



# Building Bridge to Education

Developing young people's skills and confidence to enter vocational and further education

## DENMARK

**Title of the practice (in original language)**

Brobygning til uddannelse  
Udbredelse af brobygningsforløb – "Brobygning som førstevalg"

**Who is/was implementing the practice?**

The Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (part of the Ministry of Employment)

**Which other organisations are/were involved in the practice?**

- Ministry of Education (government)
- Partner vocational training institutions (education)
- Danish Public Employment Service (PES)

**What are/were the main objectives of the practice?**

The aim of the programme is to enhance the chances of young people currently not in education, but receiving educational benefits<sup>1</sup>, to start and complete a vocational education course. A 'bridging course' aims to make it easier for young people to enroll in 'mainstream education'.

**When was the practice implemented?**

The pilot programme 'Building Bridge to Education' (Brobygning til uddannelse) was launched in 2013 and ran through 2014. The positive results from its evaluation resulted in the decision to implement two new programmes:

- 'Extending the use of Building Bridge to Education - Bridge building as a first choice' (Udbredelse af brobygningsforløb – "Brobygning som førstevalg") an implementation programme, rolling out the 'bridging course' concept in 34 municipalities. The programme was implemented in 2016-2017.
- 'Job Bridge to Education' with a randomized control trial conducted from 2018-2020<sup>2</sup>.

**Who is/was targeted by the practice?**

Young people aged 18 to 29 who are receiving education aid but not currently enrolled in mainstream education. Contrary to other bridge building initiatives, "Job Bridge to Education" targets those recipients of education aid who are identified through objective standards in the Danish cash benefit system as having the greatest challenges towards obtaining an education.

**What activities are/were carried out?**

Young people can sign up to a 'bridging course' at the PES. Within a few days they are placed at a vocational school where they study on 'regular' courses. By immersing young people into student life, including its social aspects, it is expected that they will feel more confident in their ability to continue education.

<sup>1</sup> Educational benefits are provided to young people who are expected to complete some form of education.

<sup>2</sup> A separate Youth Guarantee promising practice fiche is dedicated to this programme.

Each participant has a mentor supporting them throughout their time in the programme and beyond. The mentor helps them to select courses and short traineeships at vocational schools and enterprises. On average, participants spend 3 months in the programme, although this can be shorter or longer, depending on their needs. After the completion of the 'bridging course' the mentor supports the young person until they enroll in 'mainstream education'.

As a part of 'bridging course' young people take part in:

- courses such as mathematics and Danish language to upgrade their basic skills.
- numerous traineeships at enterprises. If participants know what they want to pursue, the traineeships can be longer, but less numerous. Others can take part in a variety of shorter traineeships to have greater clarity about the kind of vocational education they want to pursue.

To roll out 'bridging courses' in new municipalities the following activities were implemented under the programme 'Extending the use of Building Bridge to Education - Bridge building as a first choice':

- The programme funds were used to employ a local project manager in the participating 34 municipalities and schools.
- Each new local project implemented under the programme 'Extending the use of Building Bridge to Education - Bridge building as a first choice' was matched with an expert from the pilot phase and was offered support from external consultants to ensure the right implementation of the 'bridging courses'.
- Each new local project also received a 'starting package' with information about how to secure a smooth implementation, based on knowledge and experiences from the pilot phase.

## What are/were the sources of funding?

'Building Bridge to Education' was funded by a combination of means from the rate adjustment pool (Satspuljen<sup>3</sup>) and funds specially allocated to Bridge Building as a part of the youth package in 2012. In the period 2013-2014 DKK 130 million (EUR 17.4 million) were allocated to the pilot programme. The implementation programme 'Extending the use of Building Bridge to Education - Bridge building as a first choice' had a budget of DKK 25 million (EUR 3.36 million) for 2016-2017 period.

## What are/were the outputs: people reached and products?

### Outputs

- 2 837 young people had taken part in 'Building Bridge to Education' by 2015. In the programme launched in 2016 expanding the support to 34 municipalities, nearly 3 000 unemployed young people took part by the end of 2017.
- More than 40 vocational schools across Denmark participated in the pilot programme 'Building Bridge to Education'.
- Over 50% of the participants of the pilot programme subsequently started an education or found employment.

### Products

- PES and participating vocational schools prepared a website with information on 'Building Bridge to Education' that was used to inform the implementation programme 'Extending the use of Building Bridge to Education - Bridge building as a first choice'. The website provides information and advice to professionals and to young people participating in the 'bridging courses'.

<sup>3</sup> Public pool of funds earmarked for the most disadvantaged groups of citizens in the Danish society. Allocated to specific projects on a yearly basis.

**What are/were the outcomes: medium-term results or effects?**

The 2015 evaluation of 'Building Bridge to Education' demonstrated the following outcomes<sup>4</sup>:

- The share of young people in mainstream education (basic and more advanced) 25 weeks after starting the programme is 15 percentage points higher than the control group.
- 75% of participants reported that they are considering completing some form of mainstream education.
- 87% of participants felt that having a mentor was important in helping them to address their challenges.

The final evaluation of the implementation programme 'Extending the use of Building Bridge to Education - Bridge building as a first choice' will be published in the third quarter of 2018.

**What are/were the lessons learnt and success factors?**

**Lessons Learnt**

- The larger than anticipated absenteeism<sup>5</sup> amongst participants demonstrated the need to further enhance their motivation to complete the programme.
- The absences were mainly due to insecurity and educational fatigue which was especially prevalent among young people with mental health issues. One possible solution is to better address the needs and challenges of the participants when designing the programme, rather than leaving greater responsibility to the mentors.

**Success Factors**

- Participants are placed in vocational schools. This gives them first-hand experience of what it is like to go back to education or training, and should encourage them to pursue this after the programme.
- Mentors play central role in motivating and engaging young people throughout the programme. Furthermore, their follow-up support increases the chances that participants enroll to mainstream education.
- The individualised approach, in tailoring both the modules and traineeships to needs and preferences of young people, is vital in maintaining participants' motivation and increasing the likelihood that they continue in education or training afterwards.

**What are key sources of information?**

Evaluation: <https://star.dk/om-styrelsen/publikationer/2016/02/evaluering-af-brobygning-til-uddannelse/> (DK)

Evaluation: Updated effect analysis of Building Bridge to Education: <https://star.dk/om-styrelsen/publikationer/2017/05/opdateret-effektevaluering-af-brobygning-til-uddannelse/> (DK)

Website (Bridge Building to Education): <https://star.dk/indsatser-og-ordninger/vejledning-opkvalificering-og-uddannelse/brobygning-til-uddannelse/> (DK)

<sup>4</sup> <https://star.dk/om-styrelsen/publikationer/2015/11/effektmaaling-af-videnspilotten-brobygning-til-uddannelse/>

<sup>5</sup> 25% of participants have been absent for more than half of the scheduled time.