensure that officers are well-equipped to support rural youth effectively.

2.2.3. Collaborating and partnering with other organizations

Context: “Employment services in recent years have seen a shift to more holistic and concrete approaches to address labour market inclusion, especially for vulnerable groups”¹ Traditional institutional settings present challenges to obtaining a comprehensive picture of a customer’s situation, especially as in most cases employment and social welfare functions are delivered by different entities. Several approaches have sought to break these silos and establish customer-centred, cross-institutional collaborations, including through building ecosystems and new innovative approaches to contracting. A

1. Eva Exposito, Headquarters of SOC (Catalan regional PES), Tr@ck-IN project | Workshop Good practices and development of the PES: Some guidelines, held on the 26th September, Girona, Spain

number of PES collaborate with labour market partners in formalised contracts. These should also enable flexibility to support the introduction of new customer-centric delivery models without causing disproportionate extra costs. Ideally, the service structure of a PES enables a cross-fertilisation relationship with customer feedback to avoid the continuance of inefficient and unpopular programmes and practices in employment services which may otherwise continue despite producing no meaningful results. PES can set up mechanisms and identify avenues to keep in touch with their customers beyond scheduled meetings with counsellors and can create environments where customers find space to say freely and comfortably what they think about the service and what they would wish to be improved.

FAQs



What are the key components for successful partnership working in the delivery of services for NEETs?

Creating a holistic approach through cross-sectoral partnerships is important to provide a full range of services to NEETs. NEETs often face multiple barriers to participating in education, training or employment. Holistic support packages offered by PES often recognise and address such barriers in the design process, notably through working in partnership with other actors. These actors include schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs, often those specialising in youth issues), social services and other institutions. This brings in specific expertise and knowledge about youth issues that can be utilised at the right moment in the young person's journey.

Communication. This includes agreeing on the specific roles and responsibilities of each partner and reaching a shared understanding between partners on the intended methodology.

Data exchanges. These can increase the efficiency of collaborations but can be problematic due to legislative and cultural barriers related to data protection.

USEFUL INFO



Key considerations

Building on existing partnerships and creating new partnerships can offer benefits to all aspects of PES organisation and service delivery, as well as policy and strategy planning and design. External stakeholders can provide valuable insights and views that can be used to shape strategy decisions.

PES need to work with partners to develop collective understandings, as well as concrete actions, around what vulnerable workers can contribute to the labour market and how this can take place. In addition, PES will increasingly need to **build multi-sector partnerships** that help create smooth transitions for job-seeking NEETs. School-to-work transitions will likely be accompanied by more work-to-work transitions in the future labour market. PES will need to vary the external partners with which they work according to the needs of the NEETs so that delivery can be tailored and wider issues can be accounted for in the strategy design. In particular, a shift from stand-alone services to joined-up provision and partnership working will become much more important for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. This will call for a shift towards proactively seeking out new partnerships as and when required to address any new emerging issues.

By being proactive and **having holistic partnerships**, PES will be better positioned to respond to youths' (NEETs) needs and thus contribute to a better functioning labour market.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To successfully address the variety of vulnerable young people, as well as their different barriers and needs, PES need to demonstrate **flexibility in the methods, measures and services offered**. Furthermore, from the various experiences of PES thus far in trying to reach different NEETs, it is clear that **gaining the trust** of vulnerable young people is critical.

In this regard, a key message for PES is that outreach to more vulnerable NEETs will **need cooperation with a variety of local actors, from associations and educational establishments to specialist counsellors trained in mental health issues**. This requires effective and appropriate information and data-sharing, and means that PES counsellors will need to spend more time managing these partnerships.

This more inclusive approach (which places a considerable emphasis on NEETs) cannot be successful without **effective cooperation between PES, education institutions, social service providers, companies and the providers of other supportive services (including psychological and health care)**. This more inclusive approach needs to build partnerships that include data exchange in order to identify vulnerable NEETs and the signposting of young people so that they receive adequate services and do not 'get lost' between service providers.

One of the key conclusions concerning NEETs (especially those from vulnerable backgrounds) is the role of PES in contacting and convincing them to participate in the labour market. In particular, many young people might not have trust in public institutions such as the PES. They often need face-to-face personal contact with a person who can speak in a more informal manner. This is why cooperation with other service providers is fundamental.

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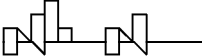


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Track-IN

Public employment services
tracking effectiveness
in supporting rural NEETs

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