



International
Labour
Organization

Policy brief on outreach strategies for young NEETs*

1. Introduction

This brief analyses the outreach approaches and strategies that target young people who are inactive with the objective of supporting them in entering the labour market or re-engaging in education and training activities.

Work is central to people's life. It is the main source of financial independence, social status and identity, and civic participation. Unemployment and inactivity have long-lasting consequences both for young individuals and for society as a whole (reduced employment opportunities and lower earnings in adulthood, greater reliance on welfare, early pregnancy and anti-social behaviour).¹ There is growing evidence that turbulence in early labour market experiences is consistently associated with poor labour market outcomes and increased risk of social exclusion during adulthood. Young people who have never started or have given up their job search are at high risk of marginalization.

The disengagement of young people from the labour market, education and/or training entails enormous financial losses, both for the individual and for society as a whole. In 2011, the direct economic loss across the EU due to the high proportion of young people neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEETs) was estimated at €153 billion (or 1.2 per cent of EU's gross domestic product).²

Policy interventions aimed at addressing youth disengagement include a combination of policies for prevention and "cure", to be implemented at different stages in the lives of young people. Prevention measures typically take place during compulsory education and are aimed at addressing the risk factors associated with

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¹K. McLaren: *Reconnecting young people. A review of the risks, remedies and consequences of youth inactivity*, Ministry of Social Development of New Zealand, Youth Transition Report Series (2003).

² These costs were calculated as the sum of welfare transfers to NEETs (social assistance, unemployment, disability and sickness benefit) and the lost contribution of the individual to society (foregone earnings, unpaid taxes and social security contributions). These estimates, however, do not include indirect costs such as those stemming from ill-health, poor self-esteem, loss of skills and social exclusion. See EUROFOUND: *NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe* (Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2012).

failure at school and early school leaving, which are likely to lead to unemployment and inactivity later in life.³

The fact that gaps in cognitive and non-cognitive skills can be tracked to early school years, and that these are key drivers of subsequent economic and social success or failure, demonstrates that this is a crucial stage at which interventions need to be planned. There is now substantial evidence that educational achievement is significantly lower for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes the probability of dropping out of school, lower rates of qualification and lower test scores throughout schooling.

While prevention policies are geared to address, early in the young person's life, factors that could lead to poor outcomes in adulthood, curative policies remedy a negative outcome (i.e. unemployment or inactivity) that has already occurred. Over the past two decades, extensive research has been conducted into youth unemployment determinants, costs for individuals and society, as well as on the effectiveness of policy interventions.⁴ A growing body of impact evaluations analysis is informing the design of youth employment policies and activation strategies, and employment service delivery system reform.⁵ Research into youth inactivity, on the other hand, is fragmented and has focused predominantly on the specific characteristics of inactive youth (such as single parents or young persons with disabilities), activation strategies and the development of pilot interventions.⁶

The policy framework introduced by the YG has universal coverage for the target group: young people neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEET) aged 15–24 (in some countries 15–29). It combines a variety of policy areas of intervention (i.e. early intervention, activation and labour market integration measures), and builds on extensive partnerships among public institutions at both central and local levels, and between these and the social partners, youth and civil society organizations and the private sector.⁷ In short, the YG requires countries of the European Union (EU) to go beyond established labour market policies targeting young unemployed, and start implementing strategies targeting young people detached from the labour market, education and training, with a view to bringing them towards mainstream services and programmes.

³ K. McLaren: *Reconnecting young people. A review of the risks, remedies and consequences of youth inactivity*, Ministry of Social Development of New Zealand, Youth Transition Report Series, op.cit.

⁴ See for example J. Kluve: "The effectiveness of European active labor Market policy" *Labour Economics*, 17(6) (2010), pp. 904-918 and J. Kluve et al.: *Protocol - Interventions to improve labour market outcomes of youth: A systematic review of active labour market programmes* (Campbell Collaboration, 2014).

⁵ See ILO policy brief "Activation strategies for youth employment" (Geneva, 2017) and W. Eichhorst and U. Rinne U: *Youth activation policies* (Geneva, ILO, 2014).

⁶ See for example P. Wehman et al.: "Predictors of successful transition from school to employment for youth with disabilities", *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, Volume 25 (June 2015), pp.323–334; K. Ruggeri and C.E. Bird: *Single parents and employment in Europe*, Short Statistical Report No. 3 (European Commission, 2014).

⁷ Council of the European Union: Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, (2013/C 120/1).

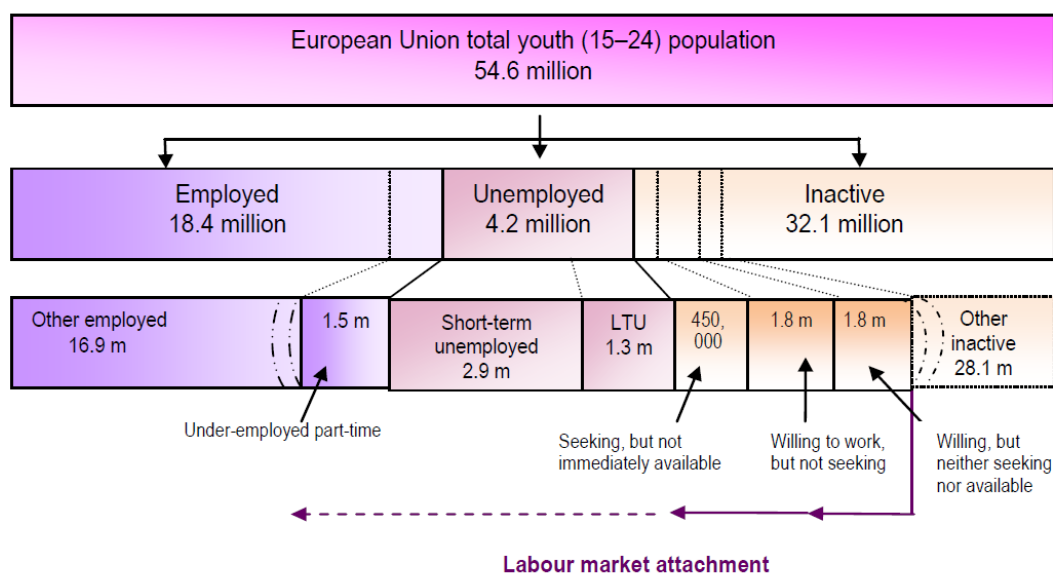
2. Young NEETs facing multiple challenges

Young NEETs are a diverse group of young people with different experiences and needs. The definition of NEETs includes the long-term unemployed, young people just entering the labour market, those looking after children or relatives, temporarily suffering from ill-health, living with long-term disabilities, or simply taking a break from work or education.

The same definition includes young people with little control over their situation, as well as those able to make choices, those who have an attachment to the labour market (i.e. the unemployed) and those who are detached (inactive, not in education or training), those registered with a public service (employment, social assistance or health services) and those who are “off the radar”.

One of the difficulties in designing policies to tackle inactivity is to decide whether a particular policy should target all young people who are inactive and not in education or training, or whether it should only be aimed at those with a higher degree of attachment to the labour market as measured by the job search activity and the availability to take up work).⁸ Figure 1 gives a breakdown of the various degrees of labour market attachment of the youth population in the EU in 2016. The data on youth inactivity is disaggregated by degree of labour market attachment, which increases from right to left (i.e. it is highest among young people seeking work and lowest among youth who are willing to work, but are neither seeking nor are available for work).

FIGURE 1: LABOUR MARKET ATTACHMENT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, 2016



Source: adapted from Eurostat: *People outside the labour market* (2015), available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_outside_the_labour_market.

⁸ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): *Employment Outlook 2004* (Paris, 2004) Chapter 2.

The majority of inactive young people (28.1 million) have no attachment to the labour market because they are either still in education or training (24.9 million), or are unwilling to work (3.2 million). That said, some 4 million young people (7.8 per cent of the youth population) are willing to work, albeit with differing degrees of availability. There is considerable variation between EU countries in the numbers of young NEETs with low labour market attachment. In 2016, approximately 39 per cent of young NEETs in Greece had low attachment (were inactive), while in Bulgaria the figure was over 79 per cent. Of those who are inactive, approximately 38.4 per cent are inactive for unspecified reasons, 30 per cent have personal or family responsibilities, 18.7 per cent are detached from the labour market due to illness or disability, and 12.5 per cent are discouraged workers as they think no work is available for them.⁹

Developing and delivering an integrated policy response to meet the needs of detached youth requires a system of support services available to young people wherever and whenever they need them. In this regard, two service delivery models tend to prevail.

The first is the establishment of *one-stop-shops*. While bringing the functions of various public service providers together under one roof may be effective for coordinating interventions and making service delivery more user-friendly, it can be costly to set up and does not solve the issue of reaching out to people who are most disconnected and may not be aware of, or willing to approach, public services. In this model, the approach is mostly passive, with service delivery triggered by individual requests for assistance or through referral mechanisms across service providers. When different services (e.g. employment, social assistance, welfare, health and housing) are grouped together, however, there is a greater likelihood of identifying young people who are disconnected. When social assistance benefits are determined by a social worker's assessment of the situation of a household, it is likely that any problems faced by children and young people in that household will be spotted and action taken.

The second approach is to set up a *partnership network and referral system*. This aims to connect (and in certain cases expand) existing services and programmes, including the non-institutional networks set up by non-governmental and community-based organizations. It normally works through public officials (e.g. advisers, counsellors, mentors and mediators) from an institution or agency (municipality, labour offices, schools, social work office) that takes the lead in making first contact with disengaged young people. In Denmark, for example, municipalities have offices tasked with contacting early school leavers to develop a personal action plan comprising education, work, training and other reintegration measures.

Although labour market strategies to address inactivity, especially worker discouragement, may not differ substantially from those usually implemented to tackle long-term unemployment – especially among the most disadvantaged groups – the identification of inactive youth who are willing to work, but not seeking employment, can be more problematic. First, these groups of young people fall outside the natural “clients” of the Public Employment Service (PES), since job search is the basic requirement for the PES to become involved. Second, limited information and mobility,

⁹ Eurostat: *People outside the labour market* (Luxembourg, 2015), available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_outside_the_labour_market

coupled with lack of motivation and distrust towards the capacity of public services to help, may play an important role in keeping young people away from available support.

3. Key features of outreach strategies

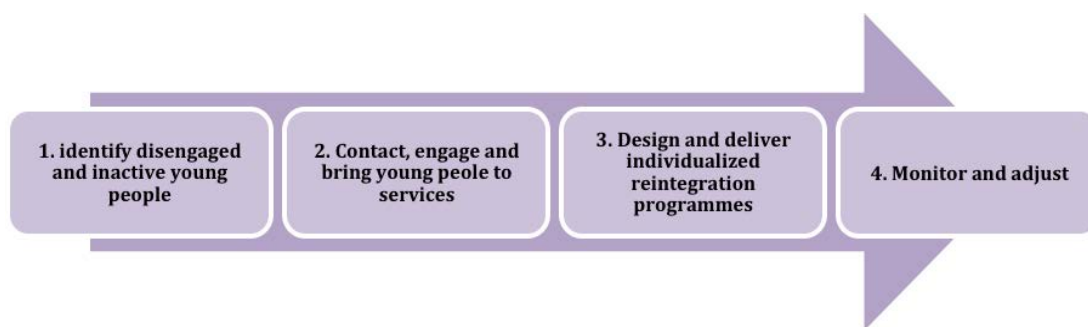
Although there is no acknowledged definition of “outreach”, the term is mostly used when referring to the identification and engagement of young people who are “hard to reach” (early school leavers detached from the labour market, youth facing substance abuse issues, homeless youth) and are not registered to receive support from any public service providers. In the context of youth employment, outreach often involves: information campaigns and awareness raising to attract young people to available services; interventions to identify, contact and engage inactive or disengaged youth; and individualized labour market integration services and programmes, delivered locally through community-based organizations, schools, malls, public events, one-stop-shops or mobile settings.

Territorial mapping may help identify the prevailing characteristics of inactive youth and available services, providers and potential partners as well as plan policy intervention and resource allocation. The mapping of inactive young people should include geographical distribution, age, gender and educational attainment level, as well as poverty and social exclusion indicators.¹⁰ If household survey data are cross-referenced with other information (e.g. data on teen pregnancy, substance abuse, mental health issues and juvenile crime) geographical maps could be generated that highlight barriers to reintegration into the labour market, education or training (such as low skill levels, care responsibilities or physical or mental ill-health), faced by different groups of inactive young people. This, in turn, can be linked to service delivery. The findings from this process can help shape the development of a relevant outreach strategy by ascertaining where gaps occur in service delivery and identifying organizations best placed to deliver services in each locality.

Despite differences between country experiences with regard to the structure and organization of outreach approaches, there are several common features. These include mechanisms to identify and contact inactive youth, in-depth assessment of individual needs, tailored service and programme delivery – usually based on individual action planning – monitoring and review. These features are illustrated in Figure 2 and their components are detailed in the paragraphs that follow. The identification stage is the only one in which approaches differ considerably from country to country. This is also the most difficult to organize at the national and local levels.

¹⁰ The Eurostat indicator “people at risk of poverty or social exclusion” (AROPE) consists of three sub-indicators: monetary poverty, severe material deprivation, and very low work intensity. See *Europe 2020 indicators - Poverty and social exclusion*. See http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

FIGURE 2: THE FOUR STEPS IN OUTREACH APPROACHES



Outreach approaches are usually accompanied by information and awareness-raising campaigns through targeted communication strategies. They are open to all – as they do not differ with respect to age, gender, ethnicity or economic background – and are accessible and flexible. Information and awareness-raising activities normally use multiple methods and media that are accessible and tailored to the target group’s behaviours and needs. Printed media (such as flyers, brochures, posters) are made available in places that inactive young people may access, such as youth and community centres, shopping centres and sports events. Key messages are differentiated according to reasons for inactivity. They are easy to understand, and answer the basic question, “what’s in it for me?” Increasingly, smartphones and social media are being used to communicate with young people, although this requires the use of appropriate language, adaptation of writing styles to the platform, and the selection of engaging visuals, while also taking into account the needs of young people with poor literacy skills and limited access to the Internet. In Portugal, for example, communications activities under the national YG plan included short advertisements, produced by the PES, which were broadcast through *YouTube*, on subjects that appealed to young people, such as video games. This was accompanied by more traditional communication tools, including leaflets and posters, which conveyed key messages in easy-to-read language.¹¹

3.1. Identification of Inactive and detached young people

Systems to identify inactive and disengaged young people and establish first contact typically build on three main methods, which are often combined. These are tracking systems and pooling of administrative data, partnership with organizations catering to young people’s needs, and recruitment of outreach or youth workers to carry out fieldwork.

Tracking and data exchange approaches serve to trace inactive and disengaged young people, establish first contact and offer support. These systems usually link the education information system, which records information on the performance of pupils and students, with other administrative databases (for example PES, social security system, or those of municipalities) to monitor the school-to-work transition and track young school leavers who become unemployed or inactive (see Box 1). Depending on the national context, the task of tracking youth can be carried

¹¹ See Key Messages from the Peer Review *Targeting NEETs – Key ingredients for successful partnerships in improving labour market participation*, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14715&langId=en>.

out by different institutions, such as schools or bodies linked to education authorities, PES, social services, or municipalities.

Box 1: Tracking system systems in Member States of the European Union

In the **Netherlands**, every student has a unique reference number administered through a nationwide system (Basic Record Database for Education, BRON). Young people registered in the BRON system as being of compulsory school age but not attending school are classified as early school leavers. An agreement at the national level requires schools to provide data on these young people to the Regional Registration and Coordination Centre (RMC). The RMC also receives data from the PES on early school leavers who already have a job or are receiving social security payments. This allows the RMC to make early contact with young people who are not working and are not receiving social security payments, to provide them with information and guide them back to school.

In **Luxembourg**, a digital national pupil register and a systematic procedure developed by the Ministry of Education and services of the Local Action for Youth (*Action Locale pour Jeunes, ALJ*) is able to identify young people who leave school without a diploma. Monthly lists are compiled, which are used by the ALJ to systematically monitor the destination of young people leaving the ninth grade and to contact young people identified as early school leavers to offer services (such as individual mentoring and coaching) or refer them to other services, when appropriate.

In **Croatia**, an agreement was concluded in 2015 between the PES, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the Pensions Department, to link their databases. This allows the PES to identify young NEETs and contact them to provide assistance.

Data pooling and exchange as a means to identify youth at risk of becoming NEET was also trialled in Hartlepool (**United Kingdom**) as part of the European Parliament Preparatory Action on the Youth Guarantee. Through this project a database was set up to collate information on all pupils in secondary education in Hartlepool. Each school was responsible for providing information on its predicted education results, absenteeism, special education needs, and involvement with youth offending services or local authority care, along with its in-depth knowledge about each young person. This information – consolidated in the At Risk of becoming NEET Indicator (RONI) – was shared with project partners to deliver outreach services to those most at risk.

Source: European Commission: Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support. Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (2013); European Commission: Learning Exchange between the Netherlands and Finland on cooperation at local level in the fight against youth unemployment, Full report, The European Commission Mutual Exchange Programme (Dordrecht, 2014); European Commission: PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs: A contribution of the Network of Public Employment Services (Brussels, 2015); European Commission: Piloting Youth Guarantee partnerships on the ground – Experiences from European Parliament Preparatory Action (Brussels, 2015).

The exchange of data on inactive young people between public authorities and partners involved in service delivery can be complicated by national legislation on data protection and confidentiality.¹² Finland and Sweden have addressed these difficulties through legislation. The Swedish Youth Act, 2009 provides that municipalities shall collect data on young people aged 16–20 years, who have not completed upper secondary education and are neither in employment, nor in education or training. The aim is to enable Swedish municipalities to identify young NEETs and provide them with appropriate re-integration measures.¹³ Similarly, Finland amended its Youth Act in 2011

¹² European Commission: *PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs*, op.cit.

to include procedures for exchanging information among schools, social services and PES on young people at risk of detachment.¹⁴

Personal data protection issues can also be overcome by adopting *ad hoc* approaches. In Austria, for instance, youth coaches provide support to young NEETs (and to young people who are at risk of dropping out of education. To overcome the constraints of personal data exchange, teachers identify young people at risk of dropping out and request parents' permission to share data about their child with the youth coaches.

Partnership approaches that build on extensive networks and include various governmental and non-governmental organizations are an important means to identify inactive young people with diverse profiles and needs. Through referral, the services mandated to provide support can be approached by the young person in need, or by a parent or relative, a professional or an organization. Professionals and agencies that may refer a young person for assistance include school staff (i.e. managers and practitioners), social workers, municipal authorities, the police, juvenile justice and health practitioners, or staff of voluntary and community organizations working with young people. In Belgium, for example, the PES has partnered with health and housing services to identify inactive young people, many of whom experience housing problems or are dealing with substance abuse or mental health issues. In Spain, the Ministry of Employment and the Youth Institute with its network of youth centres partnered to identify, reach out to and support inactive young people, and register them in the national YG scheme.

Partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may also be useful in reaching out to young people who have an attachment to the labour market, but are not registered with the PES. These young people may perceive the services offered by these NGOs as more relevant and attractive than those provided by the PES, and therefore be more inclined to use them. This is the case in Germany, where youth employment agencies capitalize on the reputation of NGOs and youth organizations to encourage young people to register (see Box 2).

Direct recruitment of outreach workers or contracting of outreach services are a means for identifying young people who are not registered with any public service providers.¹⁵ This approach is normally used by entities such as the PES and social work centres to identify young people who are entitled to receive assistance, but are unaware of the help that is available to them, do not trust public authority, or simply believe that nobody can help them.

¹³ J. Tägtström: *Many initiatives to support NEETs. But evidence base still lacking*, Mutual Learning Programme, Peer Review on targeting NEETs (Oslo, 2015) p. 2.

¹⁴ For more information, see European Commission: *Key Messages from the Peer Review on Targeting NEETs – Key ingredients for successful partnerships in improving labour market participation* (Oslo, 2015).

¹⁵ The understanding of “outreach” and “street” work varies from country to country. An outreach worker typically helps individuals in need of assistance to receive the support they need. He or she may work for a governmental, non-profit or volunteer organization with part of the work carried out in an office environment and part devoted to visiting clients in the community. A street worker is usually a social worker who engages with people on the streets, meaning that most of the work is done outside office environments. “Youth work” encompasses a broad range of activities (social, cultural, educational, sports-related and political) carried out with, by and for young people through non-formal and informal learning. Youth work is delivered in different forms and settings (open-access, group-based, programme-based, outreach, and detached) managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. See Council of the European Union: *Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people* (2013/C 168/03).

Box 2: Partnership approaches in Belgium, Germany and Norway

The FIND-MIND-BIND approach used in **Belgium** by the Brussels PES (ACTIRIS) and Flanders PES (VDAB) builds on partnerships with associations and community-based organizations to “FIND” young people by going out to meet them in the streets, sport clubs, music events. An outreach worker spends time with the young person to build a trust relationship (“MIND”) so that the young individual becomes confident and willing to develop a career plan with the help of the outreach worker, after which the young person is supported in achieving his or her career plan (‘BIND’).

Youth employment agencies have been operating in **Germany** since 2007, formed through a partnership between the Employment Agency, the Job Centre and Youth Welfare services. They work with youth and other community-based organizations, as well as the social partners, to deliver services to young people. They provide a low threshold service, with a mix of prevention and curative measures to support young people (aged 15–24) who are still at school or looking for jobs. Agency staff visit schools to provide information on jobs and careers, and carry out individual profiling. School registers are used to identify and reach out to young people who have left school early and become inactive. The services available include profiling, career guidance, vocational counselling and registration to access social benefits.

In **Norway**, the pilot project *NAV (PES) Tutors in Upper Secondary Schools* is being trialled prior to its national roll-out in areas affected by poverty, where there are high rates of school dropout, and PES offices are equipped with a youth team. Tutors, formally employed by the PES, are based in upper secondary schools three days a week and work with the PES youth team the rest of the week. They provide counselling and guidance services to students at risk of drop-out, including young people struggling with motivation, drug and health issues or experiencing severe poverty.

Source: European Commission: *PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs, op.cit.*

In Finland, municipalities employ outreach workers to contact young early school leavers who are not registered with the employment or welfare services and are not attending education or training.¹⁶ In Belgium, Luxembourg and Norway outreach is delivered by youth workers recruited by youth organizations on behalf of the PES. In Estonia and Germany, specialized PES staff are recruited and trained to deliver services in local communities. In Latvia, those responsible for identifying and referring inactive young people include social workers, youth workers and PES staff, depending on local circumstances and the prevailing characteristics of inactive and detached young people at the local level.¹⁷

3.2. Contact and engagement

First contact is usually made directly by the staff of the public service provider (employment, social, health or education) conducting outreach, or by outreach or youth workers from partner agencies or organizations entrusted to bring inactive or detached young people to the attention of service providers.

The preconditions for outreach to work are that it should be easily accessible and extensively advertised, recognized as being something that can help, and should

¹⁶ The approach used in Finland provides an example of outreach that combines tracking based on school records with the recruitment of outreach workers by the body responsible for contacting and engaging with young people at risk of detachment. Partnership also comes into play when the outreach worker refers the young client to specialized services (health, housing, employment, welfare).

¹⁷ Information provided by the Agency for International Programmes for Youth of Latvia.

not carry negative or stigmatizing implications for young individuals. In instances where inactive young people are highly educated and motivated, first contact is often established through awareness-raising campaigns or social media. In Portugal and Spain, for example many inactive young people are university graduates who lack work experience but are motivated to enter the labour market. They are likely to take action themselves, provided they know where to go to receive support. Conversely, young people who are more detached from the labour market or face multiple barriers require more time to respond to initial contact and may also need one-to-one support.

Face-to-face, individual contact made by outreach, youth or street workers is the approach most used with detached or marginalized young people. These workers, who are recruited by public service providers or partner organizations, are responsible for meeting, engaging with, and building a trust relationship with inactive young people, to help them make positive career choices and re-enter education, training or employment, either directly or through referral to other public services.

In some instances, this is done by specialized staff. Building internal teams of specialized PES counsellors to cater to the needs of inactive youth can help pool skills, expertise and knowledge and deliver high quality services at relatively low cost. Support is provided through case management. This helps to develop a trust relationship and ensures that the case manager has the best possible understanding of the individual's circumstances and can thus provide the most appropriate type of guidance and support. In Latvia, for example, the State Employment Agency has recently introduced a system of youth counsellors who provide young clients with in-depth counselling, individualized employment planning and support to achieve their personal employment, education or training goals.¹⁸ In Bulgaria, the PES identifies young people at risk using employment counsellors (Roma mediators), who are tasked with contacting unemployed and inactive young people from the Roma community and supporting them through labour market re-integration (see Box 3). In the United Kingdom, specialized gang advisers are employed by the PES and work with young NEETs who are vulnerable to gang activity. These advisers also provide intensive job search support and access to the full range of Jobcentre Plus services and programmes. They work with other Jobcentre Plus staff, local authorities, health services, the police and community-based organizations, including voluntary and charitable organizations.¹⁹

In other instances, contact and engagement tasks are assigned to other public service providers, mostly social work centres operating at the municipal level. In the Netherlands, for example, outreach activities are part of local social work, whereby social and youth workers employed by the municipality visit disadvantaged areas and meet young people and their families at home or in other informal settings.

Youth organizations and NGOs increasingly deliver outreach work on behalf of the PES; they have the specialized skills required to do so, in-depth knowledge about young people and their situations, more daily contact with detached and inactive young people than the PES, and are often located in the same community. These organizations are also more likely to have the capacity to do this work than the PES, where youth teams often have large caseloads, particularly in countries that have been most affected by economic and jobs crisis.

¹⁸ European Commission: *Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee* (Brussels, 2015).

¹⁹ European Commission: *PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs*, op.cit.

Box 3: Peer-to-peer support in selected EU countries

In **Bulgaria**, peer-to-peer approaches are being used to reach out to inactive young people aged 15 to 29 years under the national YG scheme. The peer-to-peer initiative aims to motivate detached young people to register at the labour office, or participate in education or training. Approximately 100 youth mediators were hired by the PES to work in municipalities with high proportions of inactive young people. These mediators have often had a spell of inactivity themselves and share many characteristics with their clients. They serve as a bridge between young people and the authorities, and conduct outreach and street work.

In **the Netherlands**, some municipalities (Dordrecht, Tiel and Alblasterdam) implement peer-to-peer support (“Dream teams”, in which young people act as role models) as part of their comprehensive communication strategy to get inactive youth to engage with public services.

In **Sweden**, the project *Unga In* brought together the Swedish PES, the youth centre *Fryshuset*, the National Police Board, municipalities, employers and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions to provide young people aged 16–24 years who were not in education or work with flexible support to enter the labour market and return to education. The project used various methods to engage with the target group, including outreach activities with 25 “young marketers”, specifically recruited for this role. “Young marketers” came from the same background as the target group, and were the first contact point between the young people and the PES and its partners (schools, care institutions, municipalities, social institutions, NGOs, social partners, training providers and the police).

Source: European Commission: Key Messages from the Peer Review on Targeting NEETs – Key ingredients for successful partnerships in improving labour market participation (Oslo, 2015); European Commission: Youth to youth integration (Unga In) Sweden (2016), see <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1163&intPagelId=3457&langId=en>

In some countries, as well as outreach workers, young people who are former NEETs are trained to provide peer-to-peer support. Trained peers often have place of residence, ethnic group and barriers to integration in common with the young people they are tasked to assist. Inactive and disengaged young people may therefore consider them more approachable and trustworthy than an outsider.

3.3. Individualized support, services and programmes

The services delivered to inactive young people are tailored to individual characteristics and the specific barriers to be overcome. They are organized along a continuum of assistance that accompanies the young person from initial contact to re-integration into employment, education or training.

Assistance typically includes information and an individualized needs assessment to identify individual barriers and map service requirements. This is followed by counselling and guidance on different aspects of the young person’s life, activities to increase motivation, self-esteem and self-awareness, and training on core employability skills such as communication, team work, time management, critical thinking. This assistance culminates in referral and accompaniment to specialized employment and social services (e.g. education, health, social assistance).

Individualized needs assessment – also known as profiling – is designed to gather information on the young person, identify the problems or constraints and determine the needs across various dimensions (e.g. education, family, employment or health). The process builds on counselling techniques and forms the basis for action

planning. The assessment is also critical to understanding whether the range of services offered by a single provider is sufficient to meet the individual's needs or whether the support of other professionals or agencies is required.

Support services offered to disengaged and inactive young people can be grouped into two broad categories, which are usually delivered at different times of the integration process. The first includes services to improve individuals' self-awareness, motivation and life skills. The objective is to prepare and motivate the young person to access more intensive and goal-oriented services. In Finland, for instance, municipalities and youth organizations offer workshops through which inactive young people can develop their life-management skills and participate in on-the-job work tasters for a variety of careers.²⁰

The second category comprises specialized services geared towards helping individuals attain their life objectives such as education, employment and autonomy. Mainstream services are often adjusted to take account of the specific obstacles that inactive and detached young people face.

Service delivery is organized according to the type of outreach strategy selected. In partnership approaches, contact and engagement with inactive young people is entrusted to partner organizations – often youth or community-based organizations. These usually provide services until the young person is ready to move to more specialized assistance. This process can last up to a year for hard-to-reach youth. When outreach activities are implemented by specialized staff they either provide contact and engagement services, or refer the young person to other partner organizations and service providers.

Individualized support is offered through two main approaches, which are often combined. These are coaching (one-to-one support throughout the integration process) and the establishment of information, support and guidance points that provide assistance when needed (one-stop-shops). Coaching activities are usually carried out by outreach workers who made initial contact and built a trust relationship with the inactive young person. These activities range from accompanying young beneficiaries on public transport, to scheduling appointments with specialized service providers, to taking them to job interviews and helping them to fill in forms. This type of individualized support is used with young people who are particularly difficult to reach and face multiple barriers. It is used, for example, by youth mediators in Bulgaria and by Jobcentre Plus gang advisers in the United Kingdom.²¹ It requires a well-developed partnership network and referral system able to provide specialized services to the young person as needed.

Single point services or one-stop-shops can provide a constant source of information and support for inactive young people. This, however, requires detached youth to be more proactive in seeking information and approaching available services. These services can provide more comprehensive support to young people facing multiple barriers (e.g. health, child care, employment) while maximizing physical and human resources. While this approach is already well established in some countries (e.g. Germany), others, (e.g. Croatia and Finland) are gradually moving towards it. Case management, whereby young beneficiaries are assisted by specialized staff

²⁰ European Commission: *The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment* (Brussels, 2015).

²¹ European Commission: *PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs*, op.cit.

through different integration activities, is key if this approach is also to be effective for young people facing multiple barriers.

3.4. Monitoring and evaluation

Traditional performance monitoring indicators may underestimate the results of outreach activities, since young beneficiaries may not always be ready to enter employment, education or training, despite having made progress towards this ultimate outcome. In some countries, “progression” indicators are therefore gradually being added to the monitoring framework to measure progress towards entering the labour market or returning to education and training. Unlike with results-based measurements, individuals are monitored over time and their progress is recorded in line with their personal action plan. Progress is measured in terms of the young person’s transition from one labour market status to another, or – more often – from one progression option to the next (e.g. from living in care to living independently). Progression measurement focuses on two areas: first, establishing a causal link between progression on selected indicators (e.g. employability, occupational skills, housing, family and social networks, physical and mental health) and the likelihood of getting a job or returning to education in the long term; and second, establishing a causal link between the activities implemented and progression observed.

4. Outreach in national Youth Guarantee plans

The Youth Guarantee Preparatory Action supported the piloting of several approaches for identifying and reaching out to young people neither in employment, nor in education or training.²² The aim was to draw lessons from practices that proved effective in reaching out to young NEETs for dissemination and scaling up. These pilot projects largely reflected EU countries’ outreach strategies and centred on cross-reviews of databases to identify young people at risk (piloted in Ireland, Spain and United Kingdom); collaboration with local partners, such as youth organizations, NGOs and other community-based organizations (piloted in different areas in Spain); and recruitment of “street counsellors” to engage with young people at risk.

The lessons learnt from these experiences underscore the need to design different approaches to address the needs of very diverse sub-groups of young NEETs, the importance of combining prevention and curative strategies, and, most importantly, the need to develop individual assistance packages to address the multiple barriers to labour market entry faced by hard-to-reach young people and motivate them to take part in an employment, education or training programme. These lessons have been incorporated in the outreach strategy designed in Latvia under the national YG scheme (see Box 4).

²² European Commission: *Piloting Youth Guarantee partnerships on the ground – Experiences from European Parliament Preparatory Action* (Brussels, 2015).

Box 4: Strategy for reaching out to young NEETs in Latvia

In the context of its national YG plan, Latvia has developed a national strategy to support detached young people (young NEETs neither registered with the State Employment Agency nor enrolled in education and training) in their progression towards the labour market. The activities are coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Sciences and are implemented by the Agency for International Programmes for Youth. The aim is to create a network of service providers and specialized workers to identify and make contact with disengaged young people, motivate them, and eventually bring them towards the second-chance programmes or labour market re-integration measures available under the national Youth Guarantee scheme.

The outreach framework includes three steps. First, interested municipalities are required to carry out a situation analysis to identify the groups of young NEETs in greatest need of support. This analysis also includes a resource map for the implementation of activities on the ground. Municipalities are encouraged to conclude partnership agreements with one or more service providers or community-based organizations.

The second step is to identify qualified staff to be project managers and mentors (mostly social and youth workers), and conduct a staff development programme on the identification of young NEETs, profiling individual characteristics, verification of motivation level and distance from the labour market, and the mapping of local level initiatives that may benefit young NEETs.

The third and final step is to roll out individualized support activities (lasting between nine and 12 months) to help detached young people become active labour market members.

At the end of this individualized programme, young people are referred to the national YG plan and its labour market re-integration measures.

The Agency for International Programmes for Youth developed a comprehensive set of guidelines for the delivery of outreach activities, based on research carried out on the most disadvantaged inactive young people (single mothers, young people with substance abuse issues, “freeters”). These guidelines include approaches to identify young NEETs, strategic partnerships, the role of programme managers and mentors, profiling and individual action planning.

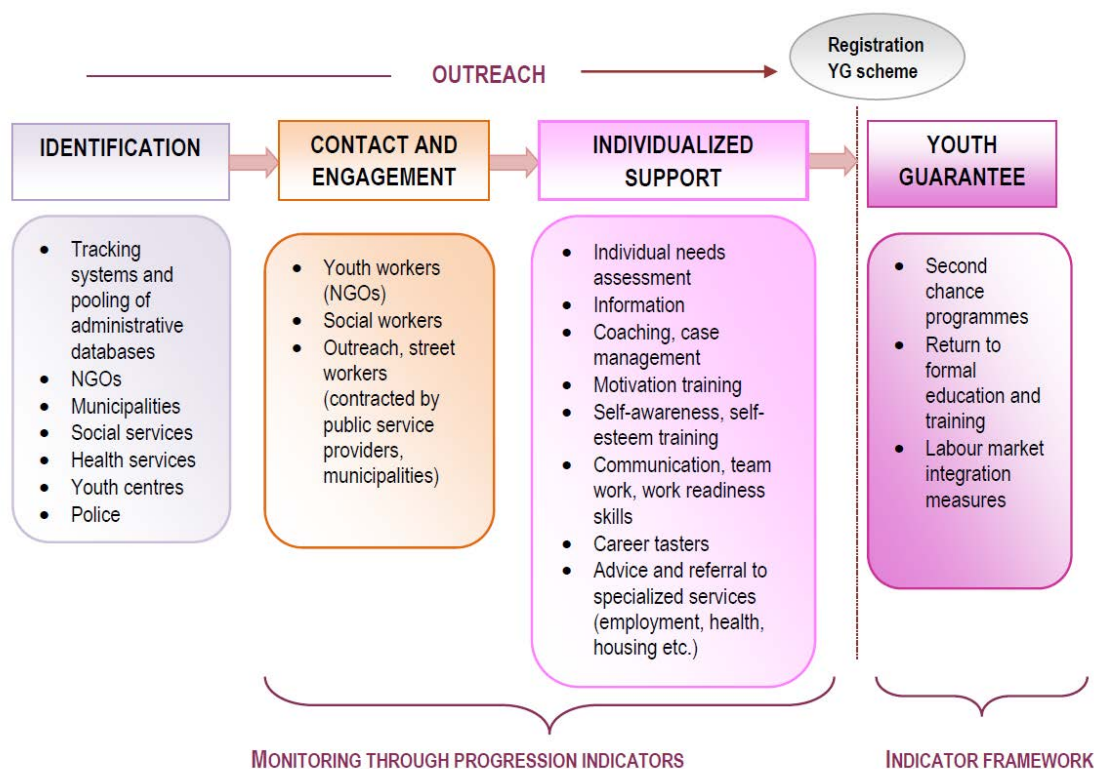
Source: Information provided by the Latvian Agency for International Programmes for Youth. The guidelines are available at http://ijp.lv/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/metodologiskas_vadlinijas_19_10_2015.pdf

Figure 3 below summarizes how outreach work may be organized and delivered through national YG plans.

As previously stated, identification can take place through tracking systems, data exchange among service providers or building on the knowledge of partner organizations, or a combination thereof. Although first contact and engagement can be carried out by specialized staff working for a service provider that has the lead in outreach, this task is increasingly being assigned to outreach, youth or street workers, either recruited by the service provider or already working for partner organizations.

Individualized support includes a package of services intended to prepare the inactive young person to access the mainstream services and programmes of the national YG scheme (e.g. second chance programmes, return to formal education and training, or participation in labour market re-integration measures). At this stage of support, the young person may attend activities such as self-awareness and motivation training, life skills training – teamwork, communication, time management, decision-making, counselling, job-preparedness training (job search, job interviews, career tasters), and may be referred to specialized services, if required (e.g. health, social services, psychological assistance).

FIGURE 3: OUTREACH DELIVERY SYSTEM IN THE YOUTH GUARANTEE



The exact combination of services and programmes to be delivered to the young person depends on his or her individual characteristics and the barriers that need to be overcome. These barriers are identified through individual needs assessment and action planning with a view to preparing the young beneficiary to take full advantage of the labour market reintegration measures available under the national YG plan. The transition to mainstream services and programmes is usually managed by specialized staff working for service providers (e.g. youth counsellors in PES, psychologists or education counsellors in schools, youth health practitioners) who are also responsible for adjusting YG service and programme delivery according to individual needs.

Outreach activities should be monitored building on progression indicators developed on the basis of the individual action plan, with registration in the national YG scheme as the final indicator. Thereafter, the framework established to monitor the progress and success of young NEETs across YG interventions comes into play.²³

²³ European Commission Employment Committee: *Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee* (Brussels, 2015).

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