



European
Commission



Effective outreach to NEETs

Experience from the ground



Social Europe

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1 Introduction

Since the launch of the Youth Guarantee (YG) in 2013, the labour market situation of young people has improved significantly and there are now 2.2 million fewer young unemployed in the EU. However, despite this improvement, not all young people have benefitted equally. In 2017, over half of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in the EU aged 15-24 were economically inactive (are not actively looking for a job or other opportunities) (56 %) with large variations across the EU – from 80 % in Bulgaria to 39 % and 40 % in Spain and Croatia respectively.

The Council Recommendation on establishing the Youth Guarantee¹ places importance on developing effective outreach strategies towards young people and it is highlighted as an essential ingredient in the ‘early activation’ approach. The recommendation encourages Member States to ‘develop outreach strategies and introduce mechanisms to identify and activate those furthest away from the labour market’, ‘with a view to catchment and registration with employment services’. The principle of the Youth Guarantee has been reaffirmed by the European Pillar of Social Rights².

Despite the progress made since the implementation of the YG, some challenges still remain³. YG schemes have not yet reached all young people: particularly the low-skilled and disadvantaged are under-represented⁴. It is estimated that only 38.5 % of all NEETs aged 15-24 in the EU were registered with a Youth Guarantee provider in 2016. Increased efforts are needed to support young people who are furthest away from the labour market. Therefore, improving outreach and better engaging with non-registered young NEETs is a priority area for action. Also, a 2017 European Court of Auditors report recommended that Member States should “establish appropriate outreach strategies to identify the entire NEET population with the objective of registering them”⁵. The December 2017 Employment Committee (EMCO) Review on the monitoring of the YG highlighted the need to increase efforts to reach out to non-registered NEETs and improve coverage of the YG.

The aim of this report is to highlight existing practices, lessons learned, challenges and success factors on improving outreach to NEETs. Firstly, the report discusses the concept of outreach work and delivery models as well as the need to tailor practices to the diversity of NEETs. Secondly, it gives an analysis of current approaches carried out before the young person becomes inactive (prevention) and those to support young people who are already NEETs⁶. This is followed by a reflection on how to build inclusive partnerships to support outreach. The report also includes ‘top tips’ that are meant to summarise the main practical considerations under each approach. The focus of this report is on prevention, early identification, reaching out to and contacting NEETs⁷. The report reflects on the information and evidence available on individual practices, recent evaluations and research on outreach⁸.



2 Key messages

Strategic approach and flexibility in implementation

- Developing a strategic approach to outreach at national level helps ensure consistency, coordination and common standards. When designing effective outreach approaches it is important to get the right balance between establishing an overall framework and ensuring flexibility in the implementation. Overarching national strategies with a flexible local aspect to delivery help to ensure that the activities can be responsive to the situation on the ground and deliver the services needed⁹.
- The characteristics of the NEET population are very diverse and hence the approach to reaching out to and engaging with them varies across Member States.

The value of prevention and early intervention

- Prevention is better than cure. Intervening early to avoid young people from becoming inactive and distancing themselves from the labour market and social services provision is more effective and less costly than trying to reach out to those young people who are already disengaged. Outreach professionals can work with local schools to identify pupils at risk and take preventative measures to ensure that they receive timely support to avoid them becoming hard-to-reach youth in the future¹⁰.
- Countries which have 'early warning systems for early school leaving' in place have found that good results can be achieved when the system is accompanied by clear and timely support for young people identified as being at risk of leaving school early.
- Early advice and guidance can prevent young people from becoming disillusioned and dropping out early. This can be provided either by schools, Public Employment Service (PES) or other actors. Online portals and social media can also increasingly be utilised to reach a large target group via suitable media.

Mapping and tracking NEETs

- Mapping can enable a better understanding of the characteristics of NEETs at a macro level and where they are primarily located, thus allowing for more targeted measures at the micro level.
- It is important to keep track of young people throughout their journey from education to employment. Inclusive multi-agency partnerships play an important part in delivering appropriate methods to identify, reach out to, engage and activate NEETs and these partnerships need to be delivered in a co-ordinated way to ensure that young people do not get 'lost' within a system.
- Identifying hard-to-reach young people can be challenging as they are often not registered with the PES and are unknown to social services and youth services. Therefore countries could gather relevant information to identify who they are, where they are and what their needs are.
- The value of 'tracking services' to contact young people before and after they have dropped out and/or become unemployed is essential. Depending on the national and regional context, this role is fulfilled by different stakeholders such as PES (including specialised services), local authorities and/or different types of 'youth agencies' and other forms of youth oriented social work at the local level.
- Strong and formalised co-operation and information/data sharing between all stakeholders is critical to ensure that young people are not falling through the cracks. But data protection legislation can prevent organisations from sharing personal details of hard-to-reach youth with each other or with providers delivering the service.

Tailoring strategies and services to young people's needs

- Integrated service delivery (i.e. one-stop-shops) to young people can serve as a focal point to facilitate the contact with NEETs.
- Building trust with young people remains a challenge and can make securing engagement problematic. 'Peer-to-peer support', 'word of mouth' recommendations and engaging with youth organisations continue to be key parts of the process of building trust with young people.
- There is no single method that works best to reach out to young people. Different channels should be used depending on the specific group targeted, such as focal points/one-stop-shops, information stands at events/open days, and the use of different types of media including social media. For the hardest-to-reach, effective approaches include the use of mobile units, young 'ambassadors', social work, street work, cooperation with youth clubs, NGOs and all stakeholders and institutions that are in contact with (specific groups of) young people and 'speak their language'.

3 Context of outreach work in the EU

3.1 Outreach as an evolving concept

Outreach is a broad concept for which there is no commonly agreed definition. **Outreach work** is understood in this paper as informing young people, in particular but not exclusively those who are regarded as ‘hard to reach’ and those facing multiple barriers, about support available in their transition from school to work and the necessary steps to take to benefit from this support.

The concept of outreach has evolved in recent years. Over time, more diverse and structured outreach initiatives have been introduced in different Member States¹¹. Currently, Member States carry out outreach work to address youth unemployment and inactivity in various ways, including:

- Interventions that identify, approach and engage young NEETs, either through grassroots level actions (such as street outreach work) and multi-agency and cross-sectoral work;
- Interventions that take individualised labour market integration services and youth programmes out of their standard settings and bring them closer to the young people (i.e. bringing youth and employment services to schools, mobile outreach services or one-stop-shops).

Outreach methods across Member States vary depending on their context, the scope of implementation and the characteristics of their NEET population. In particular, Member State experience has shown the importance of adapting outreach strategies to the needs of the specific target group: starting with territorial mapping to identify both the characteristics of the group and the services available in the area can help shape the outreach strategy and consequent resource planning.

Experience from the ground also highlights that a successful outreach practice embraces the principles and ethos of youth work especially what comes to the relationship between practitioners and young people, voluntary participation and non-judgemental approach that does not exclude anyone. Targets need to be chosen in a careful manner, taking into consideration the background and starting point of the target group, and leaving room for celebrating small achievements¹².

Key partners and institutional settings

Delivery of outreach used to be mostly in the hands of youth, religious and community organisations and other NGOs with strong grassroots presence. This applies also today insofar that they play a key role and in many countries and contexts they still have the main role, but the part played by the public sector has increased considerably as the Public Employment Services (PES) and other statutory services have the mandate to reach those who are inactive.

Across the European Union, in the Member States, where there is no institutional or legal arrangement for NEET outreach, the work is mainly project-based, such as location and target group specific actions by NGOs or outreach projects implemented by public bodies with the support of European Social Fund (ESF)/Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) (or alternative grants). In many of these countries, not only the ESF but also the frameworks for the Youth Guarantee are acting as catalysts for further development of public sector driven initiatives in the field. This includes some Southern European countries and Baltic States, for example.

EU financial support for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee

The **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)** is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. It exclusively supports young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), ensuring that in parts of Europe where the challenges are most acute, young people can receive targeted support.

The total budget of the Youth Employment Initiative is €8.8 billion for the period 2014-2020. This funding is being used for a variety of measures that underpin the Youth Guarantee, ranging from outreach to vulnerable groups and activation, to hiring subsidies for employment of young NEETs.

By September 2017, preliminary information from Member States to the Commission show that the Youth Employment Initiative had supported approximately 1.7 million young NEETs. The impact of these interventions is positive with around half of the operations financed by the Youth Employment Initiative leading to a positive outcome – that is, a qualification or a move into education/training, or employment (including self-employment). The assessment of many Member States, therefore, is that the Youth Employment Initiative is having significant impact on the coverage and design of employment policy in their country¹³.

The Youth Employment Initiative is complementary not only to other actions undertaken at national level, but also to actions financed by the **European Social Fund**. The European Social Fund can reach out beyond individuals, helping reform employment, education and training institutes and services – reforms that are often crucial for effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Over the 2014-2020 programming period, the European Social Fund— in addition to the Youth Employment Initiative — directly invests at least €6.3 billion to support the integration of young people into the labour market across Europe. Many successful projects under the Youth Guarantee have been financed by this investment. Furthermore, the European Social Fund also supports young people in other ways through a total of €26 billion to tackle early school leaving and invest in vocational education and training.

Ideally, Member States should develop a strategic approach to outreach. Nowadays, several countries operate more structured and established national or regional outreach initiatives either within a broader policy framework for youth inclusion (i.e. a part of the YG framework or youth strategies), with dedicated and secured funding, or within a supportive regulatory framework (i.e. the practice is stipulated in law, a youth act for example). In **Denmark** for example, the 52 youth guidance centres covering the country have an established place both in the national policy and regulatory framework. It is the responsibility of these centres to get in touch with all young people under the age of 25 who are not involved in education, training or employment. They use a variety of outreach methods, including contacting identified individuals and inviting them to take part in an informal meeting at the centre or in a community setting¹⁴. With the support of the ILO and the European Commission, **Portugal** has developed a “National Outreach Strategy for non-registered young unemployed and inactive young people in Portugal”¹⁵. The Outreach strategy was launched July 2017 with the implementation of policy interventions being rolled out in two phases. The first one (2017-2018) aims to improve service outreach through the partnerships already established under the Youth Guarantee. The second phase of the strategy (2019-2020) will build on the practices and lessons learnt during the implementation of activities in the first phase. The ILO has published a guide for policy makers on how to develop national outreach strategies¹⁶.

In some countries, working in partnership to undertake outreach activities or test new outreach approaches is not a traditional way of doing things and might require a mentality change. Thus, developing partnerships between public sector and third sector stakeholders in delivering outreach activities often requires time and resource investment from all partners. This applies to all partners. For NGOs and grassroots organisations, engaging in a partnership approach to deliver outreach usually involves extra effort beyond their current activities, often based on free work by volunteers. For public sector organisations, similarly, engaging in new partnerships needs to be acknowledged in addition to their assigned duties and everyday jobs.

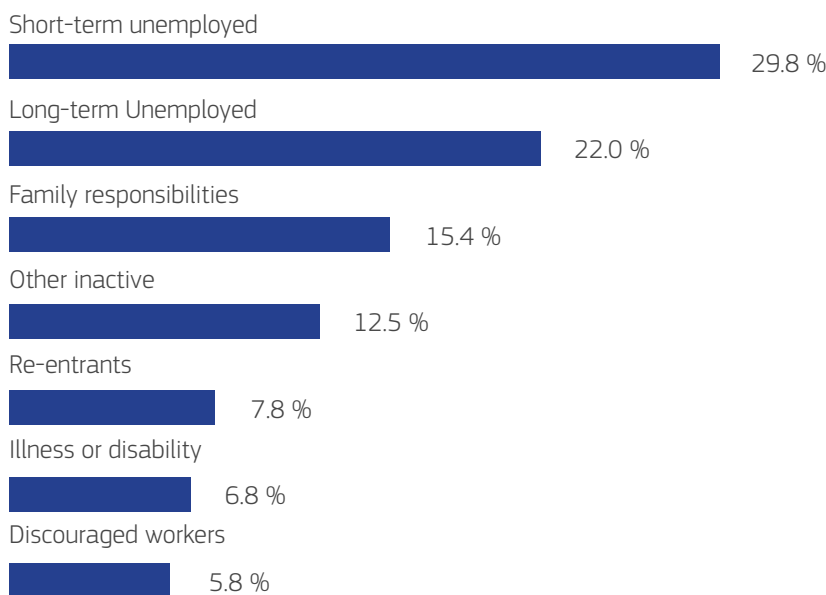
In this context, the role of the PES with respect to outreach activities is also important to bear in mind. The latest 2017 report from the PES network on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee showed that around one third of PES actually does not have the mandate for outreach activities, because this responsibility is allocated primarily to other institutions or authorities (e.g. the municipalities, the ministry of education or other institutions under its authority etc.)¹⁷. This relates to the PES in AT, CY, DK, ES, IE, LT, LV, NO, RO, SE, and SK, although in many cases PES do engage in specific outreach projects or activities of other stakeholders.

3.2 Tailoring strategies and services to the different needs of young people

An important aspect to consider is that NEETs are very diverse and thus sub-groups have different support needs^{18 19}. While NEET is only a temporary status for some young people (time between jobs or before finding a job after finishing their school education or higher education studies), for others, it can be a symptom of disadvantage (in many cases also multiple disadvantages and problems) and indicate a more long-term disengagement from society as a whole.

About half of the NEET population are economically inactive and not looking for a job, with large variations across the Member States. This can result from a variety of factors, including family responsibilities and health issues but also discouragement and a lack of incentive to register as unemployed. Young people's background is a determining factor in becoming NEET. Those with low educational attainment are three times more likely to become NEETs²⁰. Those with a migration background are more at risk (70 %), as are young Roma²¹ and 40 % of young people with a disability or health issue. Young women with family responsibilities are also disproportionately represented among NEETs.

Figure 1. Diversity of NEETs population



Source: Eurofound. (2016). *Exploring the Diversity of NEETs, Composition of NEETs in EU 28 (young people aged 15-24) in 2013*



Therefore, young people in the two broad categories of temporary and longer-term NEET status require different types of outreach activities. Stakeholders delivering outreach activities also need to be aware that the two groups are not separated by strict boundaries and hence an open and individualised approach to outreach is what works best.

For the more **'temporary' NEETs**, outreach activities are best focussed on ensuring successful transitions to their next job or education stage, by providing advice, guidance and information. Such NEETs are also typically more easily identified and reached as they are easier to track from education system databases or employment registers. As a result, they might require less intensive measures compared to more 'long term' NEETs. Successful outreach activities for this group include:

- Cooperation with schools and education providers to provide outreach services in education settings.
- Having appropriate information channels through the internet and social media, which such young people are likely to use when searching for information about their future options. These channels are effective in reaching young NEETs, who have IT and literacy skills and are motivated to search for such information on their own. Some countries such as Spain and Italy have specific Youth Guarantee websites aimed at young people who can access various information about the Youth Guarantee and register to receive individualised advice.
 - In **Belgium**, the Brussels J platform²² offers online information and advice for young people. The aim is to encourage young people to contact public employment, training and education services by providing them with quality information and to prevent breaks in their school or work trajectory. Each year, 10,000 young people receive information to address their needs for education, training and work²³.
- Having appropriate events, workshops or other awareness raising activities, which attract young people, who are already relatively motivated to consider their futures. National examples include:
 - In **Bulgaria**, the Employment Agency (EA) organises job fairs – an effective practice in bringing together employers and young jobseekers. During the job fairs the employers and the young people, who want to find work, can meet without prior commitments and obligations. A total of 19,461 young persons aged up to 29 took part in the 125 job fairs for youth organised in the period 01.2014 – 12.2017 and 12,938 of them were hired after participating in the job fair. 33.5 % of the youth who found jobs were not registered with PES, which shows that the job fairs are a good activation tool for inactive youth²⁴.
 - In **Estonia**, the PES is organising mobile counselling and workshops about working life and labour market situation at schools and youth centres. Workshops on working life, job search and employment opportunities are aimed at all 8th-12th grade students. The workshops are co-financed from the European Social Fund. Most young people participating in the Youth Prop-Up programme²⁵ have been reached through networking activities and mobile youth work. Additionally, there are programme participants that have been reached through awareness campaigns, some young people have contacted the service providers themselves (i.e., the youth centres offering the Youth Prop-Up programme) or have reached the programme through other youth work activities. The programme is co-financed by the European Social Fund.

For the more **'long-term' NEETs**, much more intense outreach activities are usually needed, including joint partner efforts to identify, locate and track such people, understanding the range of their often multiple support needs, motivating them to re-engage with society, providing adequate individualised and tailored advice and guidance. Thus, a range of outreach approaches are deployed for this group:

- Dedicated youth outreach workers whose primary job is to meet, engage and build up a relationship with the young people.
- Mobile PES and other partner services to reach young people where they are based. Mobile units work particularly well for rural and remote areas.
- Providing one-stop services where the complex range of support needs of this sub-group can be addressed not only through the PES support but also building on strengths offered by other partners.

However, one of the fundamental problems is that often the PES have issues identifying 'long-term' NEETs as they have never been or are no longer registered. Many national Youth Guarantee activities have sought to address this problem by undertaking NEET censuses, studies, or by cooperating with various stakeholders to locate these missing NEETs:

- In **Luxembourg**, a study assessing the situation of NEETs in the country was conducted in cooperation with the Labour and Employment Unit (CET) of the Inspectorate General of Social Security (IGSS) and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER) as well as all Local Action for Youth, all relevant ministries and the PES. They combined a number of administrative sources and created a “Young Persons” file, which contained data on all young people aged 16 to 24 residing in Luxembourg (and registered with the Luxembourg social security system). This allowed a tracking of young people’s situation from month to month (employed, in training - initial or continuous - or NEET). The monthly monitoring served to measure the persistence and recurrence of NEET status among 16-24 year olds²⁶. The study was co-financed by the European Social Fund.
- In **Malta**, a NEET Census was carried out in 2015. The NEETs Census consisted of a questionnaire aimed at gathering the relevant information on the characteristics of the NEET population and their expectations of education and the labour market. This exercise provided insight on the young people’s perception on government interventions and the awareness of government programmes, thus ensuring that future policies and measures are targeted at the specific needs of the NEET cohort. According to this census, NEETs in Malta can be sub-divided into three categories: Transition (Those young individuals who have chosen to take time out before progressing onto further or higher education opportunities); Floating (Youths who lack direction and motivation. They tend to have spells of being a youth NEET in between further education courses and employment with no training); Core (Youths with social and behavioural issues, including those who come from families where “worklessness” and unemployment is accepted as a norm and not much importance is given to further and higher education). It was found that the YG in Malta was mostly targeting Floating NEETs. As a result, decision was taken to provide more quality employment opportunities allowing for up-skilling and further learning and supporting employers that engage with young people, and in particular NEETs²⁷. The study was co-financed by the European Social Fund.

National experiences help to identify which outreach approaches are particularly successful for certain NEET sub-groups, when a particular need for support dominates.

For NEETs with an **ethnic minority background**, the use of grassroots NGOs and cultural mediators is especially successful. This is because they have already established trusted relationships with the community, either through a shared cultural heritage or ongoing work and support.

- In **Bulgaria**, this approach is implemented under the National Programme “Activation of Inactive Persons” through the work of Roma mediators (appointed in the labour offices) and youth mediators (appointed in the municipalities with the highest youth inactivity rates). Between January 2014 and December 2017, as a result of the work of the Roma mediators 15,918 young people aged up to 29 were activated to register with the public employment service. **For NEETs with family responsibilities**, especially young women, and **NEETs with a disability**, outreach can be effective when it is done in coordination with the provision of parental benefits and disability benefits. Alongside receiving benefits, young people are informed in an open way about opportunities (clarifying their relationship with the conditions for further benefits).
- In **Ireland**, non-jobseeker NEETs with caring responsibilities or with a disability are generally registered with the benefit service for receipt of either Disability Allowance (DA)²⁸ or One Parent Family Payment²⁹ (OFP). Although these groups are not subject to the “rights and responsibilities” conditionality regime applying to jobseekers’ payments, they are encouraged to take up appropriate employment, and are eligible to take up opportunities on labour market programmes. Further outreach measures are now being undertaken for people (of all ages, not solely youth) on disability payments:
 - Already, people with disabilities may on a voluntary basis seek an appointment with a case officer to discuss their employment ambitions and develop an appropriate personal progression plan. This service is available across the network of 60 Intreo³⁰ centres.
 - A more pro-active approach is now being piloted in one region, with more intensive promotion of the employment service to people with disabilities, including the designation of specialist case officers as contact points.
 - A key message to be communicated is that engagement with the Intreo employment service is voluntary for this group, and will not result in an automatic review of a person’s disability payment.

For **young offenders**, research seems to indicate a close correlation between low educational levels, social exclusion and offending behaviour³¹. In addition, an offending background makes the young person more likely to become NEET. Breaking the cycle of reoffending is difficult as these young people face tougher prospects for reintegration than any other group. Establishing trusted relationships is key as well as empathy and respect. The provision of such support requires specialised professional training (either probation office or social worker) or can come from peers (who have faced a similar personal experience).

- In the **UK** gang advisers have been established as part of the projects carried out by the UK PES to tackle gangs and gang violence. In the 33 project implementation areas, gang advisers work in the community with 16 and 17 year olds. They identify those who are involved in gang activity and those who are at risk of involvement in such activity. They provide the young people with ongoing support with the ultimate aim of getting them into education, training or employment³².
- In **Latvia**, within the project "Work and Do!" new communication strategies are tested, for example, with probation services and police, to help also young people with behavioural problems to integrate into the education system or employment³³. The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund.

Across the range of NEET sub-groups, the key to success of outreach activities is **tailoring and taking an individualised approach**. The YG has been in place for four years now and experience shows that providing tailored solutions and making NEETs with complex needs a key target group proved to be a novelty and a major challenge in several Member States. Despite significant efforts, the most vulnerable young people are under-represented among Youth Guarantee beneficiaries³⁴ and Youth Guarantee interventions often remain insufficiently adapted to the needs of those facing multiple barriers, such as poverty, social exclusion, disability and discrimination. This is the result of a number of factors, including a limited knowledge of the diversity of the NEET population and the specific needs of different NEET groups, as well as the lack of low-threshold offers, insufficient geographical coverage (often in rural areas) and the complexity of registration procedures³⁵.

Who is a NEET?

According to Eurostat, the indicator of young people neither in employment nor in education and training corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group who is not employed and not involved in further education or training, e.g. meeting these two conditions:

- they are not employed (i.e. unemployed³⁶ or inactive³⁷ according to the International Labour Organisation's definition);
- they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

The Youth Employment Initiative exclusively supports NEETs. The European Social Fund Regulation does not provide a definition of a young person "not in employment, education or training". The fulfilment of this criteria is determined in accordance with the national eligibility rules. National approaches vary and the Commission provides guidance to Member States on how the NEET status can be proven in this context.

4 Early intervention approaches

The Youth Guarantee aims at ensuring that no young person is left behind. For this to become a reality, it is essential to have the right mechanisms in place to identify and reach out to young people in a timely manner. Experience shows that early intervention is key in order to avoid long-term negative effects of unemployment and inactivity. Early intervention means not only prevention but also helping those young people who are already NEETs to get back on track.

Below there is an overview of early intervention policy approaches.

Who?	What?	How?	Who Intervenes?
Young people in education and training	Prevention	Systematic guidance provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and education institutions: teachers, guidance providers, psychologists • Public Employment Services, Youth agencies: advisors/ mentors
	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Early warning systems</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutoring/ mentoring of pupils at risk Other information/ communication activities 	
NEETs	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Outreach</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking measures One-stop-shop centres Outreach activities for hard to reach groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Other specialised staff from health and social work services • Youth stakeholders (including youth NGOs)
	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Early activation</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orientation and guidance Skills audits Individual action plans 	

Source: ICF

The Council Recommendation on establishing the Youth Guarantee highlights effective outreach work as an essential ingredient in the 'early activation' approach. The Recommendation encourages Member States to "develop outreach strategies and introduce mechanisms to identify and activate those furthest away from the labour market"³⁸.

A well-developed outreach strategy³⁹ can provide a useful overall national framework for outreach activities. However, the delivery needs to be tailored to ensure that in-country differences are addressed. For example, the characteristics and numbers of inactive young people may differ across localities along with suitable lead delivery partners. Overarching national strategies with a flexible local aspect to delivery helps to ensure that the activities can be responsive to the situation on the ground and deliver valuable services that matter and to do this, strategies should ideally incorporate on-going communication between national, regional and local authorities. This can ensure that there is regular communication between the different levels and it can promote shared platforms, along with common standards and procedures⁴⁰. It is also key to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved in designing and delivering the outreach strategy (see chapter 4.3 about building effective partnerships to improve reach).

Linked to this, the Member States have been encouraged to make use of available ESF (and YEI) funds to develop and implement outreach actions with at-risk youth.

The following sections provide an analysis of current approaches carried out before the young person becomes inactive (prevention) and those to support young people who are already NEETs.

4.1 Preventive approaches to reducing the risk of becoming NEET

Preventive approaches aim to support at-risk young people before they become inactive. These can be either comprehensive or targeted: whereas comprehensive measures aim to improve school-to-work transitions for all students, targeted measures focus on those young people, who are at a higher risk of early school leaving.

Preventive approaches involve close cooperation between different services and schools in order to help young people during the transition between education and employment or further education.

4.1.1 The value of guidance to prevent disengagement

The risk of dropping out of school is higher at key transition points in one's educational trajectory. For vulnerable youth, the risk is especially higher at the point of transition between lower and upper secondary education. As a result, the **provision of systematic information, advice and guidance** at an early stage (e.g. secondary school) before school leaving occurs is critical in reducing this risk. It can help pupils to make informed choices and facilitate school to work transitions. Making young people aware of the options available to them, including vocational training and work-based learning, can prevent disengagement from more traditional forms of learning. For example, in some countries, **career guidance** provision for all students is compulsory. In countries with a strong dual system like Austria, young people are required to make a decision about their future career at the age of 15-16.

- In **Austria**, career guidance is obligatory for every student at an early age as part of the Education Act. Usually, this is implemented by local PES offices who invite groups and classes into one of the 64 'BerufsInfoZentren' (BIZ, Career Information Centres). The visits include a presentation of the PES services for young people, with an emphasis on the importance of starting to think about career choices. During the visit the young person is asked to do research on a job-related question put forward by BIZ staff and teachers. The Austrian PES considers this approach particularly effective in engaging with young people early on to offer services adapted to their age group. It helps 13-14 year olds to develop realistic perceptions about what jobs are available to them, allowing them to make informed choices while contributing to reducing vocational education and training dropouts later on. In the city of Vienna, 32 full-time PES staff (AMS) work on implementing the initiative with support from teachers. The average number of students reached is around 15,000 a year; the AMS reaches around 40 % of school students. The remaining students are reached by other (private) organisations offering similar services⁴¹. Similar initiatives are offered in Germany.
- In **Finland**, the Career Start (ammattistartti) programme is aimed at pupils at the point of transition between lower and upper secondary education and who have either dropped out of or did not progress to upper secondary level VET. It seeks to encourage them to consider alternative career trajectories, VET courses and employment options, so that they are motivated to stay engaged in education. The pupil at risk together with their designated tutor develop an individual development plan of activities which can last 20 to 40 weeks, depending on his/her specific needs. The plan can include a wide range of activities such as vocational 'tasters', study skills/development, vocational and life skills training and short periods of workplace training. The evaluation of the pilot phase found that about around 70 % of young people at risk secured a study or training place, or a job, within one year of completing the programme. Given that one in four eligible young people participated, the programme contributed to reducing unemployment and social exclusion among young people overall. Due to the success of its pilot phase Career Start was mainstreamed⁴².

Top tips



Providing career guidance for all young people



Involving teachers



Close cooperation between PES and schools



Providing information on alternative career trajectories



Making information sessions youth specific



Using feedback from teachers and students to adapt advice and guidance service to better fit students' needs

4.1.2 Early warning systems

Early warning systems to identify those at-risk of becoming inactive are sometimes used as part of the preventive approach. These systems often collect information on the young person's attendance in secondary education and may include other information about their educational performance.

- In the **Netherlands**, as part of the national programme to tackle early school leaving (*Aanval op schooluitval*) introduced in 2005, a concerted effort has been made to identify those young people at risk of dropping out of school and to intervene before it happens. Since August 2009, thanks to a simplified computerised reporting procedure, all absenteeism is registered by schools on a daily basis on the Digital Absence Portal. The data are transmitted to the municipalities and school attendance officers based on the pupils' unique personal education number which enables the authorities to track them. Frequent absenteeism being a risk factor, school attendance officers can identify pupils who have missed more than 16 hours at school in four weeks and get in touch with them, their parents and their school to intervene quickly. The school inspection and school attendance officers also use the information to visit absent pupils at home⁴³.
- In **Lithuania** a National Information System on Children's Absenteeism and Pupils' Truancy was established in 2010 to identify young people who have problems in attending education. It integrates information from several databases and is shared with authorities in social affairs, internal affairs and health care⁴⁴.
- In the **UK**, the Pembrokeshire Youth Guarantee pilot project worked in partnership to provide a good quality offer of employment, education or training to inactive young people aged 15 to 26. An important part of the identification of at-risk young people who were still in full-time education was to use existing data. The Vulnerable Assessment Profile (VAP) database collates data about each student in school in Pembrokeshire. They are scored against specific indicators (e.g. if they are young offenders, their literacy and numeracy levels, ethnicity) and this scoring is used to calculate a 'vulnerability score'. Each school has a multi-agency team that comes together each month to discuss those students who have a high vulnerability score. The project also used another existing database to profile young people aged 16 - 24, and to subsequently match provision to the needs of the young person. The database labels each individual on a rating score (Tier) between 1 and 5. This information is used to profile young people and to determine what their needs are likely to be and what action will be required by outreach workers⁴⁵.

Top tips



Using established information and administration systems to monitor those 'at risk'



Targeting support at individuals and families most in need



Fostering cooperation between education, employment and social services



Engaging with parents and relatives to reduce the risk of young people from dropping out from school.



4.2 Reaching and contacting the young people

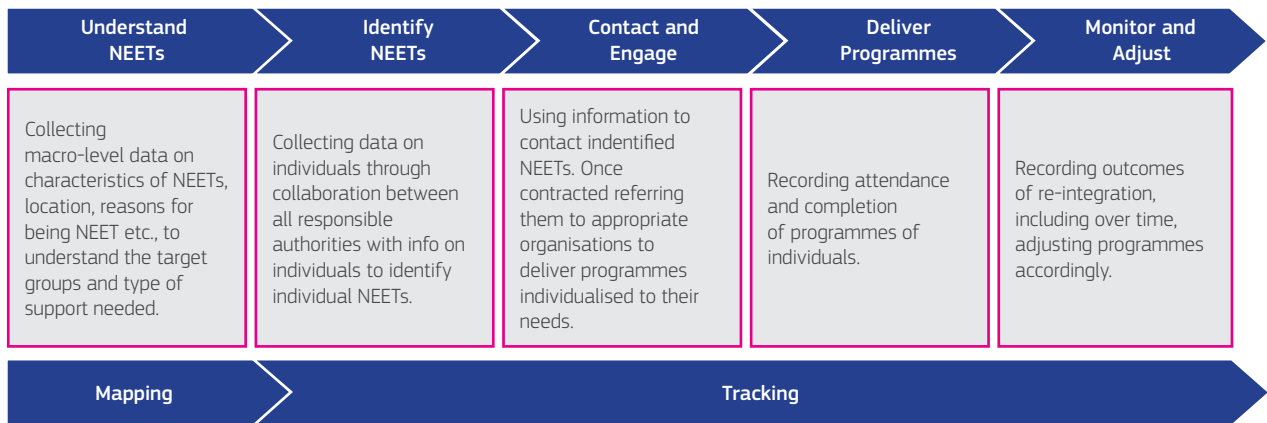
Methods to identify NEETs and make a first contact with individuals identified as NEET can involve dedicated youth workers, peer-to-peer outreach workers (young people trained to undertake outreach work with NEETs), NGOs and grassroots organisations. Increasingly first contacts are also made over the internet/social media either after referrals from youth workers, schools, social services or PES or through social media campaigns.

4.2.1 'Mapping and tracking services' to follow the young person

Mapping and tracking services that effectively **identify and monitor students and offer them support during school-to-work transitions** focus on identifying and making contact with young people who have dropped out of school or become unemployed. **Mapping** can enable a better understanding of the characteristics of NEETs at a macro level and where they are primarily located, thus allowing for more targeted measures at the micro level. **Tracking** data including information on the individual young person can then be collected and shared between different organisations, which often helps to identify young people at risk as early as possible. Using this data, the young person can then be contacted and engaged in support. Mapping and tracking systems are at various stages of development in Member States, mainly due to the varying political will and political priorities in place to create this across the EU⁴⁶.

- In **Luxembourg**, a national register of students in secondary education helps the Local Action for Youth to get in contact with school leavers to find out about their current activities and to offer them support during the transition. Youth workers from the Local Action for Youth offer services (individual mentoring and coaching) to assist young people in establishing a personal plan for education, vocational training or integration into the labour market. They also work in close cooperation with teachers from secondary schools to provide vocational guidance and information about different career guidance services in schools in order to prevent early school leaving. Moreover, Luxembourg also publishes annual statistics on early school leaving based on administrative data and a survey of early school leavers. With these data, services are better informed about the risk factors of early school leaving, such as age, gender and migration background⁴⁷.
- In the **Netherlands**, a national level agreement requires schools to provide data on (early) school leavers to the Regional Registration and Coordination Centre (RMC). The RMC also receives data from the PES on the early school leavers who already have a job or are receiving social security payments. This allows the RMC to make early contact with young people who are unemployed and who do not receive social security payments to guide them back to school⁴⁸. The municipalities can now also receive information on young people unknown to the PES or educational institutions⁴⁹.
- In **Portugal**, for the development of the country's outreach strategy (2017) a mapping requiring the analysis of the micro-data of labour force surveys and surveys on income and living conditions was conducted. This analysis enabled the creation of a statistical profile of young NEETs in Portugal, creating a typology of NEETs and their geographical distribution. The results were then used to design specific services and assign priority to groups of inactive young people living in different regions. However, Portugal still faces some challenges with this mapping, primarily related to the data being outdated as it refers to the previous year, and the situation of young people being dynamic. Moreover, the data is anonymised so it cannot be used to contact young people⁵⁰.
- In **Croatia**, a NEET mapping system has been functional since November 2017 and is based on a Cooperation Agreement on Data Exchange between the Ministry of Labour and Pension Systems, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Croatian Employment Service and the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute. The system is designed to identify unregistered NEETs and their characteristics, with the aim of further developing the system so that the PES can in the future contact and engage young NEETs, provide support, and monitor them until they have entered training or employment. The data is currently only being used for statistical purposes and analysis, as consent is not required for this, but the data cannot be used for contact; this poses a challenge in further developing the system. Data is used from two different registers, one on exits from primary and secondary education, and the other on exits from higher education. Whilst the former provides high quality data as diplomas are printed from this register, the latter faces some quality issues as some higher education institutions are private and may not be willing to share this data⁵¹.

Figure 2. Mapping and tracking in the context of outreach, engagement and activation



Source: ICF⁵²

4.2.2 Data sharing to identify inactive young people

A particular challenge is with those who are not registered with the PES and are unknown to social services and youth services. It therefore may take more time and resources to identify this group⁵³.

As indicated previously, a common approach to identifying young people is to **use the knowledge of partner organisations**. This can be as simple as knowing where inactive young people gather and meet. This information is often shared among partner organisations to develop a common knowledge base.

Partnerships and networking are therefore important to identify inactive young people in cases where comprehensive data sets do not exist (as well as to deliver holistic and comprehensive activation strategies).

- In **Latvia**, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Education, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth and municipalities have set up a network of service providers and specialised workers to contact, engage and register inactive young people. The municipalities are responsible for mapping inactive young people and they have agreements in place with service providers and NGOs to carry out outreach work on a local level. Each outreach worker is responsible for identifying the inactive young person, profiling the young person and referring them to local initiatives that they may benefit from participating in⁵⁴.

Using existing data held by organisations can be a quick way to identify young people. This may be data that the PES or partners, such as youth organisations, may collect and can provide a good starting point to work out who the inactive young people are for profiling purposes. For example, in some countries (such as Croatia) schools exchange data with PES on students at risk of dropping out and on students who have already left school so that the PES can proactively contact them.

Databases collating information on vulnerable young people are often held by schools, municipalities or social services. They are often regularly updated and they can provide a good starting point to identify inactive young people, or those at-risk of becoming inactive, who would benefit from outreach services.

While exchanging data about inactive young people between key actors in outreach work can be highly beneficial, it often does not happen. In many countries, there are legal barriers in place to prevent the sharing of data while in other countries there is the perception that sharing data may infringe confidentiality agreements and data protection⁵⁵.

However, in some countries this problem has been addressed at a national level with changes or adaptations to legal frameworks.

- In **Finland**, the Youth Act was amended in 2011 to include procedures for handling the exchange of contact information from young people. Key partners, such as education, social services and the PES, work together under the framework of the Youth Act to share data about young people who are at-risk and require follow up from the PES⁵⁶.

Amending current legislation to include data exchanging protocols may take time. However, it has the added benefit of ensuring that all involved have clear roles and responsibilities, that any issues around ownership of data are likely to be covered and it sets down a clear mandate for this to happen.

Where national agreements are not in place, some countries have opted to make funding for statutory services conditional to partnership working and exchange of data.

- In **Wales** the national careers body has a clause written into their funding letter to explain that they should work in partnership with other key stakeholders to share data with the local authority, local PES offices and further education colleges. The government is entitled to withdraw their funding if they do not work in partnership and share data then⁵⁷.

On a much smaller scale, the issue of data exchange can be overcome **by young people signing a standardised form** where they can choose which organisations they would like their data to be shared with. While this can be time-consuming and burdensome, it can be a suitable solution where there is no legislation on data sharing.

- In **Norway** the NAV tutors involved in the NAV Tutors in Upper Secondary School Project ask each young person to sign a confidentiality agreement. This explains to them how their data will be used and they can choose which other organisations (within the partnership) the NAV tutor can share their data with. All shared data is solely for the intended purpose of providing them with help and support and their data is not shared with the local NAV office. While this approach is suitable for small scale activities it may not be realistic to transfer this approach to a larger scale due to the time and resources required to go through this process⁵⁸.

Social protection systems can also help to identify inactive young people and encourage them to access services that reduce the distance between them and the labour market. These mechanisms can collect up-to-date information about inactive young people on an on-going basis, and this offers partners an opportunity to have the latest information on a continuous basis.

- In **Italy**, the Legnano Youth Guarantee Pilot Project used an existing database linked to social services in the area, SIL (*Servizio Integrazione Lavorativo*), to effectively identify inactive young people at risk of exclusion. This approach was intended to speed up the identification process and allowed the project to spend more time on developing effective outreach approaches, rather than spending time on finding the young people⁵⁹.

Alongside data sharing, sharing knowledge about existing provision is important to make sure that a young person receives the most appropriate support to their needs. In many countries there is a wide range of provision and different routes to employment available to young people. **Mapping existing provision is therefore important to ensure that all organisations working together have good knowledge about what is available.** This knowledge could also be used to streamline services where needed and ultimately, to ensure that better support can be provided to the young person.

Top tips



Being aware of data protection legislation and other legal barriers



Establishing communication and data exchanging protocols



Using the knowledge and data of partner organisations



Undertaking a mapping of existing provision and opportunities available for young people

4.2.3 Making contact and spreading the word

The advances in technology and the increasing use of the internet, social media and smartphones have made it much faster and more convenient for young people to connect with each other. Partnerships targeting NEETs can use these tools to reach out to the target group but this **needs careful consideration to ensure that the communication is effective**.

Strategies to raise awareness and encourage people to contact youth services include:

- Youth-friendly websites and information campaigns in the media/online, including social media;
- Dissemination of printed material, such as leaflets and brochures (including material in foreign languages targeted at young people with a migration background);
- Holding information stands in job fairs, cultural or sports festivals;
- Cooperation with those stakeholders in direct contact with young people to encourage referrals (youth clubs, NGOs working with youth etc.).

As there are a wider number of different channels, each containing many different communication platforms, effective partnerships analyse the situation before undertaking any communication campaigns. This includes looking at who uses what channels, at what time of the day and for what reason.

Using the most appropriate channels, organisations can craft messages that are tailored to the target group. Effective communication includes using **appropriate language for the target group** (e.g. no long, complex sentences); **adapting any writing styles to the choice of platform**; **taking into account cultural differences**; spreading **success stories** and involve celebrities; taking **feedback** of target group into account and **choosing suitable engaging visuals** that convey the right messages (particularly where video is the chosen platform).

- In **Portugal**, the media campaign about the Youth Guarantee included short adverts on the Youth Guarantee which were featured in YouTube videos on different subjects that appeal to young people, such as computer games.

Internet services and social media also play an important role in the efficiency of outreach methods. A broader range of services is offered through Youth Guarantee platforms, providing not only general information, but also information management tools and promotional features. Outreach workers frequently report using well targeted social media as one of the most important communication channels with unregistered youth as it tends to be one of the 'constant' features in their lives. They might change address and phones, but rarely change their Facebook or Twitter account. Social networks offer a huge potential to promote services and organise events for a large number of young people at minimal cost. Additionally, the information and content can be quickly updated and adapted to the language of the target audience⁶⁰.

- In **Slovenia**, the Youth Council launched a communication campaign in 2013 to increase awareness of the Youth Guarantee, in cooperation with other youth organisations and the governmental office for youth. Activities included press conferences, high-level meetings, launching a website and a Facebook page, as well as an art competition. Additionally, since 2014, the PES has increased awareness-raising activities aimed at young people by publishing information on social media, establishing a new information platform, and developing new applications for smartphones.

As part of the European Commission Youth Guarantee pilot outreach and awareness-raising activities, various Member States developed activities, including Finland, Latvia, Portugal and Romania. The goal was to encourage young people to register with their local Youth Guarantee providers by combining the use of traditional communication tools, such as leaflets, posters and radio spots, with social media campaigns on Facebook and Twitter. An electronic toolkit to guide young people through the steps to follow and the sources of information available was also developed. The lessons learned from the projects are highlighted below:

Activities to enhance impact	To keep in mind when planning...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing with target groups is crucial (helps target activities before rolling them out) • Linking to existing/Setting up of a YG official webpage where key information can be found and people can register • Use of Facebook, YouTube and other social media channels (but need to be updated and managed regularly) • Cooperation with celebrities, role models or popular YouTubers (boost interest from NEETs & media) • Both online and outdoor media advertising • Going beyond online presence: events in rural areas to reach NEETs and attendance to youth events (with presence of advisors) • Funny and catchy radio spots (also for streaming platforms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testimonies are useful but need careful selection and planning • Collaboration with sports clubs is a good multiplier, however it is a two way process (e.g. they should also promote the YG on their social media) • Leaflets should be targeted to partners and stakeholders rather than young people (who need rather online information) • Collaboration with youth workers can be very efficient • Information points such as Europe Direct and Eurodesk help reach out to youth all over the country (not just in capitals) • European Commission representations can pass on the message, too • Media and social media training can be needed (public authorities)

Source: ICF Mostra, EC Youth Guarantee pilot outreach and awareness-raising activities, Lessons Learned

In addition, more recently, through the EaSI-PROGRESS programme, the European Commission has been supporting Member States (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain) in their communication and information activities.

- In **Italy**, the plan is to develop an app that will offer young people virtual communities for self- and mutual-counselling, a self-evaluation tool and virtual profiling services⁶¹.
- In **Lithuania**, the 'New Communication and Cooperation Model for Better Information about the Youth Guarantee' project highlighted that the availability of structured and quality information about the Youth Guarantee initiatives was one of the key elements of successful communication with young people. It is important to pay much attention to the quality of information about the initiatives, make it understandable and easily accessible as well as to consolidate the information into one place. A crucial part of successful communication was to properly engage with the target audience via channels which are commonly used by young people. Channels such as social media, local events or viral videos can be very effective. However, it is important to adjust content to each channel⁶².

The **involvement of young people from different backgrounds in the design of communication strategies and tools** not only helps to identify the 'right' language, message and tone but also to spread the message about services among friends and other peers; the value of word of mouth as a communication channel of its own cannot be underestimated⁶³.

4.2.4 Using incentives to encourage registrations

Financial incentives, such as cash benefits, can encourage young people to register for services and ensure they benefit from the support available. But it can also help social services, or the PES, to gather information on the characteristics of the inactive young people to better target the support. Experience shows that in order for this to be attractive to inactive young people, it needs to be simple and quick to complete paperwork and payment to be processed within a very short time frame.

- In **Denmark**, young people aged under 30 years old who are not eligible for cash benefits can access social assistance. However, this is under the condition that they need to complete their education, or undertake a different measure⁶⁴.

Experience shows that **'word of mouth' and peer to peer recommendation can be more powerful in motivating young people to initially engage with the services**. But securing engagement will ultimately rely on the ability to provide a good quality offer to the young person, in a way that he/she sees as meaningful.

4.2.5 Facilitating a single-point of contact

Many countries have reinforced integrated service delivery and/or implemented 'one-stop-shops' whose purpose is to offer integrated, multi-agency services to young people. Often, one-stop-shops are based on voluntary co-operations between a number of organisations such as municipalities, NGOs, social and labour market authorities and employers. The **integrated, multi-agency services** to young people can serve as a focal point to facilitate the access to the services through a single point of contact. Initial support can be provided confidentially to young people.

- In **Sweden**, the PES created multi-skilled teams to support youth with complex needs (UngKOMP). These teams of PES employees and municipalities were created with the purpose of improving the efficiency of the PES and strengthening cooperation with municipalities in supporting unemployed young people. The measure will be established in 20 municipalities during 2015–2018, and will focus on young people with complex needs. Its success is due to the fact that it is designed from the viewpoint of young people, providing a holistic approach where different actors work closely in order to support the young person as effectively as possible. It also uses a more casual approach when engaging young people, for example by hosting meetings in a "lounge-inspired environment". The voluntary participation and a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which the teams interact with young people was identified as key to increase their active participation and to remain in the programme. The team is always around and can be approached any time by the participants without prior appointment. The aim is to foster an environment that encourages open dialogue and exchange. This initiative has reached 8,584 young people and 63 % left the project to pursue further education and employment⁶⁵. The project is financed under the European Social Fund.
- In **France**, the Missions Locales (ML) are grassroots-level one-stop shops open to all young people aged 16–25 not in education. They are linked to the PES but they are autonomous entities financed by local authorities and the state. They have the experience of offering advice in different fields, from employment and training to health, housing and citizenship, under "one roof". They are specialised in serving unemployed and inactive youth and the staff has a good understanding of the challenges faced by this target group. The MLs appear to have had a significant impact since their establishment. In 2013, for example, the 444 MLs together supported more than 1.2 million young people, while in 2009, of the 1.25 million young people supported by a ML, 487,000 (nearly 40 percent) had access to training or a job⁶⁶.
- In **Croatia**, an approach to integrated service delivery has also been developed through Centres for Lifelong Career Guidance (CISOKs). CISOKs were established in 2013 to provide individual and tailored services to users, in particular young people, based on their individual needs. Each centre provides a mix of different services (i.e. self-help, staff assistance, and individual guidance). So far, 13 centres have been established across Croatia and a total of 22 centres are planned by 2020. The project is financed through an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and its sustainability has been assured through national funding and the European Social Fund (ESF) for the programming period 2014–2020. Its potential benefit is that each centre tailors its services to the specific needs of its region in terms of both labour demand and supply. The results from an early evaluation are positive: they show that nearly 200,000 people used CISOK services between July 2013 and September 2017. In 2016, CISOK's services were used by 2,700 NEETs⁶⁷. The centres are co-financed by the European Social Fund.

For those countries with lack of similar inter-agency structures at local level, the risk is that the NEETs may need to navigate by themselves from one service provider to another, increasing the risk of getting lost in the system. But it comes with setting up costs and it still requires reaching out to the young person to get through the door. On the other hand, having the different services working together reduces the chances of young people falling off the radar⁶⁸.

Top tips



Bringing services (employment, social assistance, health, welfare and housing) together under one roof and having access to multi-skilled teams



Common approach and agreed criteria



Face to face support in combination with the use of digital platforms



Young person guided through the different service providers by a designated case worker



Choosing a location that is easily accessible and close to where young people spend their time



Offering personalised support, allowing the young person to make informed choices

4.2.6 Proactivity and face-to-face contact for the most vulnerable

Vulnerable NEETs – those who are disengaged and not actively looking for work and/or training opportunities, and who may also experience other challenges – often require **special outreach activities**. Proactive outreach often includes using **street-based outreach workers, youth outreach workers** and **specially trained mediators** from specific groups to facilitate access. This approach is important as it can effectively secure young people's trust. This may be very useful when dealing with migrant populations, including those who do not have developed language skills in their country of residence.

Street-based outreach workers focus mainly on the engagement of young people who are regarded as 'hard-to-reach' by visiting public spaces and places that are popular among local youth with the aim of building trusting relationships with them. Their work involves listening to their concerns and offering practical and emotional support and later inviting them to participate in youth services. These activities require the work of trained professionals who are able to establish a trusting relationship with the young people and open communication.

- In **Spain**, in the locality of Gijón, one of the pilot projects to test YG schemes, worked with street counsellors to improve reach. The two young women employed as 'street counsellors' by the project were professionals trained in pedagogy and social work and had previous experience working with disadvantaged youth in a local community. The two street counsellors carried out 40 hours of outreach work each over a period of 3 weeks. They worked in tandem visiting local hangouts in Gijón (parks, skate parks, squares, job centre, libraries, the beach) at different times of the day, in order to ensure that they covered a range of disengaged young people with different profiles and habits. Being the same age, dressing in the same manner, and speaking the same language as the young persons they were reaching out to facilitate the process of communication and help to build trust. The street counsellors referred 54 disengaged youngsters to the pilot project, of which 31 finally registered⁶⁹.
- In **Finland**, the network of outreach youth workers reached 27,000 youngsters in 2016 and provided personalised service to 18,000 youngsters. The responsibility of outreach work falls with the municipalities (youth departments). The PES, youth workshops⁷⁰ and one-stop-shops cooperate closely with outreach youth workers.

Some countries have opted to train young people who were previously NEETs themselves to provide **'peer to peer' support** to others in the same situation.

- In **Bulgaria**, the 'Youth Mediators' programme was launched in 2015 with the aim of reaching out to and activating young NEETs who are not registered with the PES. Youth Mediators are both PES staff and unemployed young people registered at the PES who are specially trained for this role. They act as intermediaries between inactive young people and public institutions that provide social, health, educational and other services. They are placed within the municipalities' administrations, helping to bridge the gap between unregistered NEETs and public service delivery, including access to the Youth Guarantee scheme. The programme is funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy under the national programme 'Activating the Inactive'. Around 350,000 EUR have been allocated for the training and employment of 100 Youth Mediators (including accommodation, transport and remuneration of EUR 290 per month). Promising results have so far been identified with over 5,000 former NEETs registering with the local PES as a direct consequence of their contact with a Youth Mediator and nearly 2,000 finding a job solely through Youth Mediators' support⁷¹.

Experience shows that outreach activities can be resource intensive as well as require the right skills to support the young person. The capacity of the PES or social services at local level might not be sufficient to deliver the services and activities in a timely and effective manner, particularly in those areas suffering from high unemployment and inactivity. Hence, it is important to work in collaboration with outreach providers (e.g. NGOs and grass roots organisations), formalise their role and avoid seeing outreach as an add-on activity.

Top tips



Being proactive and visiting young person in their usual meeting places



Building trust of young people takes time



Using peer to peer support: Being of similar age, dressing in the same manner, and speaking in the same language as well as having similar life experiences facilitates engagement



Being flexible and working outside normal hours



Listening to their concerns and providing practical advice



Engaging with the community



4.3 Building effective partnerships to improve reach

In order to reach out to young people, local, regional and national level cooperation and coordination of outreach activities have proven essential. It has been key to involve a range of relevant government and non-government stakeholders, such as employment services, education, social services, NGOs and community groups. This is because a single stakeholder on its own cannot successfully reach the different sub-groups of NEETs. These stakeholders join efforts to reach out to young people with the aim of ensuring that they get access to the information and support available within the framework of the Youth Guarantee. This is especially important as many young people need a wide range of support (social services, health, housing), additional to the 'traditional' PES offers such as career counselling. Ultimately, supporting successful transition of young people can only be delivered as a collaborative effort of PES and other key state and non-state actors on the labour market, the education and training sector, social and health services and youth work.

4.3.1 Ensuring coordination between partners works

An important aspect of the partnership development is the need for **systematic coordination between various partners**, including the PES, social work / welfare services, health services, municipalities or other relevant public authorities, depending on the country context. It is important to find a common ground within the partnership as everyone should work towards the same goals.

- In **Sweden**, a national youth NEET coordinator has been appointed. The coordinator's task is to encourage better cooperation among government agencies, municipalities, county councils and organisations at the national, regional and local levels concerning NEET initiatives, including outreach activities. The coordinator has been instructed to work in close cooperation with the Youth Employment Delegation established by the Government in December 2014 to promote local agreements between municipalities and the Public Employment Service on initiatives to reduce youth unemployment⁷².
- In **Germany**, a systematic partnership approach is developed. Collaboration agreements are in place on a local level between the Federal Employment Agency, Job Centres and Youth Welfare Services to ensure that activities are coordinated and there is a common understanding on how services are to be delivered. By January 2017, 289 collaboration agreements had been drafted. In addition, YEA also work with social partners and youth associations to deliver relevant services to young people. To improve this collaboration, youth employment agencies are provided with a self-evaluation tool by BMAS and the Federal Employment Agency to enable managers and staff to rate the quality of cooperation in the YEA and identify needs for further development⁷³.
- In the context of a large-scale active labour market programme for youth in **Hungary**, a counsellor-network hosted by the local PES set up or strengthened the already existing local co-operation system and interact with all possible local stakeholders. Coordinators are in a day-to-day contact if necessary with relevant local partners, such as educational institutions (secondary and tertiary level), adult training institutions, civil organisations, youth organisations, local and minority governments, social institutions, libraries, cultural institutions, homeless shelters etc. Outreach activities include among others advertisements (radio, TV, internet), participation at festivals, participation at programmes of partners mentioned above, newsletter to partners mentioned above, distribution of flyers and posters at partners etc. The programme is supported by the Youth Employment Initiative.

Some countries such as Germany, Finland and Sweden have **integrated all outreach services into one single point of service** as described in section 4.2.5. The latest PES report on Youth Guarantee implementation in 2017 found that 14 PES provide such centres (up from 12 in 2016)⁷⁴.

4.3.2 Building on the strengths of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

There is also an increasing tendency to involve **NGOs** in the delivery of outreach work, on behalf of PES. In 2017, 19 out of 32 PES have worked on outreach activities with NGOs, an increase from 17 PES doing so in 2016⁷⁵. This has been done in a variety of activities, including to share information, identify youth at risk, promote specific services and publicise the Youth Guarantee opportunities.

Involving youth and grassroots NGOs allows to capitalise on their strengths which a traditional PES might not have. They already have relevant contacts and specialised workers with in-depth knowledge of young people and bring additional resources which PES might lack due to the size of caseloads or the experience and skills of their staff. They find it easier to build a trust relationship with hard-to-reach youth through their regular activities. Young people perceive public services as being out of touch, unable to help and the embodiment of authority (some young people might struggle with this given previous negative experiences). NGOs are often held in higher regard by young people than PES as they may perceive their service offer as being more relevant and attractive to them.

However, the local and small-scale nature of many third-sector organisations is also a challenge for the PES, whose mandate is to reach young people across the country (or a region in regionally structured PES in some Member States, for example Belgium). This means that PES have many NGOs to interact with, which has costs in terms of proper coordination and cooperation. There are interesting experiences from several countries in this respect, aiming to overcome this possible fragmentation challenge by a systematic approach to mapping and developing of partnerships.

- In **Latvia**, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Education, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth and municipalities have set up a network of service providers and specialised workers to contact, engage and register inactive young people. The local municipalities are responsible for mapping inactive young people and they have agreements in place with service providers and NGOs to carry out outreach work on a local level. Each outreach worker is responsible for identifying the inactive young person, profiling the young person and referring them to local initiatives that they may benefit from participating in⁷⁶.

Several countries show interesting practices building on the strengths of youth NGOs to deliver a range of outreach work, ranging from comprehensive activities (Belgium), to street work (Belgium, Greece, France) and creation of physical spaces for young people to meet (Czech Republic).

- In **Estonia** evidence shows that such direct contacts are most effective in outreach. In 2016, the data from the Youth Prop-Up project shows that the most effective in reaching young people have been networking activities (35 % of programme participants have been reached through these activities) and mobile youth work (25 % of programme participants have been reached through mobile youth work)⁷⁷. The project was co-financed from the European Social Fund.
- In **Belgium**, during the first stage of the Belgian 'FIND-MIND-BIND' approach, young people are identified and approached by youth non-governmental organisations that get to know the young persons and offer them engagement activities. Both ACTIRIS (the Belgium-Brussels PES) and VDAB (Belgium-Flanders PES) use this approach. Both regional PES work with youth organisations to 'FIND' and identify young people by going out to meet them where they live or spend their time. Secondly, outreach workers from those same youth organisations engage the young person in various activities to build up a trust ('MIND') relationship, so that the young person is confident and willing to develop a career plan with the outreach worker. Lastly, the outreach worker works with the young person, to support them to implement their career plan ('BIND')⁷⁸.

Street-based outreach work works well in the area of outreach activities for hard to reach groups where youth NGOs are successful given their credibility and familiarity with the target group.

- In **Greece** a local NGO Emphasis undertakes street based work to help young people who are facing challenging life situations (homeless-rough sleepers, suffering with addictions and mental health issues). Services are delivered by volunteers and they provide a connection between the education and social support structures. They work with social professionals and local authorities to offer tutoring, counselling, on-going one-to-one support. They also provide additional support such as a Mobile Support Unit and emergency relief during extreme weather conditions for those who are on the streets and running 'social support corners' where advice and support on health issues, legal counselling and employment advice and basic needs (food, clothing, survival kits, baby and school supplies) are provided every week on the street. They 'connect people with the "system" acting as a link between those on the street and other professionals'⁷⁹.

Providing physical spaces for young people to meet has also been successful in improving reach.

- In the **Czech Republic**, OS Proxima was set up in 1993 and offers drop in youth activities focused on youth aged 12-19, in difficult life situations, living in proximity of the centre. In 2011 they ran 10 drop in centres in Prague and surroundings, worked regularly with more than 2,000 young persons and delivered over 20,000 interventions. The association also works with other target groups in difficulty⁸⁰.

4.3.3 Ensuring the schools and education system stakeholders are on board

In addition to NGOs, a key partner for the PES in outreach activities are **schools and education system stakeholders**, where young people can be reached in a preventative way before they drop out. 21 PES out of 32 (an increase from 18 in 2016) reported having proactive outreach work with schools in place⁸¹. Many PES adopt non-traditional approaches such as embedding their workers in the education systems (e.g. school visits or provision of services within the school), both to provide information on labour market / further education opportunities as well as career guidance or counselling.

- In **Norway**, the 'NAV tutor in Secondary Schools' pilot initiative has involved closer collaboration between the education service and the PES (NAV in Norway) using a preventative approach to identify those who are at risk of dropping out from school, including young people who are struggling with motivation, drug and health issues or experiencing severe poverty. The NAV tutor is formally employed by the NAV but is based in a school three days a week and in the NAV office youth team, two days a week. The NAV office at the school operates a 'drop-in' policy so that young people can see them when it suits them. In terms of success factors, the PES tutors are integrated within each school's student support activities as they work alongside the pupil service's team, and attend meetings including one to one sessions with students. This provides the PES tutor with a wealth of information about students and the school system that can help them to provide more appropriate and tailored support to individual students. The 'buy-in' from each school and PES office was key to ensure that the practices was embedded. Reducing the physical distance between school and PES support ensures close cooperation and means that no time is lost once the young person leaves school⁸².
- In **Germany**, a large number of Youth Employment Agencies (YEA) work closely with schools and this helps them to make contact with young people at an early stage. PES staff visit schools to provide information on jobs, careers and carry out individual profiling. In Hamburg, as a result of YEA action and the cooperation with schools, the number of school leavers who started an apprenticeship immediately after leaving school has risen continuously from 2012 onwards (1,338 out of 5,307 school leavers in total in 2012, 1,443 out of 3,731 in 2013 and 1,893 out of 5,059 school leavers in 2014). The cooperation with schools, allows the YEA in Hamburg to get in touch with young people early on, receive all necessary data and be able to track early school leavers and inform them about the services offered⁸³.
- In **Ireland**, young people under the age of 18 years, who have left the school system without completing secondary education, and who have failed to find employment, are provided with a quality 'second-chance' educational /training pathways outside the school system such as Youthreach or supported in re-entering the school system. Outreach to these young people, and their referral to relevant second-chance opportunities, is generally carried out by the local education authorities in liaison with their last-attended school. The 2010 overall evaluation and the ongoing centre-based evaluations have reported that Youthreach is successful and particularly strong in improving soft skills. The key identified conditions for success were having a supportive, secure and structured environment where the education is learner-centred. Young people are treated with mutual respect and are, in turn, expected to respect others. There is a substantial one-to-one input⁸⁴.

4.3.4 Maximising the services delivered by local municipalities

In some countries, the key partners in outreach activities are **local municipalities** and regional authorities or other local government bodies. Positive experiences show how maximising the outreach activities delivered by the local/regional government stakeholders can work successfully towards the target group.

- In the **Netherlands**, municipalities play an essential role to identify, engage with and support those young people who are not likely to apply spontaneously for social benefits and register with PES. Outreach activities are part of broader 'social work' activities that are carried out at local level. For example, social/youth workers employed by the municipality visit disadvantaged areas, meet young people and their families at home or in other informal settings. The municipalities such as Dordrecht, Tiel and Alblasterdam implement 'peer to peer' support, as part of their communication and networking strategy, with the so called 'Dreamteams', where young people act as role models. The young person who is providing the support receives training at the same time as working on their own careers. They are also used as a 'sounding board' in the discussions with authorities and key stakeholders, participate in 'roadshows' and visit employers⁸⁵.
- In **Lithuania**, youth affairs coordinators in municipalities contribute to dissemination of information about the YG, cooperate with local YG coordinators, municipal institutions and employees. The role of youth affairs coordinators is in particular important when trying to get the local self-government stakeholders involved. In addition, the network of the Youth Job Centres (YJC) was extended. Since 2016, all municipalities have Youth Job Centres. YJCs operate according to the "one stop shop" principle and provide vocational guidance measures for students (guidance activities are regularly organised in educational institutions, communication is being developed with career counsellors in schools), inform and advise young people on labour market measures as well as implement activation and motivation measures for young unemployed people. YJC provide services to all young people – registration is not mandatory⁸⁶.

4.3.5 A key issue for partners is funding

To be effective, youth and grassroots organisations and other partners need to have the right capacity to engage with young people.

Often, funding for the non-governmental partners to deliver outreach activities is project-based, making it dependant on the continuous availability of funding in the future and/or changes in the priorities of the funder. Project-based funding also means outreach activities are typically time-bound, which means that some young people 'fall through' in the breaks between the funding rounds or until new funding is confirmed. In addition, it is important to encourage collaboration between organisation instead of competition to 'hold onto' clients⁸⁷. This can affect negatively the quality of outreach work and jeopardise the coordinated partnership approach.

Several countries show examples of how such obstacles can be overcome. Outreach has been integrated into the standard service delivery of services, in a small number of countries such as Luxembourg and Finland.

- In **Finland**, the Ministry of Education and Culture provides an annual national grant to municipalities to undertake outreach work. On the ground, municipalities can apply to the Ministry to recruit a specific outreach worker⁸⁸.

On the more positive side, project-based funding can also provide flexibility and spaces to experiment more freely and test new approaches to outreach than would be possible in the mainstream outreach service delivery by the PES.

Funding is also an issue in the public administration. Many PES and social work/youth work institutions have faced cuts in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis and staffing and budget levels are only slowly starting to recover. This means a challenge to meet the needs for individual approaches required in outreach activities with the limited budgets of PES. Without additional resources, the challenge for PES is to look at how current resources can be used more effectively to meet the needs of NEETs. For instance, sharing access routes, services and delivery resources between partners to potentially maximise efficiency for all stakeholders, also through single point services⁸⁹.

- In **Estonia** the outreach services of the PES are being extended in partnership with youth centres.
- The **Netherlands** has agreements with municipalities, knowledge centres, schools, and the office for early school leavers;
- In **Portugal**, the PES has partnered up with private companies, such as McDonalds, through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to raise awareness and disseminate information on the YG.

4.3.6 Establishing partnerships takes time and resources and needs clarity over roles

Partnerships work best when they are tailored to the local context and as far as possible build on existing channels of cooperation/networks to maximise existing resources as well as the different areas of expertise and experience of partners. To have a successful partnership, it is important to **define the specific roles, responsibilities and objectives** for each partner as well as to establish **leadership**. This ensures that clarity exists as to who is accountable for which outreach activities, who collects information on which young people, and who has the ultimate responsibility for different aspects of the partnership's activities. At the same time, experience shows that if young people are passed from one organisation to the other, this can have a negative impact on their experience and increases the risk of disengagement. Clear roles of partners help to reduce this risk. In this respect, setting at least the broad parameters of the partnership working is usually helpful.

- **Belgium** (Le FOREM⁹⁰) uses a cooperation contract between stakeholders involved. BE-Le Forem has redefined the partnership between PES and Skills Centres and has made new cooperation agreements with the education system based on established principles, tools and processes to support the management of partnerships for NEETs.
- In **Croatia**, specific outreach activities are regulated by the legislation and written agreements on the cooperation between the stakeholders.
- In **Slovenia** the content of cooperation with the stakeholders in outreach activities is defined in the PES annual plan.
- In **Belgium** (Brussels region), the involvement of the three youth trade union organisations as well as two federations of youth organisations within the steering committee has been effective since February 2017, in order to promote the exchange of successful and less successful practices. Federations of youth organisations have also been invited to develop alternative outreach projects for young NEETs.
- In **France**, the Youth Policy Council (*le Comité d'Orientation des politiques Jeunesses*) is one of the first national authorities to include the youth organisations in the development of public policies. It has three working groups and one is dedicated to the "outreach and registration/mobilisation of youth"⁹¹.



5 Challenges and success factors

The following challenges and success factors have been identified for prevention and outreach strategies:

Challenges:	Success factors:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEETs are not a homogeneous group and knowledge about them remains limited – understanding the profile of the NEET cohort and providing services to meet their varying needs is key • Significant proportion of NEETs are not registered and are hard to reach • Insufficient linkages to broader frameworks on youth employment and social inclusion • Outreach is labour intensive and time consuming • Technical and legal issues limiting the gathering of information on pupils at risk and (early) leavers from education and training • Data sharing and data protection issues • Lack of cooperation among education, employment, social services and youth stakeholders • Some young people mistrust authorities and institutions • Lack of effective communication measures to inform young people about services available to them • Outreach work is still mostly project-based and often lacks a comprehensive approach • Funding is becoming more diverse but outreach work still often relies on project-based, time-bound funding; even established and regulated initiatives rely on annual grants, creating uncertainty during implementation and for the staff delivering the service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic approach to outreach, based on a clear mapping and coordinated activities • Early intervention and prevention based on identifying “at risk” young people still at school • Proactive outreach work and mobile units have proven successful in widening reach • Formalised cooperation and clear responsibilities between education, employment, social services and youth stakeholders • Partnerships bringing together all the organisations that are involved in young people’s lives from a local perspective • Active involvement of NGOs and/or youth organisations since they have in-depth knowledge and specialist skills to engage them as well as established trusting relationship • Existence of dedicated services in charge of reaching NEETs and delivering support and guidance • Flexibility, empathy and mutual respect as well as setting up realistic expectations • Network/Partnership based initiatives with new actors • Using a variety of communication channels but ensuring that the information is well targeted and updated regularly • Ensuring sustainability as an established outreach practice that enjoys financial, policy or regulatory support • Involving young people in the design of the programmes and regularly gathering feedback from the target group

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Since its launch in 2013, the **Youth Guarantee** has supported millions of young people across the European Union to find a job, a traineeship, an apprenticeship or to continue in education. Yet despite this, too many young Europeans are still without work. Across the EU, more effort is needed so that all young people can benefit from quality offers under the Youth Guarantee.

This report is one in a series of **five reports** on Youth Guarantee delivery, presenting existing practices from the ground from the first five years of its implementation. It outlines lessons learnt, challenges and success factors, aiming to inspire and help all actors involved in delivering the Youth Guarantee.

The report **Effective outreach to NEETs** looks at measures to better reach out to young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, and to encourage them to register for Youth Guarantee schemes.

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