



IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

LESSONS FROM EUROPE

A report for the Health Foundation's
'Young People's Future Health Inquiry'

Institute for Employment Studies

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The Young people's future health inquiry

This report is part of the Young people's future health inquiry which is funded by the Health Foundation. The inquiry is a first-of-its-kind research and engagement project that set out to consider how the experiences of young people today are likely to shape their future health outcomes. This guide forms part of a wider programme of policy research in the action phase of the inquiry. The research is led by IES across the four UK nations and is focused on understanding how to improve access to good youth employment and amplifying the voices of young people in research and Policy-influencing.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Martina Kane and Cara Leavey of the Health Foundation, for their stewardship and support throughout this time. The authors are indebted to Becci Newton, Steve O'Rourke and Zoe Gallagher at the Institute for Employment Studies, whom they thank for their time, support and expert input in the development of this work. Thanks also goes to www.DanSmithGraphic.Design, who created the design for this report.

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Ten key lessons



1. **Collaboration** – with local partners having control, support and institutional backing to understand needs, target support and work together.



2. **National leadership and cooperation** – particularly between departments and agencies, with strong institutional frameworks for local areas and partners to operate in.



3. **Prioritisation** – clarity on where support should be focused, what can be improved and for whom; often underpinned by clear national missions and campaigns.



4. **Shared purpose** – with all levels of government, industry and social partners involved, and critically listening to and involving young people.



5. **Raising standards** – mechanisms to support improvement, share practice and encourage innovation between places and programmes.



6. **Inclusion** – a focus on reaching, engaging and supporting people whether on any benefit or none, or in education or out.



7. **Co-location** – meaningful integration of public employment services, careers, training and wider supports, delivered in different settings and often through 'one stop' services.



8. **Pace** – rapid engagement, onboarding and delivery of support, with clear goals and responsiveness to individuals' needs and circumstances.



9. **Personalisation** – focusing on individual capabilities, goals and needs; often drawing on blended approaches that go beyond just employment, training and careers.



10. **Sustained outcomes** – balancing long-term goals and aspirations with short term engagement in employment and learning.



01

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

1.1 Background to this research

This paper draws together a range of examples and case studies on how other countries are working to improve outcomes for young people and support transitions into employment and learning. It draws on evidence from seven European nations that have strong records on raising participation for young people and/or have introduced interesting and evidence-led reforms.

The purpose of doing this is three-fold:

- to try to provide practical pointers and examples that may be useful to those who are making policy, commissioning or delivering services for young people (across the four nations and locally);
- to support knowledge sharing and promote awareness of what other countries are doing, especially with the UK no longer part of most of the formal arrangements for sharing knowledge between European nations; and
- to contribute to the wider debate on how we might more fundamentally reform our approach to how we support young people in future – to support greater collaboration, clearer accountabilities, stronger local partnerships, and more inclusive, accessible and effective services, particularly for marginalised young people.

This report is the latest output from IES work funded by the Health Foundation around improving the quality of work for young people. This has included a [suite of resources](#) targeted to youth employment partnerships and focused on ‘what works’ evidence (Orlando, 2021), alongside a large scale [youth-centered research programme](#) centering on young people’s perspectives on what good quality work and support means to them (Orlando, 2022). This project intends to build on our work with national governments and local areas, and to inform work next year on wider systems reform.

The evidence presented in this report makes clear that there are many similarities between the UK and our European neighbours in the services and support that we deliver for young people. This reflects decades of knowledge exchange and shared learning as well as the fact that in broad terms the contexts that we operate in and many of the challenges that we face are similar. However, there are also a number of clear differences, both in the detail of what is delivered for whom, but also more obviously in how systems are organised, overseen and delivered.

It is important to note however that we have not attempted in this relatively short review to systematically review ‘what works’ across seven nations, nor to assess the effectiveness of specific individual interventions or approaches. Rather the intention is to share knowledge and stimulate discussion and thinking about what we can do differently and how we can continue to improve.

1.2 Approach

The purpose of this review is to provide an outlook on the approach taken in other countries to supporting young people to make transitions from education to employment. We have focused on European Union (EU) nations for two principal reasons: because of the breadth of activity on this agenda in recent years, particularly since the adoption of the EU-wide Youth Guarantee in 2013/14; and because of the extensive evidence available on the approaches that nations have taken and their relative success in improving outcomes for young people.

The seven nations included in the review (Sweden, Finland, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and France) were chosen based on measures outlined in the STYLE Handbook¹. There is no single indicator that can be taken in isolation to establish country performance, given the multitude of factors and complexities determining youth transitions. The Handbook highlights instead a combination of indicators, that taken together can provide a more comprehensive picture of country performance. These include rates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), the level of integration of vocational education and training (VET) systems, and the degree of institutional cooperation in the development of education and youth employment policy in each country. The countries included in the review have been selected based on meeting a combination of these criteria, including displaying some of the lowest NEET rates in the European geographic area², highly-integrated VET systems, and an established history of institutional cooperation.

The countries included in this review vary in their institutional, education, and labour market systems. The element they share is their adoption, development and successful implementation of the EU Youth Guarantee over the past years. The Guarantee is the first example of a wide-scale initiative involving all EU member states, and the first attempt to shift the focus of youth employment strategies beyond reactive Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) alone, to also include early intervention. It provided an outcome-oriented approach, allowing each state the flexibility to decide how the guarantee should be delivered according to national, regional and local needs. To enable the implementation of these measures, the Youth Guarantee has promoted the introduction of major reforms in the areas of vocational training, education systems, and public employment services (PES) to encourage the provision of individualised support and ensure the quality of opportunities accessed by young people.

It should be noted that the aim of this study is to showcase the wide range of practice which takes place in highly diverse institutional contexts, and to try to identify individual insights from those approaches that could be useful in improving outcomes in the four nations of the UK as well as common themes across areas. We are not attempting to conduct a rigorous, quantitative evaluation or meta-analysis of the impact and effectiveness of specific institutional reforms or features.

We have set out below further background on the institutional features of each of the seven case study nations. The report is then structured in five sections, looking at approaches taken to overall governance; employment support; vocational education and training; careers support; and minimising the number of young people outside education and training.

¹ The EU-funded STYLE Project set out to examine the obstacles and opportunities affecting youth employment in Europe following the 2008 recession. This involved 25 research partners, an international advisory network and local advisory boards of employers, unions, policy makers and Non-Governmental Organisations from 19 European countries. The aim of the project was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes of very high unemployment among young people and to assess the effectiveness of labour market policies designed to mitigate this phenomenon. The handbook can be accessed at <https://style-handbook.eu/>

² This is based on the rate of NEET young people aged 15-25, as calculated by the OECD. Exceptions to this are Sweden and France who both display higher rates of NEET young people compared to the UK and the EU average. These countries were included given their strong performance in terms of institutional cooperation and VET systems integration.

1.3 The seven case study nations

The following section provides a succinct overview of the governance structures for each of the countries included in the review, with the aim of providing contextual information for the measures that are discussed in the subsequent sections of this report³.



Sweden is a highly decentralised country and has an established history of local self-government through its 290 municipalities. Municipalities run local and regional affairs, acting on their own responsibility. At central level, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Education, and the Swedish National Agency for Education are the main actors developing national policy on youth transitions. At the local level, the Ordinance on Cooperation to reduce Youth Unemployment alongside the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants are the mechanisms through which policy measures are applied in practice, regulating cooperation between municipalities and the Swedish Public Employment Service in each local area.

In terms of the education system, compulsory school begins at the age of seven and ends at the age of 16. Upper secondary school consists of 18 national programmes and five introductory programmes for learners who are not eligible for a national programme. Among the national programmes there are 12 vocational programmes and six higher education preparatory programmes. Learners usually start upper secondary school at the age of 16 and complete their studies at the age of 19, following which they can transition into work or higher education. Students who have not completed upper secondary education are able to attend municipal adult education or 'folk high schools' to prepare for work.



In **Finland**, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for the development of labour policy and legislation. Local authorities, represented by the 311 municipalities, have a high level of self-governance and are responsible for the articulation and implementation of policy at local level. A Youth Act stipulates that local authorities must have a coordinating body for local cooperation with representation from the local educational, social and health care, and youth administrations, as well as from the labour and police administrations. The Youth Guarantee is a core element of youth employment policy in Finland. The methods for implementing the Guarantee include measures related to the educational guarantee, skills programmes for young adults, public employment and economic development services for youth, and rehabilitation services, including municipal social and health care services.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for education legislation and works closely with the Finnish National Agency for Education; the national development agency responsible for implementing national education policies across all education stages. As part of the Youth Guarantee, cross-sectorial cooperation mechanisms on themes related to education and training are becoming increasingly important in Finland. Cooperation involves the ministries (Economic Affairs and Employment, Education and Culture, Social Affairs and Health), local authorities, teachers and social partners. Compulsory schooling begins at the age of seven and lasts for nine years in Finland. It is provided in a single structure system called 'basic education'. Upper secondary education is provided by general and vocational upper secondary schools and starts at 16. Tertiary education is provided by universities and universities of applied sciences (which are professionally-oriented education institutions).



Germany is a federal republic, consisting of 16 highly devolved federal states. On a federal (central) level The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the national body responsible for the general development of labour market and youth employment policy. The Federal Ministry of Education holds general powers of coordination for vocational training. At the federal state (regional) level, the respective state ministries for education, labour, social and economic affairs carry responsibility for vocational training and employment in each region. The federal states take chief responsibility for the education system, setting their own educational policies. The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs brings together all regional education ministries to promote the common education-related interests of the states. The Conference of Ministers for Labour and Social Affairs promotes cooperation between the federal states around labour market and employment policy.

Given responsibility for education policy lies with each federal state, there is no uniform education system in Germany. However, schooling is compulsory nationwide for all children under the age of 18. This comprises full-time compulsory education in primary and lower secondary education plus compulsory vocational education. Once pupils complete compulsory schooling they move into upper secondary education. The routes they can take include full-time general education and vocational education within the dual system. Germany has a well-established dual system of vocational education and training, with multiple vocational training pathways and types of qualifications.



The labour market of **Denmark** is known for high job mobility, flexibility, competitiveness and generally high-quality working conditions. At central level, there is a high degree of cooperation between the Ministry of Children and Education, the Ministry of Employment, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. At local level, there are 98 municipalities in Denmark, with a high degree of flexibility in how policy is implemented locally, to reflect municipalities' priorities for their local area. The Consolidation Act on Municipal Provision for Young People Under 25 requires municipalities to establish municipal youth guidance units responsible for establishing partnership-based approaches to youth guidance activities.

The Ministry of Children and Education is responsible for primary, lower secondary, general and vocational upper secondary and adult education in Denmark. National vocational committees (faglige udvalg) are responsible for the organisation of vocational education and training. Approximately 50 vocational committees are responsible for 102 main courses. The committees normally have 10–14 members and are formed by labour market organisations, including employer and employee organisations.

In Denmark, there are 10 years of compulsory education, from age six to 16. Following primary and lower secondary education, young people who wish to continue studying can choose between academically oriented and vocational upper secondary education programmes. General upper secondary education is focused on preparing students for further studies in higher education, while vocational upper secondary education is orientated towards entry to the labour market.



In the **Netherlands** the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is responsible for the development of employment policy. It works together with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on the transition between education and the labour market and on cooperation between education, businesses and government. The implementation of employment and educational measures is carried out in a decentralised way. Central government establishes the policy frameworks and makes funds available to municipalities and the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), and these two actors are jointly responsible for the coordination of employment support measures at local level. The Dutch labour market is divided into 35 labour market regions (arbeidsmarktregios). This regional approach aims to create cooperation structures to allow stakeholders at the regional level to address unemployment issues according to local needs.

Compulsory school in the Netherlands lasts from age six to 16 and is divided into primary and secondary education. When leaving primary school at the age of around 12, students can choose between three types of secondary education: pre-vocational secondary education (four years), general secondary education (five years) and pre-university education (six years). Most secondary schools are combined schools offering several types of secondary education so that pupils can easily transfer from one type to another. After completing pre-vocational secondary education, young people can go on to higher vocational education or pre-university education. Students who wish to continue into higher education can enter university. A distinctive feature of the Dutch education system is that it combines a centralised education policy with decentralised administration and management of schools, which is carried out by municipal authorities.



Labour market policy in **Austria** is characterised by a close interaction between government and non-governmental institutions, with social partners that are actively involved in the development of legislation and policy. The main actors involved at central level on youth employment are the Department for Family and Youth, the Chamber of Labour, and the Trade Union, alongside the Federal Ministries of Labour, Social Affairs and Education, and the PES. The Youth Guarantee plays a key role in the development of Austrian youth transitions policy. A key element of this is a Training Guarantee, which guarantees every young person up to the age of 18 an apprenticeship position after registering with the PES.

In Austria, compulsory schooling lasts up to the age of 18. Following the completion of primary school, young people transition into either academic or general lower secondary school. Through the academic route, students generally move onto academic upper secondary school and university. Through the general route, students transition into vocational and technical upper secondary education, followed by entry into work. Vocational training is provided in Austria either through an apprenticeship or through school-based education, in intermediate or higher-level secondary technical and vocational schools and colleges. Training is offered in approximately 200 different occupations. Young people who take up an apprenticeship receive on-the-job training in a company and attend a vocational school on a part-time basis (dual training system).



In **France**, the Ministry for Youth coordinates overall youth policies, while the Ministry of Labour is in charge of employment policies including youth employment. The Ministry of Labour's departments also include the General Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training, responsible for the organisation of VET. The Ministry for Education participates in the development of employment policies for young people, particularly around the development of policies for school-to-work transitions. The PES is the main operator responsible for the implementation of employment policies at local level, alongside Local Missions, which are leading public operators in the implementation of policies for the integration of the most disadvantaged young people at the local level and operate through 450 sites across France. The thirteen regions of mainland France are responsible for the implementation of vocational training and guidance policies at local level and collaborate closely with the local PES.

In France, school education is compulsory and free of charge from the age of 6 to 18. The education system is organised into three periods (cycles or levels) including nursery and primary school, lower (four years) and upper (three years) secondary education, and higher education. For upper secondary education, students can choose between academic or technical and vocational routes. There are no separate VET providers and technical courses are taught in *lycees* just as academic courses. The French education system has been increasingly decentralised over the past decades. Nursery and primary education are the responsibility of the communes, while lower secondary education in the colleges rests with the municipalities, and upper secondary education with the regions. Central government retains responsibility for all higher education.



02

GOVERNANCE



Governance

2.1 Central government

This section focuses on governance mechanisms, at central and local level, as well as approaches taken to support partnership working, cooperation and integration.

At central level, key common practices surround having clear collaboration mechanisms across departments tasked with youth policy; mechanisms for involving stakeholders in decision-making through advisory bodies; and strategies that promote cross-sectoral collaboration across institutions and services.

Institutionalised inter-departmental collaboration

This involves coherent and consistent collaboration between government agencies involved in youth transitions. In most cases these are built on strong foundations and clear and established processes, rather than ad-hoc or merely formal mechanisms. Most also include the involvement of agencies at national and local level that have a stake in youth transitions, beyond traditional actors, such as departments responsible for employment and education.

Who does it well?



Joint Preparation Procedure (*Gemensam beredning*).

In Sweden, the Procedure requires that issues falling under the remit of multiple government departments are addressed through joint approaches and regular inter-departmental consultation. This aims to ensure that all government departments involved agree on a decision or approach at the design stage, minimising risks of challenges during implementation and delivery.



Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (*GGO*).

In Germany, GGO sets out the principles for inter-ministerial cooperation across federal states (Länder), Germany's highly devolved regions. A cooperation committee (Kooperationsausschuss) supports joint collaboration between central and local government through a range of working groups (Bund-Länder-Arbeitsgruppen), including one on youth education and integration.

Why does it matter?

- Reduces fragmentation and siloed-working across government.
- Improves coordination and coherence of youth policies at institutional level.
- Promotes innovation and increases robustness in policy-making.

Multi-representative advisory bodies

This includes the councils, and steering and advisory groups with representatives from a wide range of stakeholders (educational institutions, businesses, youth councils, special interest groups, etc.). They are often well-embedded in the work of government and are regularly involved in consultation and policy-making processes.

Who does it well?



The National Employment Council (BER). In Denmark the BER advises the minister of employment on all matters relating to the labour market, including youth employment. The Council comprises 26 representatives from a wide range of stakeholders, including trade unions, employers associations, local government and representative bodies such as the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People.



The Social and Economic Council (SER). In the Netherlands, the SER advises government on all socio-economic policies and includes an active Youth Platform, to ensure youth participation is embedded within its activities. The Platform meets regularly, and members are invited to participate in all consultation processes concerning matters affecting young people. It also produces regular reports for government on the state of youth in the country.



Inter-ministerial steering group. In Austria, an inter-ministerial steering group was set up to develop, implement and monitor the Youth Coaching programme (see Box 11) including ministers, representatives from regional steering groups, as well as the Regional Coordination Offices for School to Work Transition, among others.

Why does it matter?

- Provides a consistent mechanism to ensure policy-making is shaped by the interests of key parties, including young people.
- Promotes dialogue across government, and between government and key stakeholders in youth transition processes.

Cross-sectoral strategies

These include dedicated youth strategies which are developed and applied in collaboration across different government departments and across different levels of governance. These strategies shape youth policy and underpin policy on education and work.

Who does it well?



The Austrian Youth Strategy (Österreichische Jugendstrategie). In Austria youth policy was established as a cross-sectoral issue through the Austrian Youth Strategy (see Box 1). As a result, each Federal Ministry is required to develop national youth objectives within its sphere of competence, according to the four fields of action of the strategy. The Department for Family and Youth holds coordinative responsibility ensuring all Ministries consider young people's position in all new legislative projects as part of a 'Youth Check' and linking policy agendas across departments where opportunities for cross-collaboration arise.



The National Working Group on Youth Dialogue and Youth Participation (NAJJ). In Austria the NAJJ brings together federal and provincial authorities and other youth policy actors to develop youth participation across all policy areas. The working group comprises of the Department for Family and Youth, the Department for European and International Family and Youth Policy, the Federal Youth Council, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information, the Federal Network of Open Youth Work, and the youth departments of each federal state. The group is responsible for ensuring the participation of young people in all areas of youth politics and youth work, the ongoing development of standards and quality criteria for participation, and the implementation of the EU youth dialogue guidelines and European Youth Goals in Austria.

Why does it matter?

- Ensures youth policy is established as a shared agenda requiring a collaborative approach, with better coordination and integration.
- Sets clear outcomes and accountability for all stakeholders involved.
- Embeds youth voice in policy-making processes, ensuring youth policy is informed by the views of those it directly affects.

Box 1: The Austrian Youth Strategy

What is it?

The Austrian Youth Strategy (Österreichische Jugendstrategie) was introduced in 2014 as a concerted, cross-governmental effort to strengthen youth policy. There are four major fields of action in the Strategy that serve as an overarching framework (Learning and Employment, Participation and Initiative, Quality of Life and a Spirit of Cooperation, and Media and Information).

A key feature of the Youth Strategy is the active involvement of young people and youth professionals at all levels, in both its development and implementation, through regular consultations and participation in steering groups. The aim of the Strategy is to systematise and optimise the way measures for young people are developed, so as to create a coordinated and coherent approach across all policy areas affecting young people.

What does it do in practice?

Based on the fields of action of the Youth Strategy, each ministry was tasked with developing an objective within their sphere of competence, which led to the creation of the Austrian Youth Goals (Österreichische Jugendziele). Each goal has a set of indicators to track progress and all ministries are required to report on these.

Box 1: The Austrian Youth Strategy (continued)

The Youth Strategy is not a static document and is reviewed and updated each year to reflect progress and areas for further work. This update and review process is supported by the Youth Competence Centre (Kompetenzzentrum Jugend) which coordinates key activities, develops knowledge and skills resources, and liaises with experts. The goal of the centre is to develop a strong network across a diverse group of youth policy stakeholders.

What are the success factors?

A key strength of the Austrian Youth Strategy is that it is an ongoing process aimed at strengthening and further developing youth policy across all departments that have a stake in youth matters. It involves regular dialogue between expert bodies, such as the Youth Strategy Development Group and Youth Competence Centre, and the key departments responsible for the strategy's implementation.

The Strategy has also led to the development of coordination processes and mechanisms, both within and across different government departments. Within these, having objectives and outcome indicators for each Ministry contributes to ensuring clear accountability and a tangible sense of progress, and ensures that the Strategy can remain flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.

2.2 Local government

At local level, good practice centres around having established processes to support effective local decision-making alongside strong place-based mechanisms for partnership working.

Local decision-making

This involves clear legal and institutional arrangements to promote join and integrate work in areas that support youth transitions, often alongside substantive devolution of responsibility for operational policy in areas such as education and employment.

Who does it well?



The Act on Municipal Provision for Young People Under 25 (Lov om Kommunal indsats for unge under 25 år). This Danish Act establishes that the overall youth effort in each municipality should be coordinated across the local council, education, employment, and social services, as well as through collaboration with local employers. The purpose is to simplify and strengthen provision targeted to young people with low or no qualifications and those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) to ensure they do not fall through the gaps of support. The act was followed by the [Agreement on better paths to education or jobs](#) in 2017, which gives municipalities further freedoms to organise local cross-sectoral efforts to meet these objectives and has led to the establishment of cross-municipal partnerships.



The Finnish Youth Act (Nuorisolaki). In Finland the Youth Act requires each local authority to have a coordinating body for cross-sectoral cooperation on matters concerning young people, including employment. The coordinating body includes representatives from education, social, health and youth services as well as the PES and wider support services. Members of each local network collaborate to monitor and share knowledge on young people's living conditions and developments in local service provision, promote the integration of services (education, employment, health), develop shared approaches to support young people to engage with services, and ensure effective signposting and warm handovers.



Devolved youth policy in federal states. In Germany, the federal states take chief responsibility for the education and youth employment system and set their own policies. Respective state ministries (Landesministerien) for education, labour, social and economic affairs carry responsibility for vocational training, employment and entrepreneurship and work jointly to develop integrated approaches.

Why does it matter?

- Ensures youth policy reflects the needs of the local area, allowing measures to be tailored and more effective.
- Promotes coordination across local education, employment and social services.
- Fosters the creation of tightly knit support systems and facilitates dialogue across key actors.

Partnership working

Beyond these institutional mechanisms, many countries also have strong systems for local partnership working, including multi-disciplinary advisory bodies and formal partnerships between education, employment and support services.

Who does it well?



Regional Labour Market Councils (De Regionale Arbejdsmarkedsråd). In Denmark, there are eight regional councils, including representatives from the regions, the municipalities, business organisations, education institutions and social partners for each area, working to improve coordination and dialogue across municipalities on all employment matters. The Councils' responsibilities include ensuring business-municipality and cross-municipality dialogue, advising municipalities on the development of employment policy and measures, ensuring VET provision is aligned to local labour market needs, and coordinating efforts particularly around areas with labour shortages and areas with high unemployment.



The Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants (Dua).

In Sweden, Dua promotes cooperation between municipalities and the PES, to reduce youth unemployment and to support integration of young people in both their communities and in work (see Box 2).



Local Missions (Missions Locales) In France, Missions Locales (see Box 3) are a leading public service, with 450 hubs across the country, working through multi-stakeholder partnerships to implement local strategies for the professional and social integration of disadvantaged young people, based on local needs.

Why does it matter?

- Promotes joint decision-making and information exchange across key stakeholders and services at a local level, leading to more efficient and integrated measures.
- Involves all key actors, from education to businesses, and encourages each party to develop ownership of local youth policy and measures.
- Fosters new ways of collaborating, resource-sharing, and innovation.

Box 2: The Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants (Sweden)

What is it?

The Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants (Dua) has been established to strengthen cooperation between municipalities and the Swedish PES and promote the development of new forms of collaboration. It works to foster local and regional dialogue, develop new approaches, understand what works, and then integrate these within the PES's activities.

The aim is to help reduce youth unemployment, enable newly arrived migrants to integrate in the Swedish labour market, and thus improve labour and skills supply within local areas.

Box 2: The Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants (Sweden) cont**What does it do in practice?**

Dua provides grants to local areas to fund local cooperation initiatives on youth employment, and then disseminates knowledge about best practice on labour market policy initiatives and forms of collaboration to local areas and within the PES. Virtually all municipalities in Sweden now have local Dua agreements with the PES, which are signed by at least three municipalities and the PES in partnership, and set out how joint initiatives for young people NEET are to be organised and run. Agreements include 'local job tracks' which look to ensure that employers' skills needs are met and there are clear paths to work for the young people. These local tracks vary depending on the needs of local employers, who also collaborate with the PES to provide support to young people to move into and stay in work.

What are the success factors?

Since Dua's introduction in 2015, 287 of Sweden's 290 municipalities have now entered into local agreements with the local PES to cooperate in reducing youth unemployment. Dua's success lies in its ability to mediate between the municipality and the PES to create a joint and integrated support offer. This ensures that vulnerable young people, at risk of falling through the support net, do not have to navigate a complex web of institutions and services. They are instead provided with a tailored and holistic service that can help address a range of employment and social issues, through a locally-based approach, managed by a single body, which is focused on effective cooperation between services. Tight partnership with employers, and sustained dialogue, also plays a key role in supporting effective engagement tailored to employers' needs.

2.3 Partnership work

Wider partnerships can also play a key role in supporting effective transitions for young people. The seven case study countries emphasise in particular the importance of partnership working between the PES and wider services; business partnerships; and the role of social partners.

Public Employment Service (PES) partnerships

These typically extend the PES's remit and reach beyond job-searching support to include, for example, reintegration into education, transitions to further or higher education, or improving access to wider rehabilitative activities.

Who does it well?



Collaboration with vocational education. In Denmark, where activation measures have a strong focus on supporting unemployed young people into vocational education and training (VET), there is extensive partnership between the PES and vocational institutions. As part of this, vocational guidance counsellors and job coaches work collaboratively to provide guidance at 91 job centres across Denmark. Depending on the needs of each young person, counsellors and coaches cooperate to develop tailored support to ensure young people's successful transition into VET.



Collaboration with schools and youth services. In Sweden, in order to reach young people at risk of disengagement, the PES arranges information campaigns at schools and other educational and youth venues. Outside of education, the PES works closely with the National Board of Institutional Care, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service and the Swedish Police, carrying out prevention and early intervention with young people who are at risk of getting involved in criminal networks.



Statutory inter-agency collaboration. In Finland, the Act on Rehabilitative Employment Activities stipulates multi-professional cooperation between social and health care services and educational, training and employment authorities. The partnership aims to provide holistic support to young people in the PES, including social, health, and wider rehabilitation activities. The aim is to help young people develop improved health and wellbeing and life management skills, and in turn support subsequent transitions to work or learning.

Why does it matter?

- Expands the PES offer beyond immediate employment, ensuring more young people have access to support tailored to their needs and can transition into sustainable destinations.
- Extends employment support to young people who may not otherwise come into contact with the PES, so reducing the likelihood of young people falling through the cracks.
- Fosters cross-collaboration between employment, education, and wider support services, reducing fragmentation and promoting integration.
- Encourages information and knowledge exchange.

Education and business partnerships

Effective school-to-work networks, involving partnerships between educational institutions and businesses, are also key to supporting effective transitions to work. This includes developing effective networks, particularly at the local level, that can help young people understand employer and labour market needs, and businesses to develop effective pathways for recruiting young people.

Who does it well?



School Economy Network (Schulewirtschaft). In Germany schools and businesses work together through a regional approach, comprising almost 400 regional networks. The local networks bring schools and companies together to ensure young people make successful transitions into the world of work and companies build local talent pipelines. The networks support young people to access a range of experience with local businesses while still in school, and support businesses to recruit from the local area where they operate.



The Council for Basic Vocational Education and Training (REU). In Denmark, vocational education is characterised by strong partnership work, to ensure that training programmes continually meet the requirements for each industry and respond to labour market needs. The REU has been established to advise the education minister on VET policy, and works through the cooperation of social partners, VET colleges, students, and employers who are each equally represented on the Council.

Why does it matter?

- Promotes early engagement of young people in the labour market, supporting them to shape realistic career plans and aspirations.
- Supports the development of youth talent pipelines, promoting young people's transition into sustainable destinations.
- Improves dialogue between industry and education, ensuring curricula meet the needs of the labour market and prepare young people for a successful entry.

The key role of social partners

The effective representation of young people in social partnerships, such as through trade unions, gives young people's interests and rights in the labour market higher visibility. This can include creating youth divisions within larger trade unions, but often goes beyond this to actively promote membership for young people and develop dedicated youth platforms, as well as consistently including youth voice in consultations with stakeholders.

Who does it well?



Youth representation in trade unions. In Austria, the Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) has its own youth organisation, the Trade Union Youth (ÖGJ), which consists of seven units working across all federal states, with 145,000 members (10 per cent of all young people aged 16–29 in Austria). The Union advocates for young people's rights in both employment and training. Austria also has a Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer), of which all workers are part, and which seeks to represent the interests of people in work. The Chamber includes a youth platform (AK Young) providing highly accessible guidance and advice on a wide range of topics, including employment, training, education, and benefits.



Trade unions working with employment and VET councils. In Denmark the social partners (arbejdsmarkedets parter) are members of the local, as well as regional and national employment councils. At a local level this allows them to provide advice about local employment measures to the PES, while at regional and national level it enables them to influence policy more strategically. They are also members of the boards of vocational educational institutions. The extensive reach and representation enjoyed by social partners in Denmark allows them to be directly involved in the development of youth policy in both the employment and education sectors, playing a key role in representing young people's interests.

Why does it matter?

- Supports improved transitions to work by increasing young people's visibility in key processes that social partners are involved in and that shape employment policy and practice.
- Provides young people with increased resources and understanding around processes surrounding entry to work, and rights and responsibilities in work, which should in turn improve job quality and security.

Box 3: Missions Locales and the Youth Engagement Contract (France)

What is it?

Local Missions (MLs) work alongside the French PES to support the integration of disadvantaged young people into the labour market. There are 450 located across France's municipalities, each taking a place-based approach. They welcome young people aged 16–25 who have been out of education or employment for a year or more, and focus on supporting their professional and social reintegration into the local community.

What does it do in practice?

Alongside the PES, the MLs deliver the Youth Engagement Contract (YEC), which was introduced by the French government following the Covid-19 pandemic and as an extension of the Guarantee for Youth (Garantie Jeunes).

The YEC is a fully personalised programme of support that can last from 6 to 12 months, depending on individual needs, to help NEET young people under 25 define their professional aspirations and find a job. Young people who could benefit from the programme are identified by a stakeholder group made up of representatives from the French PES, Local Missions, local government and relevant local stakeholders (eg education and social institutions).

Box 3: Missions Locales and the Youth Engagement Contract (France) - Cont

When the young person signs the contract, they benefit from individualised one-to-one support from a specially trained adviser, and an intensive programme of 15 to 20 hours per week consisting of different types of individual and group activities brokered with a range of local services (employability training, social service mission, work placements, job search support, preparation for learning, etc.).

Young people also get access to an allowance of up to €500 per month, provided they fulfil their commitments (this is facilitated through the use of a dedicated app that helps them manage and keep track of their commitments). Young people can also receive additional earnings of up to €300, from paid work or work placements, without these affecting the allowance. At the end of the contract, once the young person secures education or employment, the adviser can provide further light-touch support up to six months.

What are the success factors?

While the main focus is on supporting employability (eg CV writing, interview skills, job searching, digital skills), the strength of MLs lies in their holistic approach. ML advisers take into consideration work, education, guidance, housing, health, and access to culture and leisure, with a specific focus on supporting young people address wider difficulties which may act as barriers to education or employment.

MLs operate through the cooperation of a range of stakeholders, and call on local networks of social, educational, work, and leisure services to help young people access the right provision. Strong local partnerships also play a key role in the effective identification of NEET young people. Each ML adviser is responsible for 50–100 young people per year, giving them greater time to tailor their work to the individual's needs.

Furthermore, the provision of financial support as part of the YEC programme has both incentivised and facilitated young people's participation, providing an additional source of income, and reducing risks tied to PES-managed benefits (eg delays to payment or administrative burdens).



03

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

3 Employment support

This section explores practices around how employment support is delivered for young people. There are many similarities with the UK in the case study countries around the sorts of support and services that can be delivered for young people, so this section focuses in particular on three points of difference around rapid engagement, blended approaches combining education and employment support, and dedicated measures for vulnerable groups.

3.1 Rapid engagement

A key feature in the seven nations reviewed for this report is the ability of services to provide detailed and accurate assessments within short timeframes and ensure they follow-up regularly with young people to maintain engagement.

Rapid assessment and follow-up

This includes but is not limited to reducing waiting times between young people's first contact with the PES and the point that they are assessed and then develop a plan. Besides reducing waiting times, it involves ensuring young people receive assessments that effectively identify and meet their needs, providing them with high quality tailored support and following up regularly with young people to support their engagement.

Who does it well?



The seven-day assessment timeframe. In Denmark young people registering as unemployed with the PES are assessed within seven days. If they lack qualifications, they have the right to an educational activation measure within the first month. If they already have qualifications but do not succeed in finding a job within three months, they receive an activation offer of training or employment. Additionally, municipal Youth Guidance Centres (see Box 9) have been introduced to prevent young people aged 15–17 from dropping out of education. In the centres, young people develop a personal education plan with support from an adviser.



The Swedish Youth Guarantee (Ungdomsgaranti). In Sweden a key element of the Youth Guarantee is ensuring young people access support early and can make quick but sustainable transitions to EET. In 2015 the government introduced a target of a 90-day guarantee, meaning young people should enter a positive and sustainable EET destination within three months of engaging with the PES. In 2017 on average young people who accessed the PES entered education or work within 53 days. The Swedish system is particularly focused on early in-depth assessment, followed by a tailored combination of educational and vocational counselling, alongside jobseeker activities with individualised coaching. After three months, if the young person is not ready to transition to EET, initial activities are supplemented with work experience, study motivation courses, and further employability support.

Why does it matter?

- Enables earlier access to suitable provision, so potentially supporting more rapid transitions and better outcomes.
- Promotes sustained engagement of young people throughout support and following transitions through regular contact and follow-up.

Box 4: One Stop Guidance Centres (Finland)**What is this initiative?**

The One Stop Guidance Centres were set up in response to a lack of guidance services and fragmented employment support for young people in Finland. The centres are a joint initiative by Finland's Ministries of Economic Affairs and Employment, Education and Culture, and Social Affairs and Health, offering youth a single point of contact for employment and social services. The One-Stop Guidance Centres bring together key mainstream employment and social services for young people into a single place.

What does it do in practice?

By 2018 over 60 centres nationwide had been established, where young people accessed personalised support around job seeking and pathways into training, education and social rehabilitation. The aim of the centres is to provide wrap-around support at a single location to young people going through transitions, and encourage them to remain in education and work. Support focuses on social and health related rehabilitation, planning out routes to education or employment, and ensuring that young people are well equipped to cope and prepare for transitions into further education or work.

A wide range of services are involved in the collaboration and delivery of support, including youth counselling, PES coaches, social workers, immigration, social housing, healthcare and recruitment agencies among others. There is strong collaboration between the centres and employers, focused on careers skills matching, creating employment opportunities and improving employers' capacity to create jobs. For example, through the centres, employers can apply for municipal supplements and recruitment subsidies to create summer jobs and work experience opportunities. The Centres also play a key role in improving skills matching between jobseekers and employers, for example through recruitment events and tapping into existing employer networks to supplement their own offer.

What are the success factors?

The definition of what a One-Stop Guidance Centre should be was deliberately kept loose, leaving room for local partners to adapt the concept according to local needs. As a result, each centre is different and the key success element across all centres is the wide-reaching collaboration within local networks. A further key element of success is that support offered at the centres is comprehensive, not just focusing on paths to employment, education or training, but also helping young people develop life and social skills, as well as providing rehabilitative activities.

3.2 Blended approaches

Many countries take blended approaches that move beyond rapid entry into work, and that bring together employment services with skills, training and wider support, based on each young person's individual needs.

Joining up employment services with wider support

In a number of countries, PES support for young people also incorporates an active focus on helping young people enter education and training as a step towards sustainable employment at later stages. It includes PESs providing information, guidance, and coaching in areas such as alternative and vocational education.

Who does it well?



Comprehensive support packages. In Germany the PES provides comprehensive support beyond job searching, covering training and employment guidance and placement; tailored support focusing on aptitude analysis, activation and stabilisation; grants to help with the costs of vocational education and training; and integration subsidies for trainees with disabilities.



VET-focused support. In Finland, the PES operates on the principle that young people who access job centres must be offered support that facilitates sustainable careers rather than short-term jobs that may then lead again to unemployment. A primary aim is for young people to acquire a vocational educational qualification and the PES facilitates this through the provision of career coaching, vocational guidance and career planning, alongside job search, work coaching and start-up grants (for those wishing to start an enterprise).



The Job Guarantee (Jobbgarantin). In Sweden the Job Guarantee supports young people under 25 who have been unemployed for at least three months to find work or enter further education. Following an in-depth assessment survey, analysing their abilities and support needs, young people access personalised support that can include study and career guidance, six-month training courses, access to work placements, vocational rehabilitation job training at a workplace, and enterprise support. While on the programme young people receive a 'development compensation' benefit, to secure their income while they engage in learning and upskilling, and are also entitled to an allowance to cover transport costs.



ApprenticeshipFit programme (AusbildungsFit). In Austria the ApprenticeshipFit programme is aimed at school-leavers with low or no qualifications and young people with disabilities or special educational needs. It combines training modules with a focus on activation, with individualised coaching and workshops focused on acquiring social and technical skills. Across Austria, there are over 60 AusbildungsFit engaging around 4,000 young people each year. AusbildungsFit exists alongside the youth coaching service offered by the PES as complementary provision.

Why does it matter?

- Extends the reach of the PES to young people who may not be ready for work but can be supported to enter learning, leading to better employment outcomes in the long-term.
- Reduces the risk of young people becoming NEET or long-term unemployed by providing alternative bridges to education, training, and work.
- Promotes a focus on sustained and longer term outcomes, and reducing the frequency and duration of spells of unemployment.
- Increases the range of pathways available to young people, which supports higher participation and better outcomes.

Using assessment tools to tailor support

This includes a focus on in-depth assessment, personalised support and targeted provision, with the aim of ensuring longer-term positive outcomes while reducing the risk of disengagement or entry into unstable or unsuitable destinations.

Who does it well?



Three-tiered approach to support. In Denmark, for young people with low qualifications, the primary focus of the PES is to improve their formal skills through vocational education, as unskilled young people are at greatest risk of unstable employment. When a young person has their first interview with the PES, they are placed in one of three target groups (ready for education, ready for education within one year, ready for activation) based on their initial assessment (see Box 5). The target groups aim to ensure young people access tailored and meaningful support, and that those with more complex barriers are met with the right provision to make successful transitions to education and work.



Web-based assessment questionnaire. In Sweden, a web-based tool helps advisers identify young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment. The tool makes a statistical calculation based on risk factors like age, disabilities, and qualifications. There are four possible outcomes, each giving an indication of how far the young person might be from the labour market and of the type of support they might need (from light-touch to intensive).

Why does it matter?

- Provides clear pathways to support and promotes the development of tailored plans, through tiered approaches and in-depth assessments.
- Supports the identification of multiple barriers and risks of long-term unemployment at an early stage, helping address these early on and reducing risks of disengagement from support.
- Supports consistency in access to support and services for those with multiple needs.

'Second chance' schools

A popular and effective measure across a range of countries has been second chance schools which, alongside PES provision, target young people with low or no qualifications, to support them into further education.

Who does it well?



Production School (Produktionsskoler). In Denmark, the PES can support young people to enter a Production school, a school with a practical focus that provides an alternative entrance to a VET college. These schools offer technical courses and are targeted to young people who have not completed an upper secondary education and are without qualifications to enter secondary education. While attending the school, young people who are not in receipt of state benefits are entitled to receive school benefits to support their income. Production schools focus on supporting young people to develop the personal, social and professional skills that can help them transition into education or stable employment.



Folk High School (Folkhögskola). In Sweden, a young person aged 20–24 who lacks a school-leaving certificate is supported by the PES to enrol in a folk high school. These are second chance schools with a VET focus, and a goal of completing upper secondary education. The study programme, offered in 155 centres across Sweden, focuses on motivation activities to support participants to complete or continue their education. There are a wide range of technical courses, both general and specialised, offered at folk high schools. The general course is for people who do not have a primary or secondary school education and provides basic eligibility to apply to a university or specialised VET course. While studying at a folk school young people are entitled to receive a state grant to secure an income while studying.



Second chance schools (E2c). In France, second chance schools offer specific courses for early school leavers, through six-month programmes focused on improving language and numerical skills at the end of lower secondary school, alongside paid training in a company, to promote social and vocational integration. E2c serve 15,000 young people and form a network of 46 schools on 110 sites spread across the country.

Why does it matter?

- Protects the right to an education of every young person and promotes equality of opportunity irrespective of background.
- Provides a pathway back to education and learning, enabling young people to improve their human capital and in the long run find better quality work.
- Ensures young people have an income while they develop skills.

Box 5: A three-tiered approach to employability support (Denmark)

What is it?

In Denmark there have been several reforms focused on youth employment in recent years, with a strong focus on prevention and educational activation, alongside the traditional focus on entry into employment. Young people under the age of 25 who have not completed lower secondary school can receive guidance from the municipality through the PES. The emphasis in provision is on supporting young people to achieve the skills and qualifications that can allow them to access vocational education. Based on this approach, young people assessed by the PES can enter one of three streams: those who are ready for an education, those ready for an education within one year, and those ready for activation. The target group approach aims to ensure that each young person receives tailored support, and that young people with complex barriers (social, personal, health) access intensive, rather than universal, support.

What does it do in practice?

Each young person identified by the municipality as requiring transitions support, comes into contact with a single keyworker that coordinates provision across all the services involved in the municipal cooperation. The Act also introduced municipal youth guidance centres, providing cross-sectoral youth measures that integrate education, employment and guidance (see Box 9). For those who are deemed ready for education within a year, support can include upgrading of skills and qualifications, short internships in educational centres, mentoring and practical work training in enterprises, before the young person is supported to transition into mainstream education. A young person with a number of challenges is instead categorised as 'ready for activation' which entitles them to specialised and intensive support.

The measures for this group include the right to a coordinating caseworker in the job centre, who maintains close contact and provides regular follow-ups, alongside the measures offered to young people. If the young person is not able to engage in any activity, further support is provided through a specialised mentor, who focuses on personal and soft skills development. There is continuous monitoring to check that the PES offer to the young people leads to positive outcomes and satisfaction for clients, including through regular evaluations commissioned by the municipalities.

What are the success factors?

The three-tiered approach ensures that every young person who comes in contact with the PES receives support, which is tailored to their needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Effective identification and assessment mechanisms maximise the use of resources, including the offer of further and specialised support to those with more complex needs. The focus on education, rather than just labour market activation, highlights the emphasis on ensuring young people are well skilled before entering the labour market, increasing their chances of finding good quality, sustainable work.

3.3 Vulnerable groups

A dedicated focus on more vulnerable groups is essential in any approach, as those with more complex needs and in particular some disabled young people, often face the most significant barriers in making successful transitions to education or employment.

Facilitating the integration of vulnerable groups

This involves developing comprehensive measures, which understand and are tailored to the needs of different vulnerable groups, such as disabled and immigrant young people, to support their effective integration into education and work.

Who does it well?



Measures for newly arrived immigrants. Sweden has developed dedicated measures targeting newly arrived young immigrants aged 18 and over with the aim of supporting community and work integration. This is done through a range of measures, underpinned by an 'Individual introduction plan' (*Individuell introduktionsplan*), that is agreed with the PES and that maps the young person's educational background, previous work experience and need for training and other measures. The young people who take part in upskilling activities under the introduction plan are entitled to a benefit, to provide them with an income while they develop their skills. Alongside this measure, newly arrived young immigrants are also offered a civic orientation course, to provide them with a basic understanding of Swedish society and foster integration.



Wage dispensation (*loondispensatie*). In the Netherlands, when employees have reduced productivity levels due to a health condition or disability, employers can apply to a wage dispensation. Under this measure, the employer pays less as a result of lowered productivity due to the employee's condition, while the employee has access to a dedicated sickness benefit (*Wajong*) which makes up for the lost income.



The Social Insurance Institution (*Kela*). In Finland, Kela determines the rehabilitative needs of young people with reduced working capacity and young people in danger of exclusion. The target group includes young people who may lack vocational education or may have dropped out of education, or may be skilled people who have low employment prospects due to a health condition or disability. The goal of Kela is to build, in cooperation with other actors, a realistic and timely path towards employment. Young people who meet the prerequisites can access vocational rehabilitation support such as a vocational rehabilitation course or work try-outs, alongside medical rehabilitation. Young people with reduced capacity to work also have a statutory right to aids and special assistance to help manage studies or work (eg assistive devices, personal assistant).

Why does it matter?

- Provides individualised support, increasing the chance of young people entering and sustaining positive destinations.
- Integrates employment support with wider support (social, health), enabling young people to progress by tackling multiple areas where they might experience challenges.
- Protects and supports both the young person and the employer, allowing each party to access and explore opportunities for work and facilitating retention.

Box 6: Trial Job scheme for disabled young people (Netherlands)**What is it?**

In the Netherlands, the intervention Proefplaatsen (Trial jobs) gives disabled young people on social benefits the possibility to do a paid work trial with an employer of their choice. During the trial, young people retain their benefits and the employer does not pay their wages. To be eligible young people must be receiving a disability benefit and have been unemployed for at least three months. Young people under 27 who are not disabled but do not have a basic qualification are also eligible for the measure.

What does it do in practice?

The duration of the trial jobs is two months and employees continue to receive social benefits during the trial. Employees and employers can also request an extension to the trial placement, for a maximum of six months, if the employee's condition requires a longer period to assess suitability to the role. This intervention allows the employer and the employee to decide if the jobs and tasks are adequate to the young person's capacity and needs and the employer's requirements.

The trial job aims to give the young person the opportunity to gain experience while promoting the recruitment of disabled young people among employers. Following the end of the trial, there is an expectation for employers to offer the employee a permanent role, if the trial confirmed that they are suitable for the job.

Employers who wish to keep young people on are required to provide a contract of at least six months, and for at least the same number of hours that the young person worked on a probationary basis during the trial. Employers that employ a young person beyond the trial, can apply for a job coach subsidy which allows them to recruit a job coach to support the young person in the workplace.

What are the success factors?

The key success factor in the trial job scheme lies in its straightforward structure and application, which results from the protection both the young person and employer receive, through subsidised employment. As a result, young people on the scheme can apply to a wider range of opportunities, as any other young person would, and employers are more inclined to provide the opportunities, as they face decreased risks of high resource investment with low return.

The flexibility that the scheme provides (through the possibility of extension, as well as the incentive of a job coach for young people who are employed full time) are further key factors that support young employee's retention into work. There is no evaluation data for the scheme, but the trial jobs has now been an established measures and integral part of employment policy for 10 years in the Netherlands.



04

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)



4 Vocational education and training (VET)

This section summarises approaches to the use of vocational education and training to support transitions for young people, and particularly those who may be more disadvantaged. There is a wide literature on VET systems and significant differences between countries in their design and delivery, so for the purposes of this brief review we have focused specifically on two aspects that appeared most relevant: the design and delivery of inclusive VET routes; and the ongoing development of VET routes in order to continue to meet the needs of young people and labour markets.

4.1 Inclusive VET routes

A common feature of many countries' approaches are to have inclusive routes which enable all young people to access further education. These often particularly focus on providing alternative entry pathways and individualised support.

Dedicated measures to ensure equality of opportunity

This involves expanding routes into further education beyond mainstream models, such as traditional enterprise-based apprenticeships and traineeship, in order to provide meaningful support to young people who face additional barriers. This can include measures such as school-based apprenticeships, alongside additional forms of support, like mentoring, to encourage young people's transition to and retention in VET.

Who does it well?



Vocational Introduction to Employment (Yrkesintroduktionsanställning).

In Sweden, this programme provides introductory vocational courses lasting 6–12 months and targeted at young immigrants and disadvantaged young people. They are based on collective agreements involving the PES and employers. As part of these courses, the young person is hired by a local employer, who receives a state subsidy to pay for the employee's wages and to provide a dedicated supervisor who can support the young person for the duration of the course. The young person is supported by the employer to learn a trade or profession, while getting paid at least 75 per cent of the full wage.



Apprenticeship Coaching (Coaching für Lehrlinge und Lehrbetriebe).

In Austria, Apprenticeship Coaching is a state-funded programme whereby apprentices and their employers can request supportive coaching to provide assistance and advice to apprentices and their trainers during on-the-job training. This is intended to reduce the risk of apprentices dropping out and to ensure they receive tailored support while working and studying. A qualified coach is assigned to each apprentice and helps them identify their challenges and aspirations for the apprenticeship; coaches them around juggling studying and training; helps them develop self-management skills; and supports them in exam preparation and in identifying opportunities for up-skilling and advanced study. Coaches also conduct mediation with the employer where required.

Who does it well? - Cont**School-based apprenticeships (skolepraktik).**

In Denmark, young people who have been unable to secure an enterprise-based apprenticeship can access a school-based route. Through this, training takes place at specialised school training centres rather than a company. For young people who do not fulfil admission requirements for an apprenticeship, the government introduced Erhvervsuddannelse/10.klasse (eud10). Eud10 is an extra school year, following Year 9 and for those who lack the qualifications to enter Year 10, focused on providing students at risk of dropping out of education with the necessary qualifications to begin a VET course.

Why does it matter?

- Ensures all young people can access opportunities through multiple and tailored measures.
- Supports retention in work and study, by having a wider safety net and better transition pathways alongside mainstream provision.
- Places greater focus and investment on young people facing additional challenges and who are more likely to disengage from education or remain excluded from the labour market.

Box 7: Mentoring support to enter vocational education (Germany)**What is it?**

In Germany, low-attaining pupils aiming to achieve a lower secondary school certificate can be supported by a mentor during the transition into vocational education and training through the 'Career entry by mentoring' programme (*Berufseinstiegsbegleitung*). The programme provides long-term, tailored support starting two years before students are due to leave school, to help those at risk of leaving with no qualifications to make a successful transition to vocational training. The programme supports young people in attaining a school-leaving certificate, developing the soft and hard skills to enter and sustain training, accessing career guidance and orientation, and finding and successfully starting appropriate vocational training.

What does it do in practice?

The target group for the programme is young people who face challenges completing general education. Problems encountered by young people targeted by the scheme often include social and financial difficulties, family issues, caring responsibilities, being a young person in care, as well as language and integration challenges. Schools apply to the scheme through the Federal Employment Agency and subsequently recruit a number of specialised career entry mentors who each support up to 20 young people.

The mentors work closely together with schools, parents, the local PES, employers, and other institutions that might be relevant for the young person. Mentoring activities focus on accompanying the young person in their transition to vocational training and working life. The support consists of advice on vocational training options, career guidance as well as various other forms of support (for example psychological support, skills development, motivational activities) and other activities necessary to ensure a smooth transition from school to vocational training. The mentor develops an individual support plan for the young person and offers a range of socio-educational support, for example linked to the development of different types of skills (personal, social, methodical, practical life, intercultural, media, IT). Following successful entry into the training destination, young people are offered follow-up light touch support.

What are the success factors?

Implementing the model through schools has enabled close collaborative work and successful integration and coordination of different stakeholders that can support disadvantaged young people. A further key element of success was the provision of holistic support that was not purely academic but included personal advice as well as signposting to wider support. The stability of the mentoring relationship was also crucial, ensuring continuity for young people – which includes an expectation that mentors commit to their role for at least 2 and a half years when they sign their employment contract. Finally, the approach has also been credited with supporting young people to have a clearer understanding of and aspirations around labour market opportunities and pathways to employment.

Between 2009 and 2013, in the first phase of the programme, around 55,000 pupils were mentored. Since then, the programme has been widened nationally, and approximately 113,000 pupils and 3,000 schools are expected to participate by the end of 2022. The initial evaluation of the programme showed that 30 months after finishing school 65 per cent of participants were in vocational training. This was especially the case when participants received support both whilst still at school and after having started the vocational training.

4.2 Ongoing development of VET

A focus on continual improvement of vocational education and training is a further common feature in countries with strong pathways for young people, and includes a focus on quality assurance and the sustained involvement of key stakeholders in the development of VET.

Effective quality assurance mechanisms

This aims to support and strengthen school-to-work transitions by focusing particularly on maintaining quality and relevance, and ensuring equality of access to VET.

Who does it well?



Reforms to the VET system. Over the past decade Sweden has strengthened its investment in VET to facilitate the transition from education to work, through reforms focused on widening the use of apprenticeships and the quality of work-based learning. This includes the creation of a national framework for social partners' engagement; cooperation between local authorities and industry associations, to develop a quality framework for work-based learning; and the introduction of allowances for apprentices to cover the costs of meals and travel. The reform also strengthened employer vetting mechanisms, with employers thoroughly vetted, including through a consultation with the local union division before they are allowed to take on apprentices and trainees.



The quota system and advantage list. In Denmark a quota agreement has been introduced for VET programmes where admission is limited, to ensure that the number of students is in accordance with labour market needs and that students have a clear path to sustainable work. In these cases, all students are either admitted according to a quota or are required to have a training agreement with an enterprise prior to commencing the relevant foundation course. Furthermore, up until January 2022 some education programmes were included on an advantage list (*fordelsuddannelse*). The criteria for being on the list was that 90% of students on the programme moved on to a job, or further training opportunity within three months of completion of programme. Enterprises included on the advantage list received an extra cash bonus to invest in the training and development of apprentices.

Why does it matter?

- Promotes quality across VET routes, ensuring coherent pathways to work and alignment of provision with labour market skills needs.
- Uses quality-assurance mechanisms (allowances, employer vetting, quotas) maximising the chances of young people staying engaged and transitioning to sustainable destinations.

Box 8: The Young Adults Skills Programme (Finland)**What is it?**

In Finland, The Education Guarantee is a key part of the Youth Guarantee/ NAO scheme and aims to ensure that young people who complete basic education gain a place in further education. The Young Adults Skills Programme was implemented as part of the Youth Guarantee from 2013 to 2016, and was funded jointly through national (€187 million) and EU (€200,000) funding.

The programme combined pre-employability and VET learning activities with the aim of giving an opportunity to 20–29 year olds without an upper secondary qualification to achieve parts of a vocational qualification or a full qualification. The programme was delivered in collaboration by the local PES, local third sector organisations, and around 60 VET providers across Finland. The majority of young people who took part in the programme (80 per cent) were unemployed.

What does it do in practice?

Alongside the provision of VET learning, the programme used a collaborative approach to create a far-reaching “learning network” with the involvement of VET providers, teachers, the PES and wider support services. This included, among other activities, VET teachers and NAO guidance counsellors working as pairs to support young people, group work activities on specific skills, confidence-building, and social integration delivered in collaboration with schools and external providers, and the active involvement of entrepreneurs and local businesses in certain skills courses.

Additionally, VET providers collaborated to develop new outreach strategies to encourage young people in their area to start the programme, including dedicated orientation courses on studying and workplace skills. The Ministry of Education actively supported local VET providers delivering the programme, facilitating regular national workshops, bringing together all partners, and sharing good practices across the network.

What are the success factors?

The collaborative and learning-oriented approach of the Young Adults Skills Programme was effective at creating new outreach and support methods to engage vulnerable young people at key transition points. For example, effective methods included dividing training schemes into smaller units, so that young people would achieve a learning outcome even if they completed only part of a qualification.

The use of multi-professional teams, including teacher and NAO guidance counsellors working together, was also a key element of success, ensuring young people accessed provision that was personalised and fully tailored to their needs. As of September 2017, about 14,100 young people without qualifications had started the Young Adults’ Skills Programme (88 per cent of the target number) and over 11,800 had completed at least some units of a vocational programme (83 per cent of participants), while 3,200 had obtained full qualifications (23 per cent of participants).

Sustained involvement of key partners

This involves active and regular involvement from stakeholders with a role or interest in VET, beyond schools, careers services, and VET providers, to promote participation in further education and training. This includes in particular the engagement of government agencies and employers.

Who does it well?



Widespread promotion and awareness-raising. In Sweden, civil servants from a range of departments regularly participate in career days, fairs and other events to meet students and inform them about traineeship opportunities within government offices. The Swedish Education Agency does targeted information campaigns for students in upper secondary education and their parents to promote VET, and organises conferences on VET opportunities throughout the country. It also runs national events aimed at employers and students, to increase interest in and recruitment into VET in key sectors such as construction, design, industry, IT, health care and technology.



Employer involvement in VET design. In Germany, employers and unions are key players when establishing how VET is organised, implemented and delivered, working alongside the Federal Government, the Länder and chambers. The partnership approach aims to ensure training is highly workplace and practice-oriented, and enhances the attractiveness and quality of the schemes. The VET system is co-financed by German industry, which further strengthens employer's involvement in its design and supports the development of coherent links with work. Businesses play a key role in training their future workforce from the start, which helps them build a strong pipeline of skilled workers and ensures that trainees enter permanent work upon completing their education. Vocational training regulations are revised on an ongoing basis by employer associations and unions in conjunction with public agencies to ensure they meet or are adapted to meet evolving industry needs.

Why does it matter?

- Promotes the visibility and extends the reach of VET opportunities to a wider audience.
- Encourages interest both from young people, through increased awareness-raising activities, and employers, through active involvement in the design of VET offers.
- Ensures VET routes are aligned to industry needs and encourages ownership among employers.

Box 9: The Alliance for Initial and Further Training (Germany)**What is it?**

In Germany, the long-standing Alliance for Initial and Further Training (Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung) was reformed in 2019. The Alliance comprises representatives from employer organisations, trade unions, federal ministries, the Federal Employment Agency, and federal state representatives. The new Alliance (2019-2021) was established as a key platform for continuing to strengthen the attractiveness, quality and performance of the German dual vocational training system (duale Ausbildung). The Alliance aims to create the optimal conditions to allow all the young people who want to, including disadvantaged, migrant, and disabled youths, the opportunity to access and sustain high-quality vocational training.

What does it do in practice?

Besides increasing the attractiveness and quality of the dual system, the new Alliance aims to reduce apprenticeship dropout rates, reduce the number of young people without a school-leaving certificate, provide each person interested in training with a high-quality route to a dual vocational qualification as quickly as possible, reduce the mismatch between applicants and companies skill needs, increase the number of training places on offer and the number of companies willing to provide training, and strengthen and promote advanced (berufliche Fortbildung) and higher-level (höherqualifizierend) vocational training.

Initiatives that partners in the Alliance have introduced to support the objectives include among other things: the establishment of joint quality standards signed by the business community, trade unions and the Länder, to provide quality internships that are of value to both companies and students; access to specialised support and advice provided by the chambers of commerce to companies struggling to offer training contracts; the introduction of more entry level qualifications (Einstiegsqualifizierung) to form a bridge to dual vocational training; and tailored measures to increase the proportion of young migrants accessing dual vocational training, including the expansion of local networks of chambers, trade unions and migrant associations.

What are the success factors?

Data on the Alliance's performance up to 2016 exemplifies its success – in 2015 employers offered 7,300 additional dual vocational training places which rose to 18,118 in 2016. Strong cooperation and sustained dialogue between the key partners including various levels of government, employer organisations, chambers of commerce and trade unions have been key to the successful functioning of the Alliance. Improved coordination and regular exchange of practices and experience help ensure that partners remain committed to the success of the Alliance. Measures tailored to the specific needs of target groups (including migrants and refugees) alongside early assessment, have supported better outcomes for these groups.



05

CAREERS INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND GUIDANCE (CIAG)



5 Careers information, advice, and guidance (CIAG)

This section explores approaches to careers information, advice and guidance for young people. Again, this is an area where there are a range of approaches and often significant differences between countries (and with the UK). Therefore, this section focuses on two relevant aspects, around CIAG coordination and cooperation, and the delivery of CIAG in wider settings.

5.1 Coordination and cooperation

A key feature of CIAG systems in a number of case study countries is that they are often developed and delivered through collaborative approaches across key stakeholders. This is to ensure that career counselling is at the heart of support, that it engages all young people, and that there is a focus on high quality longer-term outcomes.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Partnership approaches to CIAG often involve collaboration beyond educational institutions like schools and colleges, to include stakeholders such as the PES, social partners and employer representative bodies. Through multi-stakeholder cooperation and dialogue, CIAG services can deliver better quality and more coherent support to young people, and better quality outcomes in the longer term.

Who does it well?



Inter-agency collaboration for the delivery of CIAG. In Germany there is close cooperation at all levels between secondary schools, the vocational guidance service run by the PES, youth welfare offices, trade unions, employers and chambers. Young people can find information about career opportunities using the PES career counselling services (Berufsberatung) where they can access individualised counselling, as well as at dedicated vocational information centres (BiZs). Vocational guidance staff from the PES work closely with chambers and employers to arrange orientation and taster days and workplace visits for school leavers. Besides collaborating with the PES, chambers, industry associations and employers across the country regularly hold a range of independent events, in collaboration with schools, to promote their vocational offer. These include careers fairs, information sessions, work placements, and workshops.

Who does it well?



Framework agreement on cooperation between schools and career counselling.

The Federal Employment Agency also works with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) under a framework agreement on cooperation between schools and career counselling, to support high quality school-to-work transitions. Under this framework, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) established a nation-wide vocational orientation programme (BOP) for young people in Year 8 and 9. Through a two-stage process, young people first explore their strengths through a 'potential analysis' (Potenzialanalyse), then based on this analysis they participate in taster days for different professions which reflect their strengths. This enables young people to explore career paths which they might like and might be suited to them from early on, through practical experience. The programme also provides young people with guidance to help them secure internships and work placements in their preferred sectors.



Guidance on municipality and VET collaboration. The Danish Department for Education (STUK) and the Department for Work (STAR) have jointly developed guidance for municipalities and VET providers on collaboration to provide CIAG support to young people at risk of dropping out of education, to enter and sustain vocational education. This includes guidance on sharing information, developing collaboration agreements, issues to consider in the agreements, as well as approaches to formalise the cooperation.

Why does it matter?

- Builds stronger bridges between education, careers, and employment services, promoting the provision of a more coherent and coordinated CIAG offer.
- Ensures that short-term support to make transitions into learning or work are underpinned by a longer-term focus on career goals and labour market needs.

5.2 Delivering CIAG in wider settings

The collaborative models set out above also then lead to the delivery of CIAG in different settings and alongside other services – particularly municipal and employment services. This then contributes to widening the reach and offer of CIAG, and extending access to support to a wider range of young people.

Providing CIAG beyond traditional settings

There are many examples of effective integration of CIAG services within the PES and vice versa, as well as innovative approaches to how CIAG is delivered with partners in schools. The aim is to improve the quality of the CIAG offer, extend its reach, and making it more inclusive.

Who does it well?



PES Careers Information Centres (BIZ). In Austria, alongside career guidance offered within educational settings, the PES is also required to provide career support. There are 72 dedicated career information centres across the country offering information, counselling and advice. Since 2009, a visit to the BIZ has been part of the compulsory subject of career orientation for pupils in years 7 and 8 of school. The centres are equipped with self-information areas and offer one-on-one and group counselling. The PES also organises information campaigns, particularly focused on apprenticeships, and works closely with schools to run career days, sector presentations, training for job applications, events for teachers and parents, and job fairs, among other activities.



From school to working life (utbildningspaketet skola-arbetsliv). In Sweden, the National Agency for Education, in cooperation with the PES, offers a training programme called 'from school to working life' for teachers, school leaders and career counsellors in upper secondary education. The programme focuses on how career and guidance counselling can be integrated into the regular school curriculum and in daily learning activities, beyond dedicated careers sessions. The training is provided through a partnership between municipalities and a number of universities, and is designed and tailored according to each school's individual needs.

Why does it matter?

- Promotes cooperation between school, employment services, and wider stakeholders, creating stronger support nets and better equipping services to deliver high quality CIAG.
- Enables young people to access CIAG support across multiple settings, expanding the reach and improving the personalisation of CIAG support.
- Ensures that the focus on short-term transitions to learning and work also take account of longer-term career goals and labour market needs, which should support higher quality outcomes.

Box 10: Collaborative work in the delivery of CIAG (Denmark)**What is it?**

What is it? Denmark has a strong CIAG infrastructure with a range of guidance and counselling services across education and employment support. All young people leaving primary and lower secondary education are required to have a plan for further education. As part of this, a 2019 education reform introduced an act to further improve local CIAG provision.

The act requires that municipalities and schools work together to ensure that CIAG services provide all young people with a realistic understanding of educational and work pathways. It also requires partners to ensure coherence, coordination and progression in all CIAG support accessed by a young person. The act focuses in particular on young people who, without specific support, would encounter challenges in completing education or moving into work. Schools and municipalities are required to consider the interests, personal qualifications and skills of the individual when developing support; including informal competencies and previous education and work experience, as well as the skills needs of the labour market.

What does it do in practice?

Schools and municipalities collaborate to ensure young people in the 15–17 age group have a clear and realistic education plan by the end of Year 9 and transition into an educational activity in accordance with their plan. Additionally, at the end of each year for Year 8, 9, and 10, students undergo an assessment focused on their readiness for all types of upper secondary education (see Box 5).

For young people in school who are assessed as not yet ready, the municipal council, youth support services and the school are required to jointly produce an action plan with tailored support to ensure the young person reaches a stage where they can qualify for a positive assessment. For young people outside of school, bespoke guidance is provided to those who are deemed as needing specialised support and who do not already receive guidance from the PES or other services. To coordinate these efforts, municipal youth guidance centres (Kommunal ungeindsats) operate across each municipality and comprise a collaboration between schools, the PES, and the municipality, to provide additional guidance resources to young people at risk of, or who are NEET. The municipal youth guidance units provide guidance to young people up to Year 10, and those up to the age of 25 who are NEET. Units advise on the transition from compulsory education to upper secondary education, or alternatively to the labour market. Guidance activities include individual and group guidance sessions, as well as introductory courses and bridge building schemes. The activities are delivered at the young people's schools, for those who are still in school, or at the local PES.

What are the success factors?

At the heart of the collaborative approach between municipalities, schools, the PES and wider support services is the creation of coherent and coordinated guidance plans, to ensure continuity and progression for every young person. This effort is supported by the regular exchange of information between stakeholders, as well as regular meetings regarding each individual student being supported. In addition, the 'one stop shop' model through youth guidance centres is in line with a range of international evidence on what works in broadening access to and personalisation of support, particularly for young people.



06

PREVENTING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM BECOMING **NEET**



6

Preventing young people from becoming NEET

This final section sets out examples of approaches taken to support young people while still in compulsory schooling, to minimise the risks of them finding themselves outside work or learning after leaving education. This focuses specifically on examples around one-to-one, personalised support, and on cross-sectoral approaches.

6.1 One-to-one and personalised support

Several countries have programmes or approaches that engage with young people while in education. These initiatives provide bespoke and person-centred support to help young people stay engaged and make effective transitions, in particular through individualised mentoring and soft skills development.

Individualised mentoring in secondary education

This involves measures targeting young people in school who are at risk of dropping out of education. Measures are focused on providing individualised and practice-oriented support, such as mentoring and coaching through specialised staff (usually beyond the support provided by careers advisers).

Who does it well?



Individualised mentoring (BerEb). In Germany individualised mentoring is offered to young people who struggle to obtain a school-leaving qualification (see Box 7). These young people are supported by a dedicated mentor to enter VET or work. Support starts in school and continues through the first six months of vocational training or employment. The mentors support young people to complete their school qualifications, navigate personal problems, find and apply for a job or apprenticeship, and provide in-work support. They work with the young person to identify and build on their strengths and collaborate with the school careers advisers to develop a personalised careers plan.



Youth Coaching (Jugendcoaching). In Austria, the Youth Coaching service supports Year 9 pupils who are at risk of dropping out of school or being excluded. Youth coaches work inside and outside of school, and in collaboration with the school support system (teachers, careers advisers, school psychologists, etc.) to provide individualised support to young people, helping them identify and move into appropriate training or work. The support is comprehensive and person-centred and includes advice, mentoring and case management, with coaches carrying out analysis of students' strengths and weaknesses, identifying needs for additional training, and drawing up career and development plans.

Why does it matter?

- Provides practical and focused support, beyond traditional careers support, engaging young people early, when they are still at school.
- Cooperates with school staff and works to integrate services accessed by the young person, creating stronger and more coordinated support nets.
- Addresses individual needs through personalised and comprehensive provision, moving beyond academic support, to address wider challenges preventing successful transitions.

Focus on developing soft skills

Young people who face barriers to making successful transitions often face complex challenges in their lives and may lack wider skills that can support their progress. Successful approaches therefore often deliver support with soft skills alongside measures focused on employment and learning (like basic skills courses and job placements).

Who does it well?



Adapted initial training courses (PAFI). In France, adapted training courses are offered to young people aged at least 15, at risk of dropping out and enrolled in a secondary school. PAFIs provide personalised journeys combining organised courses (taking place during school time but outside of the school environment) and extra-curricular activities such as an internship in a company or a period of civic service. Young people retain their school status throughout the course, which can range from a few weeks to a maximum of one year. The focus is on offering young people educational activities which are less academic and more focused on increasing their motivation. Young people develop their course together with a dedicated tutor. The learning pathway and objectives are agreed by the school, the young person and their family.



The Plug In programme. In Sweden, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting) introduced Plug In, the largest collaborative project in preventing early school leaving, which ran from 2012 to 2018. The project targeted young people at risk of dropping out of education, as well as newly arrived migrants, with the overall goal to raise participation and retention in upper secondary education. The primary focus was on the development of soft skills, which could enable young people to re-engage in education and training, rather than hard outcomes such as rapid transition into EET. The project, financed through ESF funding, reached almost 11,000 young people spread over 60 municipalities. There was an 85 per cent decrease in NEET among young people who took part in the second iteration of the programme, running from 2014 to 2018. A key characteristic of the programme was that it allowed for a high degree of local flexibility, which enabled municipalities to adapt delivery to local needs and objectives and work with a wide range of partners in a flexible and adaptive way.

Why does it matter?

- Combines soft skills development and wider integration activities, supporting the young person's development on multiple fronts.
- Shifts the focus beyond academic achievement, providing holistic support to tackle the wider challenges that prevent young people from progressing.
- Allows for flexibility in design and delivery, working around young people's needs and fitting provision around these.

Box 11: Youth Coaching for young people at risk of or who are NEET (Austria)**What is it?**

In Austria, a number of strategies have been developed in recent years to facilitate youth transitions from lower secondary school to upper secondary school, further education, or work. One of these is Youth Coaching ([Jugendcoaching](#)), which is targeted to both young people finishing compulsory school and at risk of leaving education, and to NEET young people up to the age of 19 (or 24 for those who are disabled, have a health condition, or special education need). Youth Coaching was introduced to support the government's effort to ensure all young people up to the age of 18 are in education or training. It is provided through NEBA, the Network for Professional Assistance, established by the Department for Social Affairs to support the reintegration of people with disabilities and young people at risk of exclusion. The focus of the programme is on low-threshold support, to bring those furthest from the labour market closer to work or education. It focuses on helping young people with their transition from school to further education and employment; through a counselling service focused on education and job-related options, as well as personal and social stabilisation. Youth Coaching is delivered through 38 provider organisations across all federal states in Austria.

What does it do in practice?

Specialised youth coaches work inside and outside of school, in close collaboration with teachers, wider support services (school psychologists, PES, health and social services, youth workers etc.) and parents. The youth coaching offer, provided through individualised mentoring, supports young people with professional orientation and with the selection of appropriate training, qualifications or alternative ways to integrate, or re-integrate, into training or the labour market. In addition, individual advice and support are offered to help young people deal with wider barriers (eg housing, debt, family difficulties). Young people meet the coaches two to three times a month for a period of up to 12 months. The coaches work with the young people to draw up a tailored career and development plan based on the analysis of their strengths and abilities, and work with them to plan their next steps and secure provision that best fits their needs. They regularly check-in and follow up with the young person to check their progression and help them re-engage when they disengage from support.

What are the success factors?

Around 30,000 young people engage with the programme annually. Key to Youth Coaching's success is the focus on low-threshold support with an emphasis on wider re-integration, including but not limited to academic and employment transitions. The tailored and one-to-one support provided by mentors, alongside the collaboration network involving school and wider support staff, ensures a comprehensive and person-centred approach built around the individual needs and capabilities of each young person. A key role is also played by NEBA, providing central coordination and ensuring a unified offer while allowing for local flexibility in delivery.

6.2 Cross-sectoral approaches

National initiatives for inter-agency cooperation

National initiatives for inter-agency cooperation. This involves coordination across national and local government, PES, education, and wider providers of youth services, to develop strengthened support nets preventing young people becoming NEET.

Box 12: Everyone mobilised against school dropout (France)

What is it?

France has an established NEET prevention strategy, introduced in 2016 and led by an inter-ministerial partnership including the ministries in charge of national education, labour, agriculture, and health, and involving local authorities, educational and youth support organisations, as well as young people's families and local businesses. The strategy 'Everyone mobilised against school dropout' (Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire) led to the development of a range of measures, which together aim to create a comprehensive support net to enable young people to stay in education, or successfully transition to other positive destinations. The strategy draws on data and analyses produced by the ministerial studies services, including the Centre for Studies and Research on Qualifications (CEREQ) and the Directorate of Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance Monitoring (DEPP) of the Ministry of Education.

What does it do in practice?

Measures include a training programme for teaching staff on detecting early signs of dropout. The training, delivered to teachers in schools, focuses on enhancing teamwork both across school staff (teachers, school psychologists, etc.) and between school and wider support services (eg social services), as well as improving communication with and involvement of parents. A further measure saw the introduction of 'School dropout advisers', who mobilise at the first signs of a risk of dropping out, collaborating with the educational team to coordinate the preventive action carried out within the school.

Alongside the advisers, specialised Education Psychologists (PsyEN) work with families and teachers to support the cognitive and social development of vulnerable students. Together, the advisers, psychologists, head teachers, head education advisers, school doctors, and social assistants form 'The school dropout prevention group' (GPDS). The group uses the 'SIECLE school dropout tool', a tailored tool to share student monitoring data. In addition to measures introduced in schools, national initiatives have also been set up. These include the 'Educational alliances', networks operating across the country that work to bring together stakeholders, including parents, businesses, and schools and coordinate interventions by various professionals in the fields of education and youth work.

The alliances can offer adapted or personalised courses to young people at risk of NEET, including opportunities for work placements or civic service. Dedicated 'parent spaces' have been set up in schools, encouraging regular meetings between teachers and parents, particularly those whose children are at risk of dropping out of school. Teachers are supported in their engagement with parents through the 'Parents' Briefcase' (Mallette des parents), a toolkit bringing together a set of resources aimed at strengthening ties with families and equipping educational teams to have constructive discussions with parents around their children's schooling. An annual 'Perseverance Week' campaign also takes place from November to March across all schools, promoting preventive action, and is supported by the School Perseverance Weeks Deployment Kit and Don't let go of school! toolbox, providing educational staff and students with guidance and resources to support continued engagement in education.



07

CONCLUSIONS

7 Conclusions

This review draws out a number of lessons and insights for how we support young people and improve outcomes and transitions. It reiterates that there is a diversity of approaches across countries, as there are in the UK, across the four nations and within them. Many of the approaches taken in other countries have strong similarities to the support that is delivered for young people in the UK. This is not surprising as we often face similar challenges and opportunities, are drawing on the same evidence base and over decades have shared learning and practice in both directions. In particular, all countries emphasise the importance of tailored and personalised support, effective one-to-one coaching and mentoring, strong local partnerships and collaboration, targeted provision for specific groups of at-risk young people, labour market and employer insight, and going beyond just the delivery of jobs and training support.

However, there are also a number of distinctive differences in other countries' approaches. Most obviously, models in other countries are often characterised by strong institutional partnerships that can bring together key agencies, services and partners locally to define local priorities, develop operational policy and co-ordinate local delivery. This 'devolution' however is also invariably within clear national (and stable) institutional frameworks. These frameworks serve to translate national policy to local priorities and needs, and develop arrangements that support practice sharing, learning and innovation.

There are also some notable differences in how support is delivered for young people, and in the forms of support delivered. One common thread across case study countries is the emphasis on approaches that are both targeted and inclusive: targeted often on supporting groups who are at greatest risk of exclusion; but inclusive in then identifying and engaging young people regardless of what benefit they claim or educational/ institutional setting that they are in – whether that is through one stop shops, or through integrated employment, careers and skills support.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that the case studies and lessons in this report are intended to provide examples of the range of approaches being taken to address what are often common challenges across countries, and to give pointers on what may be working and what could be learnt from in the four nations of the UK. We have not sought to rigorously assess the effectiveness of specific interventions or reforms. However, our hope is that these examples will help stimulate discussion of what we can learn from other countries and share best practice, and in the longer term contribute to the debate on how we can reform support, and improve outcomes for young people.



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