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GUIDANCE AND OUTREACH FOR  
INACTIVE AND UNEMPLOYED  
**NETHERLANDS**

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ReferNet is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 28 Member States, plus Iceland and Norway. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training (VET). ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop’s work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway.

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## **Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed**

Many countries across the European Union (EU) have high levels of unemployment and of inactive adults. These phenomena are frequently associated with low levels of qualification and insufficient basic skills. They may also reflect lack of adjustment between skills demanded in the labour market and skills developed in formal education and training. In both cases up-skilling and re-skilling solutions could be explored to increase the employability of adults.

The national reports developed by ReferNet partners reflect efforts done by Member States to reach vulnerable groups affected by unemployment and inactivity and help them reengage in learning and employment. The reports refer, in particular, to measures which may include young adults not in employment, education or training (NEET) and adults undergoing long term unemployment (LTU), given their persistence in many countries and the high challenges these groups face.

The policy strategies and initiatives in focus shed light over ways to support the most vulnerable to find learning and qualifying solutions. Career guidance and counselling support to people with decaying skills, low levels of motivation and insufficient basic skills are addressed. Its instrumental role in providing information, identifying skills needs, clarifying career options and developing positive attitudes towards learning is made clear.

Whenever possible, outreach measures were described, addressing the ones who fall out of the scope of standard policies to support registered unemployed or recent education drop-outs. Many reports entertain an important discussion on the entitlement to social protection and its effectiveness in addressing the challenges of all demographic groups.

Lastly, Cedefop trusts that these reports will provide an important characterisation of current opportunities and challenges across the EU in establishing appropriate upskilling pathways for adults. Current European policy initiatives urge MS to integrate skills assessment measures with flexible learning and validation solution, where guidance services and outreach will necessarily play a key role.

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## CHAPTER 1.

# Indicators and issues

### *Introduction*

Early disengagement from education and training is an acute issue in the EU, because it frequently drives people to unemployment and inactivity. Also in adult cohorts low qualification in the face of the crisis has driven many people to unemployment. Low qualified are three times more prone to fall into a situation of long term unemployment. In this article, written on request of Cedefop, more insight is given in initiatives in the Netherlands in addressing the needs of NEET's and long term unemployed by improving guidance services and outreach mechanisms. Given the relative lack of knowledge that exists on current outreach practice, this is a priority for Cedefop and the ReferNet work (Circular 2017\_03).

### 1.1. **NEET's: the statistics**

The percentage of NEET's <sup>(1)</sup> (young people neither in employment nor in education and training) in the Netherlands is among the lowest in the European Union. In 2015, 9,7 % of the 20-34 year olds is not in employment, education or training, compared to 18,3 % for the EU-28 (see Table 1). In age cohort 30-34 the number of NEET's is the highest; almost 13 %, compared to around 7 % of the 20-24 year olds. In the age group over 25, the number of females not in education training or employment is higher compared to the number of males. The same pattern is applicable to the whole of the EU.

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<sup>(1)</sup> The indicator on young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group and sex who is not employed and not involved in further education or training. The numerator of the indicator refers to persons who meet the following two conditions: (a) they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the International Labour Organisation definition) and (b) they have not received any education or training (i.e. neither formal nor non-formal) in the four weeks preceding the survey.

**Table 1. Percentage of NEET's by age and sex (NL compared to EU-28)**

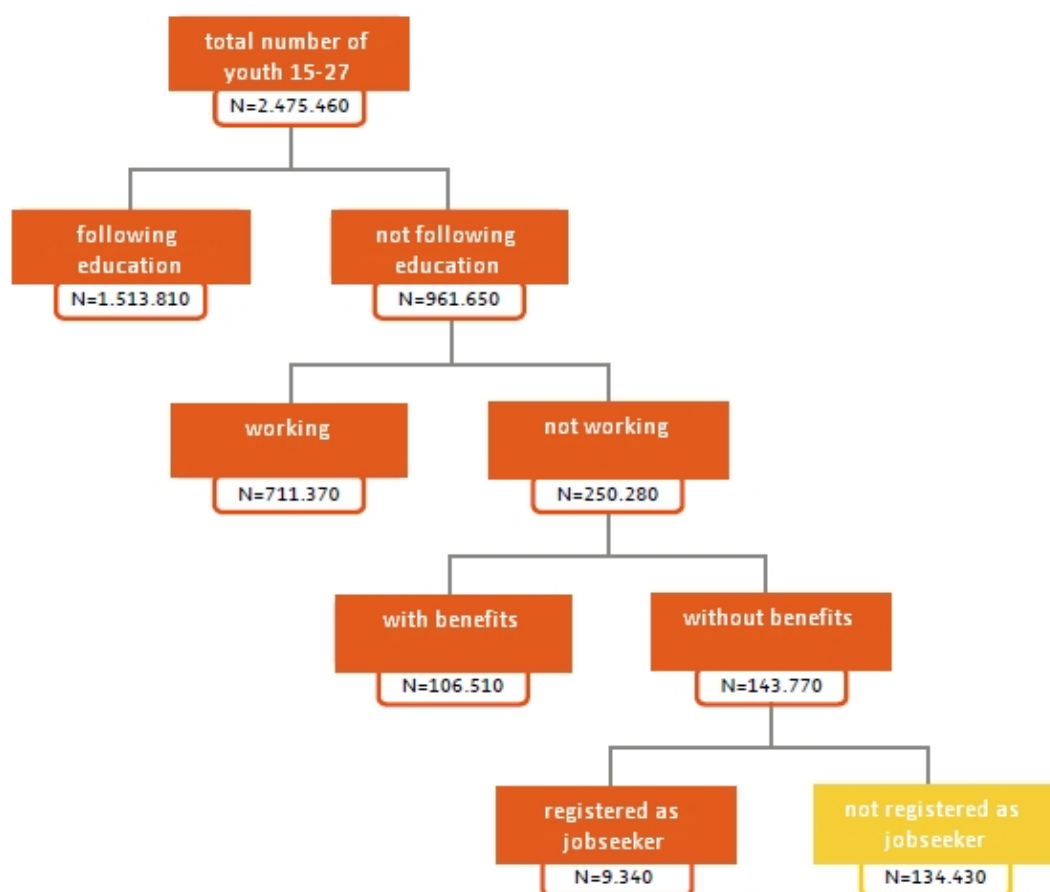
	NL				EU-28			
	15-19y	20-24y	25-29y	30-34y	15-19y	20-24y	25-29y	30-34y
Females	1,8	7,0	11,7	17,5	5,6	17,7	23,8	25,8
Males	2,6	6,8	7,7	8,1	6,5	15,7	14,0	12,5
Total	2,2	6,9	9,6	12,8	6,1	16,7	18,8	19,1
<b>Total</b>		<b>9,7</b>				<b>18,3</b>		

Eurostat: Edat\_lfse\_20, updated 25-04-2017, extracted 6-6-2017

In 2013, the CBS combined various data sources to analyse the number of young people not in education, not in employment and not looking for work (meaning: not registered as 'looking for work' in the registers of the Employee Insurance Agency- UWV).

In 2013, almost 2.5 million of the Dutch population was between 15 and 27. About 1.5 million of them were in education (based on the DUO figures for education registration), more than 700 thousand youngsters were working and 250 thousand did not have a job. From these 250 thousand youngsters not having a job, 50 % did not receive any social benefits, and the majority is not even registered as 'looking for work'. This means that 134.000 youngsters (5,4 % of the youngsters between 15 and 27 years old) is 'out of sight' by the governmental organisations (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Young people (15 to 27 years) to education, work, receiving benefits and registered as a jobseeker at UWV Werkbedrijf, October 2013**



However, the number of 134.000 youngsters is a maximum estimation. Possibly, a part of this group might not have been registered as they are in private education or are searching for a job, but didn't register at UWV as job seeker. Other reasons for youngsters missing in the formal databases are: 1) a number of them is not yet registered as they have recently finished education at least at EQF level 2 or are recently out of work and did not yet register 2) a small number is living in a family with kids, 3) is in detention or under supervision of Youth Care Institutes.

All in all a group of 66.000 youngsters between 19 and 27 do not receive education, don't have a job, and are not registered as looking for a job, don't have a basic qualification needed to enter labour market and is unknown to the formal authorities for any other reason.

Because of the obligation to be in education, the number of youngsters under 18 years old being 'out of sight' is low <sup>(2)</sup> in the Netherlands. And although youngsters over 18 are not obliged to remain in education, young people without a diploma at level 2 (EQF) are stimulated to obtain this qualification, until the age of 23. This arrangement was introduced in 2008 to reduce early leaving from education and training.

From the age of 23 the share of young people 'out of sight' raises from 5,9 % among the 18-23 years old to 8 % among youngsters over 23. Differences between native youngsters and youngsters with a migrant background are significant. Depending on their nation of origin, youngsters with a migrant background are 3 to 5 times more frequent 'out of sight' compared to native youngsters. The proportion of young people 'out of sight' is also relatively large in the greater cities, among youngsters (mostly women) in a household with a partner and kids (CBS, 2015).

## 1.2. Statistics for the long term unemployed

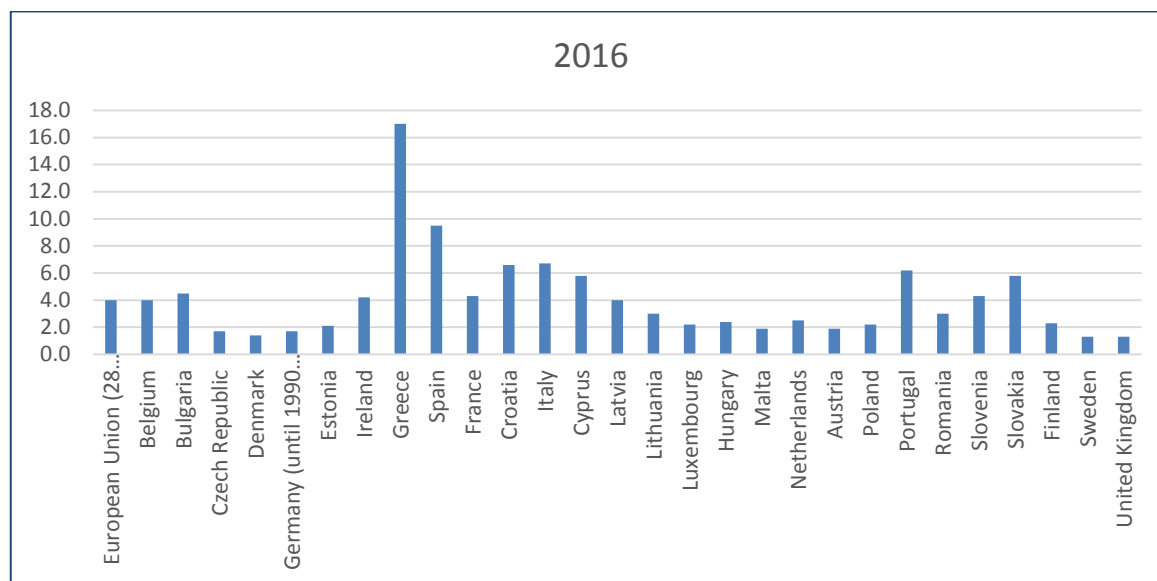
In 2016 the long-term unemployment rate in the Netherlands is 2,5 %, while the EU-average (EU-28) is 4,0 % (Eurostat, unemployment rate of active population) (see Figure 2).

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<sup>(2)</sup> Education is compulsory for pupils from 5 to 16. 16 and 17 year olds without a general or basic vocational qualification at upper secondary level (at least EQF 2) are required to continue learning, the so-called 'qualification duty' (*kwalificatieplicht*, since 2007)



**Figure 2. Long-term unemployment of active population.**



In the Netherlands, a relative large part of unemployed is long term unemployed <sup>(3)</sup>. Almost 42 % of the unemployed is looking for a job for more than a year (compared to 46 % in the EU-28). Compared to Germany and the Scandinavian countries this figure is quite high. The proportion of elderly people in long-term unemployment is higher than in other countries. In the Netherlands, it is more than 40 %, while in the EU approximately one quarter of the long-term unemployed is over 50 (see Figure 2).

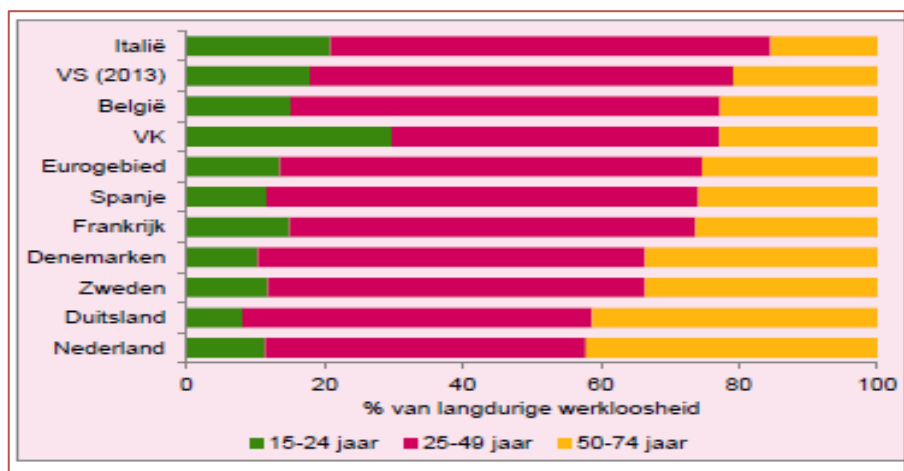
Older workers do not lose their jobs more often, but if they become unemployed, the chances for long-term unemployment are almost twice as high as average. Employers are reluctant to employ older unemployed, also because, according to the Collective Labour Agreements, their wage level, is rather high.

Long-term unemployment can cause people to retire from the labour market altogether or getting discouraged keeping looking for jobs. People who want to work, but not actively seeking work are formally excluded from the statistics for the working population; they are no longer included in unemployment statistics. In 2014 this is the case for almost 100,000; about 1 % of the working population. However, unlike, for example the United States and Denmark, the problem of discouragement is relatively limited in the Netherlands (CPB, 2015).

<sup>(3)</sup> Long-term unemployment: The share of unemployed persons since 12 months or more in the total active population, expressed as a percentage. The total active population (labour force) is the total number of the employed and unemployed population.

Long-term unemployment affects 55-plus and lower-skilled people more often than other age groups. Their share in the figures for the long-term unemployment is significantly higher than in the labour force (CPB, 2015)

**Figure 3. Long-term unemployment by age cohort (Eurostat 2014, in CPB, 2015)**



## CHAPTER 2.

# National strategies

### 2.1. Youth: preventive approach

The number of NEETs is low in the Netherlands compared to the EU average due to a preventive approach of this problem. As a result of long-term agreements between the government, schools and municipalities, the number of drop outs in VET fell within ten years from 71 000 in 2002 to less than 28 000 in 2012 (Min OCW, 2015).

Additional funding has been made available to MBO colleges (VET schools) under the condition of a successful reduction of the number of early school leavers. This principle of incentive-led policy is also applied in the new initiative to conclude 'Quality Agreements' between all individual MBO colleges and the Ministry of Education. In return to additional and partly performance based, funding schools have to raise their performance at several topics, for instance early school leaving (Min OCW, 2012).

For youngsters over 18 year old Regional Registration and Coordination Centres (RMC's) are responsible. Since the introduction of the regional registration and coordination act (RMC– Regionale Meld- en Coördinatiewet, 2001) 39 centres –evenly distributed across the Netherlands – are expected to reduce early leaving school under youngsters over 18 year old, for whom school attendance is no longer compulsory <sup>(4)</sup>. Each municipality is involved in a 'registration and coordination region' <sup>(5)</sup> (<http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0013111>).

The 39 centres develop policies reflecting the local situation. Regional Registration and Coordination Centres (RMCs) cooperate with municipalities, youth care institutions, employers, local police, justice, parents and students in decreasing the numbers of new school dropouts. RMC-centres have to keep track of young people up to their 23rd or until they have obtained at least a qualification at MBO level 2 (EQF 2) or another formal qualification at this level. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provide the Centres with data (based on the national education registration data collected by DUO) of young

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<sup>(4)</sup> For students under 18 the compulsory schooling act (Leerplichtwet, 1969) applies.

<sup>(5)</sup> The Netherlands is subdivided into 39 Regional Registration and Coordination Regions.  
[https://www.regioatlas.nl/indelingen/indelingen\\_indeling/t/rmc\\_regio\\_s\\_regionaal\\_meld\\_en\\_co\\_ordinatiepunt](https://www.regioatlas.nl/indelingen/indelingen_indeling/t/rmc_regio_s_regionaal_meld_en_co_ordinatiepunt)

people having no basic qualifications and have dropped out of school. In practice, RMC's receive (personalised) reports from DUO about students who unsubscribed from of school on a weekly basis, then RMC employees will contact these youngsters (by letter or telephone) to make an appointment for an interview. Based on the outcomes of the interview a tailor made programme is set up. RMC centres are responsible to agree tailor-made agreements with institutions and other organisations regarding coaching each youngster back to either VET or work on an individual basis (Cox, 2014). To become more effective, Centres share and disseminate their policies proved to be successful.

In 2015 the Government announced the Youth Unemployment Action Plan and made financial support available for fighting youth unemployment. In all 'Labour Market Regions' <sup>(6)</sup> municipalities and local partners (schools, employers) help young people to find jobs. This intervention builds upon the regional approach and cooperative framework created by the Youth Unemployment Action Plans in 2009 and 2013.

One of the programs of the Action Plan 2015 is "Matching on Work" (active mediation to work); a comprehensive approach including: the identification of job vacancies, reaching out to the young unemployed and matching jobs and individuals. Another initiative is to guide young unemployed people to a (learning) workplace. Special attention is given to vulnerable young people: youngsters not in work or education, without social benefits and not having acquired the minimum qualification at EQF level 2. RMCs are involved in developing these arrangements at regional level. (More information on the youth unemployment approach is available in paragraph 3.1.)

## 2.2. Unemployment policy

### 2.2.1. Active labour market policies

In the Netherlands, UWV and municipalities are the most important agencies involved in labour market policies. UWV is responsible for people with a labour market history and entitled to receive benefits from employee insurance funds, while municipalities are responsible for people with benefits under the Participation Act (social assistance benefit - providing a minimum income to

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<sup>(6)</sup> The Netherlands is subdivided into 35 Labour Market Regions.  
[https://www.regioatlas.nl/indelingen/indelingen\\_indeling/t/arbeidsmarktregio\\_s](https://www.regioatlas.nl/indelingen/indelingen_indeling/t/arbeidsmarktregio_s)

anyone legally residing in the Netherlands who has insufficient means to cover the basic costs of living) and for jobseekers without entitlement to benefits.

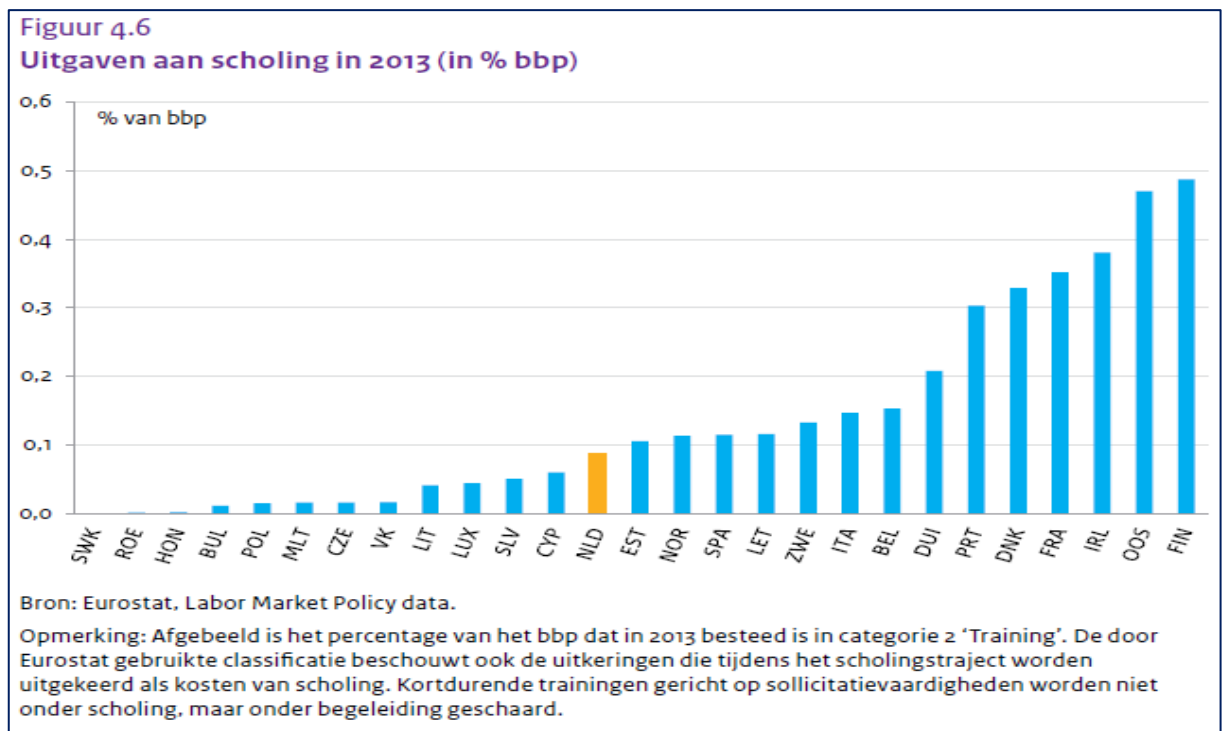
Municipalities (and, to a lesser extent, UWV) are largely autonomous in designing their policies: determination of the tools and for whom, why and when. As a result, the government's direct influence in labour market policies is limited. UWV and municipalities have to cooperate in the implementation of active labour market policies at local and regional level. For this they are entitled to cooperate with private parties, like temporary employment agencies (*uitzendbureaus*), reintegration companies, individual employers, or trade unions. To support cooperation between municipalities, education and the labour market. Working and learning desks (*leerwerkloketten*) are set up in all Labour Market Regions: <https://www.samenvoordeklant.nl/werkzoekendendienstverlening>

Which of the instrument is suited to specific jobseekers, depends mainly on the 'distance' to the labour market. For unemployed at a short distance to the labour market (in terms of education, and/or the duration of the unemployment period), support is limited to instruments aiming to optimise the search process. For unemployed at a greater distance to the labour market, it might be necessary to acquire new skills in the first place. For people at a (very) large distance to the labour market the application of more instruments might be needed. For them, a temporary or partially subsidised job might serve as a first step to a regular job. For some people, the step, to regular work, might be too demanding. In that case, they are permanently assigned to sheltered or subsidized employment.

For many years, the Netherlands has been amongst the countries spending large budgets on active labour market policies. However, between 2002 and 2013, expenditure almost halved, to 0.8 % of GDP in 2013. In the past, most of the funds were spent on (permanent or semi-permanent) sheltered and supported employment (in 2013, 45 % of the budget). Since 2015, expenses on sheltered employment have fallen sharply. The decline in Dutch expenditure on active labour market policy coincides with the lower expenditure on guidance and mediation and limitation of over funding expenses for temporary support.

Compared to other countries, in the Netherlands expenditure on education is relatively low in the field of re-integration policies (see Figure 4). Municipalities have the right to choose whether they use training facilities as instruments to help jobseekers to get a job. For the long-term unemployed receiving employee benefits (WW) no budget is available for training. However, recently UWV has started an experiment to support retraining for older (50+) unemployed to specific jobs that have labour market prospects.

**Figure 4. Active labour market policy; expenditure on education**



### 2.2.2. Decentralisation in the social domain

In recent years, the Netherlands has embarked on a considerable decentralisation of social policies. As of 2015, municipalities are given new responsibilities in the domains of youth care, long-term care (WMO) and income support (Vermeulen, 2015).

Municipalities became responsible for all youth care services, ranging from universal and preventive services to highly specialised care. Through a major reform of the long-term care system, municipalities were also given an important role in the assistance of people with physical or mental health problems in their home environment. Finally, they now provide income support for less than fully disabled persons without an employment history (as opposed to former employees), as well as social welfare services such as mediation, training and subsidized employment. One important argument for decentralisation was the hypothesis that tailor-made provisions are more effective when developed at local level; close to the people they are meant for. When tailor-made provisions are needed, municipalities are in the best position for providing them. Integral approaches to the problems (unemployment, debts, social and psychological problems) of the unemployed if all are executed and monitored at the same level. As municipalities are expected to perform the now decentralised services more

efficiently, their budget is subsequently cut compared to prior expenditures for these activities (Vermeulen, 2015).

### **2.2.3. Cooperation in the social domain**

The success of cooperation (at local and regional level) stands or falls with a shared sense of responsibility between the organisations involved. As organisations have different goals, use different tools, act on different incentives and have developed cultures, collaboration is difficult to achieve in many cases (CPB 2015). The Inspectorate of Social Affairs concludes that the level of cooperation between municipalities and youth care institutes and education and social support units, is low. Generally speaking, municipalities have little knowledge of the vulnerable young people 'out of sight'. They are obliged to follow up youngsters who don't have an mbo level 2 (EQF2) qualification till they are 23. In the light of the decentralisation of policies to the municipalities, integrated services and chain-cooperation have become even more important. (Inspectie SZW, 2015).

In recent decades, the nature of employment policies has often changed, shifting from decentralisation to centralisation and back, from public to private and with varying roles of social partners versus the government. In all cases, implementation of the new system will take time and organisations have to get used to their new roles again (Inspectie SZW, 2015).

### **2.2.4. Regular support for (long-term) unemployed**

The support from UWV for the unemployed people is fully digital. In an online environment one can find self-tests, information and online training facilities. If somebody was not successful in finding a job in three months, he/she will be interviewed by a UWV consultant. In the seventh and tenth month, follow-up interviews will be conducted either face-to-face or by phone. More personalized services are available for specific target groups (youngsters up to 27 years old and over 50) only. For 2016 and 2017, the government will provide additional resources to enable UWV to arrange more face to face contact within the first three months.

The basic services for beneficiaries provided by municipalities usually consist of a form of supervision/support from 'client managers. Client managers often have multiple roles: helping with preparation of a CV, supporting one's job seeking process, mediating between a jobseeker and employers. In addition, the client manager overlooks whether the beneficiary adheres to the agreed search-efforts. Finally the client manager decides what tools or additional services will be used for this particular person. Different diagnostic instruments are available for client managers (see [www.divosa.nl](http://www.divosa.nl)). A good diagnosis of what a job seeker

motivates and impedes to find a job is essential for adequate guidance and reintegration.

Client managers are entitled to make their own decisions in choosing instruments; they are trusted to base their choice on experiences and beliefs.

Although customer managers judge themselves as professionals, it is widely considered, in policy reports and in research findings, to be necessary to professionalise executives' implementation (CPB, 2015). At present, there is a knowledge-investment program "skilled at work" running to investigate the effectiveness of interventions, as a mean to enhance the professionalism of client managers. This program runs from 2015 to 2022 <sup>(7)</sup>.

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<sup>(7)</sup> <https://www.zonmw.nl/nl/onderzoek-resultaten/preventie/programmas/programma-detail/vakkundig-aan-het-werk/>



## CHAPTER 3.

# Two examples of practices

### 3.1. Youth unemployment approach

From 2013 onwards, the level of youth unemployment has decreased in the Netherlands. More young people stayed at school, or found a job. But despite economic growth, a number of youngsters is still and unnecessarily unemployed, according to the ministries of social affairs and education. This is especially true for youngsters without an EQF 2 level qualification, migrants, and youngsters on benefit. Important reasons are: a wrong choice of studies (for instance for a study with weak labour market prospects), underdeveloped skills levels in the employee skills, ineffective job search behaviour or not having an appropriate qualification level (EQF 2 is considered as a minimum requirement for the labour market, the so called 'starting qualification').

The 2015-2016 youth unemployment agenda has been launched as a follow up on the successes achieved in previous action plans in 2009 and 2013 and has been focused on these issues in particular (Min SZW, 2015).

In earlier agenda's on youth unemployment (2009, 2013), the ministries of Social Affairs and Education have decided to route the financial and other support for activities via the municipalities in the 35 labour market regions. In the Action Plan Youth Unemployment 2015-2016 this approach has been continued. Besides measures for migrant youth in disadvantaged areas, and initiatives to promote career learning in schools, part of the Agenda focusses on 'Matching on work'. The ministries, together with municipalities, UWV and partners, aim to match job vacancies with the vulnerable unemployed youngsters. This Matching on Work (MOW) initiative is financially supported by the ministries: municipalities received 3.5mln. euro annually in 2015 and 2016; UWV received 3.7 mln euro annually in 2015 and 2016.

To support the 'matching on work' initiative an administrative data linking functionality to trace and follow unemployed youngsters has been developed. This makes it possible to generate a monthly overview of all youngsters between 18 and 27 year olds for each municipality. Based on these data, regions have formulated ambitions about the number of young people they want to match to a (learning) workplace. Municipalities and their regional partners are also supported by the ministry by offering tools, checklists, guidelines, websites, newsletters, pilots and regional meetings. Also a research has been conducted to

identify the characteristics of successful outreaching methods for 'out-of-sight-youngsters'.

#### **3.1.1. MATCHING ON WORK approach**

The matching on Work (MoW) approach is one of the most effective measures when supply and demand on the labour market do not automatically align (Inspectie SZW, 2015). The MoW-approach consists of a wide range of regional approaches to give young people a good start on the labour market. The main three components of the MoW-approach are:

- (a) Retrieving job vacancies, maintaining contact and providing support to employers (employer services);
- (b) Reaching out to youngsters; improving job opportunities for job seekers by activating and motivating youngsters, offering guidance and training in basic employee skills.
- (c) Matching: a well-prepared pre-selection, personal intake and introduction of candidates to the employer are conditional for a successful matching process.

In 2016 the activities in the region have been monitored (Oostveen, 2017). In this monitor many regional innovative approaches to tackle youth unemployment are described. Some initiatives focus mainly on employer engagement, some on the matching processes and other on outreaching initiatives.

A number of regions has developed an outreaching approach. First a good insight is needed into the number and the characteristics of the target group. To identify these needs the administrative data of UWV, municipalities and DUO are often combined. This provided the regions better insight in the group of young people who are not active in work, training or reintegration. In order to reach the young people, it is important to actively seek contact with young people, by entering neighbourhoods, visit their meeting places and make use of social media. The regions also report that it is important to motivate young people and build trust. Many regions see learning and working arrangements as an important way to prepare youngsters for the labour market. Because in this way they are able to acquire a qualification at level 2 (a qualification level considered as a minimum to enter labour market).

One of the outreaching approaches developed under the Youth Employment Agenda is illustrated below, by the Amsterdam case.

#### **3.1.2. Example of the MATCHING ON WORK approach in Amsterdam**

In the municipality of Amsterdam, YouthPoints (*jongerenpunt*) for working and learning have been set up in cooperation with various departments from the

municipality. Increasing youth unemployment, increasing awareness of the 'out-of-sight' youngsters and a high level of fragmented municipal services have led this new working method with regard to unemployed young people in Amsterdam. These 'YouthPoints' are an entrance gate for all young people from 18 to 27 years with questions about school, work or income.

In the Amsterdam Action Plan Youth Unemployment 2015-2018, the City of Amsterdam has committed itself to place at least 21.000 young people in work or training in four year time (2015-2019). Part of this new approach are six so-called YouthPoints, which were launched in 2015 to provide a one-stop-shop for 18-27 year olds in the Amsterdam city districts. YouthPoints help youngsters to find work or training. Each youngsters is guided by a single case manager and supported by an individual approach. The integral teams at the youth points provide tailor made solutions towards work and training.

The goals of the YouthPoint initiative are:

- (a) To reach out to all disadvantaged unemployed 18-27 year olds;
- (b) To provide an easy access-point where services are integrated;
- (c) To provide guidance and suitable placement in work or training.

As time is crucial to prevent youngsters to become social outcasts, YouthPoint redirects them as quickly as possible back to school or towards work and/or training.

Involved are several municipal departments: Work and Reintegration, WSP (Employers' Service Point), Bureau Leerplicht (school attendance officers) and youth workers from several social organisations.

Although special attention is given to disadvantaged 18-27 year olds, all young people who need guidance or information are supported at the YouthPoint. In the beginning, the programme aimed at youngsters with short distance to the labour market. Since good results were achieved with this group, the focus has shifted towards the youngsters with great distance to labour market. The caseload of the YouthPoint advisors will be adapted accordingly.

YouthPoints are an intensification of already existing cooperation between professionals of different organisations in Amsterdam. Each of the six YouthPoints has its own resident team of youth advisors to help youngsters at the moment they enter. Integral teams provide tailor made solutions for youngsters. Youth work professionals in the city districts work closely together with these teams, mainly in cases of debt relief and youth care.

Steps to be followed in the YouthPoints:

#### **Step 1: Intake and outreach**

Youngsters can walk in during YouthPoint's opening hours. But since YouthPoints have an outreaching character, Regional Registration and Coordination (RMC)-teams visit the home address of unemployed youngsters. Especially youngsters without a 'starting qualification' and who are of compulsory school age (18- 23 year olds). A pilot has started in 2016 to outreach to 23 to 27 year olds. To trace these youngsters administrative databases are connected. The youngsters received an invitation to visit a YouthPoint. Also the networks of the social workers were used to reach out to the 23 to 27 year olds.

#### **Step 2: Supporting trajectories to school or work**

When visiting a YouthPoint for the first time, youth advisors will have an intake-interview with the youngster. When a youngster is legally obliged to go to school, the youth advisor takes up this trajectory. If the route towards work is possible, a job hunter will seek a matching job. They are assisted by employment agencies. When a youngster has financial problems, a specialised professional or organisation will be involved. The youth advisors stay with the youngster during the whole trajectory, even when they are not involved in the supporting action.

Core elements of YouthPoint are:

- (a) The outreaching character, which is a necessity to contact out-of-sight youngsters
- (b) Interdisciplinary teams. These teams make it easier to take organise the necessary support.
- (c) Gain trust of the youngsters by using motivating conversation techniques and stimulate reflection. Trust is a key condition to put these youngsters into action.

In 2017 the largest YouthPoint-team had 19 employees. Each city district has a team available with generic case managers, reintegration specialists, a specialist for guidance and job hunters. Most youth advisors have worked before as attendance officers of the Bureau Leerplicht Plus (the municipal office of school attendance officers), or as consultants for the labour market in the WSP (Employers' Service Point).

In order to gain trust, the youth advisors are trained in outreaching methods and motivational conversation techniques. It is necessary to build up the self-esteem of youngsters, to provide new perspective and get these youngsters to work or school with renewed enthusiasm.

The first results of the YouthPoint-approach appear to be successful. Between 2013 and 2015, youth unemployment in Amsterdam has decreased from 14,7 % to 9,3 %. The amount of youngsters that found work or training via the YouthPoint, has risen to 5076 in December 2016.

For successful implementation, an integral approach is needed. Management of the different organisations involved need managerial courage and the willingness to combine financial sources in order to set up this kind of service quickly. The outreaching character is a new element for most employees in the Youth Points. Adequate training is conditional to achieve good results (Oostveen, 2017).

### 3.2. Unemployment of young adults: the need for regional cooperation

A relatively large group of 23- to 27-year-olds is without work or education, with insufficient perspectives on improving their situation. Especially the 23-plus group without a level 2 qualification (considered in the Netherlands as a minimum requirement to enter the labour market) is vulnerable. Due to the age limit of 23 years, they are not supported by the RMC. The RMC's are regional centres responsible to identify and support young people until the age of 23 to qualify for a level 2 qualification. Because of their age, young adults are also less attractive to employers because of higher wages. An apprenticeship pathway (BBL – *beroepsbegeleidende leerweg*) seems the most attractive way to achieve the necessary qualifications. Because then they will receive an income. However, in recent years it is more difficult to recruit apprenticeships; due to economic crisis and other structural reasons the number of apprenticeship training places has declined.

The nature of the problems the 23 plus population faces, differs from relatively light to heavy and complex (problems with debt, health, living situation or relationships). Regional cooperation is an important key in finding better access to education for 23-plus. The efforts of municipalities, UWV, Vet colleges, employers and other institutions are necessary to make the placement of a 23-year-old in an educational program successful. Research shows that more cooperation is necessary (Eimers, 2016). In this regard recent research concluded that the regional learning and working desks (*leerwerkloketten*) could play an important role to initiate and support this regional cooperation.

These learning and working desks were established in 2005. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment then initiated an incentive scheme in the field of learning and working. This Learning and Working Program was aimed at strengthening the link between education and labour market opportunities. During the grant periods a nationwide network of learning and working desks has been created (in 32 of the 35 labour market regions). The grant period has been extended a number of times. After a positive evaluation in 2015, the minister has decided to fund the program structurally (Zwart, 2015). The desk is a cooperation structure, to link regional partners as UWV, municipalities, educational institutions, employers and private clients (jobseekers, employees and students).

The 'desks' aim to create a low-threshold advisory function for employers, professionals and private clients in the field of learning and working. The learning and working desks are active in the complex transition from education to work, from job to job, for young people and adults. Their core tasks are:

- (a) Providing information and advice on education, career opportunities and APL (a brokerage function);
- (b) Deliver expertise on learning and working arrangements to employers;
- (c) Provide information on (regional) educational programmes and the labour market situation;
- (d) Support the networking of all regional partners (municipalities, education and training, employers).

Together with the regional partners, the learning and working desks develop yearly business plans how to address regional education and labour market issues. Connection is sought with the action plan Youth Unemployment and Action plan to combat low literacy skills. The desks have a flexible and light structure so that they can respond to new questions and developments in the area of learning and working. The regional partners make use of the desks' infrastructure to respond, coordinate and initiate new activities. In this sense, there is a common strategic vision of learning and working in the region.

The main customers of the *leerwerkloketten* are jobseekers, employees and students. The desks provide independent and free advice. Services include information on education and labour market, career counselling and competency tests. Face-to-face contact is considered important for the target groups, but is partly replaced by digital services through the website, email and social media.

According to the network partners successful elements of the learning and working desks are:

- (a) Independency; delivering independent advice to customers, and an independent role in the regional network is considered important to connect different stakeholders;
- (b) A catalyst; by attracting attention for learning and working in the region.
- (c) Efficient use of resources, by combining resources from different partners in the region;
- (d) Focus on a long-term perspective, both for the customer and for the partners in the network (Zwart, 2015).

### **3.2.1. An example of regional cooperation in Twente**

In the Twente region the learning and working desk together with the municipality of Enschede and the mbo college (ROC van Twente) have initiated a project to guide 100 young unemployed people to a learning and working arrangement.

It has been agreed that the learning and working desk scrutinises the registration files of municipalities on suitable candidates. For fear of the lock-in effect, only unemployed people are approached who have a great distance to the labour market and are not immediately employable. A team of employees from the mbo college investigates if the persons selected by the learning and working desk are trainable and motivated. Various types of tools can be used for an advisory interview, including tests to measure capacity, personality, motivation.

If it is clear in what direction the possible educational program is concerned, the relevant educational institution and / or education will be involved.

Candidates then are supported in their orientation on labour market and education opportunities, supported in finding a learning workplace and maintaining the learning workplace (by job coaching). If the candidates have been inactive for some time, short training takes place prior to the apprenticeship placement.

The costs of the trajectories are funded by the municipality. The mbo college has a result obligation which means that after one year 50 % of the candidates didn't fall back to social benefits. If the ROC succeeds, then it receives a bonus, the ROC doesn't succeed a malus is followed.

In Twente, the partners have the impression that the cooperation between municipality, school and the learning and working desk prevents young adults from being circulated between the different organisations. This cooperation contributes in particular to the chance of successful completion of the program (Oostveen, 2017).

## CHAPTER 4.

# Reflection

Despite the many initiatives developed in the regions in recent years, the problem of the vulnerable youngsters are not solved. However, the urgency to help this group is widely shared <https://www.aanpakjeugdwerkloosheid.nl/aanpak/samen-met-gemeenten-en-uwv/knelpunten-jongeren-zonder-startkwalificatie>. But in the regions the parties involved (municipalities, education, employers) also experience bottlenecks in guiding young vulnerable people back to work or school (Frietman, 2016). Some of the bottlenecks can be solved within the region. Therefore guidelines are developed and disseminated. Some bottlenecks ask for further analysis and political decision making.

Cooperation between the regional partners to guide unemployed young people and young adults back to school or work is often organised in temporary projects, co-financed through action plans from the ministries. Municipalities have many target groups to cover and not necessarily provide support to youngsters that are not registered as looking for a job and not receiving any social benefits. The interests of the different organisation in a region are not automatically aligned: the RMC are responsible for youngsters until the age of 23, municipalities are responsible for youngsters 23 and older. Outreaching to unemployed youngsters is a new area for these organisations because due to policy incentives they used to focus on the prevention of early school leaving instead of guiding the unemployed back to work or school. The regional partners each face problems: municipalities (such as lack of financial incentives), education (insufficient customisation, such as flexible inflow, or the impossibility to combine part-time jobs with education) and employers (insufficient offer of learning and working placements) (Frietman, 2016), (Min SZW, 2017). The association of Vet colleges (MBO Raad) recently proposed to provide young people who are structurally disadvantaged with a combination of work and learning, intensive guidance and a form of income provision. A so called 'perspective year'. To solve these problems involvement of all partners is needed, including the political support of the next cabinet.



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## Websites

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