



Peer Review on “Active inclusion of young adults receiving social assistance benefits”

Oslo (Norway), 23 and 24 November 2022

Synthesis Report

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	6
1.1. The EU policy context.....	6
1.2. Background to the Peer Review	8
2. Host country practice: Social assistance and activation policies in Norway.....	9
3. Key Peer Review discussion outcomes.....	11
3.1. Individualised active inclusion programmes, measures and activities for young adults	11
3.1.1. Shifting from employment-led activation towards a social inclusion approach	11
3.1.2. Tailored Support	12
3.1.3. Close follow-up and accompaniment from qualified staff.....	13
3.1.4. Long-term employment perspective	13
3.2. Designing and implementing integrated and tailored services for active inclusion.....	14
3.2.1. Coordination between actors responsible for active inclusion	14
3.2.2. Involvement of users.....	15
3.2.3. Funding tailored and integrated services.....	15
4. Conclusion	16

1. Introduction

The focus of this Peer Review was on active inclusion measures for young adults receiving social assistance benefits, who may face multiple barriers to gaining employment and fully integrating in society. These measures, aiming to get young adults into education or employment, are most effective as part of a wider social inclusion approach that addresses the diverse and complex needs of those young adults in vulnerable situations.

The activation of young people is a policy priority of national governments and at the European level. In many Member States, social assistance schemes and activation policies are closely connected in their social protection systems with the aim of strengthening beneficiaries’ possibility of entering employment and becoming economically independent. Nevertheless, young adults (aged between 18-24) in Europe today are more exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion compared with their older peers. ⁽¹⁾

Against this backdrop, the Peer Review was an opportunity to assess whether the activation measures in Member States need to be adapted to reflect the diverse and complex situations of young adults today as well as what agencies and roles would need to be involved to put in place these services. Event participants discussed barriers to activation of young people and their needs beyond employment, measures and programmes to facilitate entry into education or the labour market, methods of coordination of stakeholders, and balancing conditionalities with incentives in the design of inclusive activation policies. In addition, local Norwegian innovative programmes targeted at young adults in vulnerable situations as part of active inclusion measures were presented at the Peer Review.

The Peer Review was hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. It brought together government representatives and local-level social services representatives from the host country (Norway), five peer countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta, and the Netherlands), representatives of the European Commission and the European Social Network, and independent thematic experts.

1.1. The EU policy context

At EU level, there is an extensive policy framework that aims to give young adults farthest from the labour market more inclusive opportunities in education and the job market as well as to ensure their social inclusion. The 1992 Council Recommendation recognised the importance of ensuring “the basic right of a person to sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity.” ⁽²⁾ In its 2008 Active Inclusion Recommendation ⁽³⁾, the European Commission called upon the Member States to design and implement a strategy for the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market. The strategy promotes the integration of three key and equally important

⁽¹⁾ The Thematic Paper prepared in advance of the Peer Review meeting offers an overview of minimum income and activation schemes in Europe and the context of the labour market for young people today, available here:

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 24 June 1992 on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems. Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/sufficient-resources-and-assistance.html>

⁽³⁾ Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market. Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2008/867/oj>

social policy strands: inclusive labour markets, adequate income support, and access to quality services.

These policy outcomes are also referenced in the European Pillar of Social Rights. (4) Principle 4 states that “Everyone has the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects...young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or a job offer of good standing within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.” Principle 14 states “Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life.” Other relevant Pillar principles are Principle 20 on access essential services of good quality, Principle 6 on wages, including minimum wages, Principle 11 on childcare, Principle 12 on social protection, Principle 13 on unemployment benefits, Principle 16 on healthcare, Principle 17 on people with disabilities, Principle 18 on long-term care and Principle 19 on housing and homelessness.

The Pillar’s accompanying Action Plan turns the principles into actions with three targets for 2030: (5)

- a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion
- at least 60% of all adults should be participating in training every year
- at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment

One action presented in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan is the 2022 Council Recommendation proposed by the Commission on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (6). The Recommendation calls on Member States to modernise and adapt their social safety nets and minimum income in particular to foster social inclusion and to support people able to work in their pathways to quality employment. The specific objectives of the initiative are to improve minimum income adequacy, coverage, take-up, access to inclusive labour markets, access to enabling and essential services, individualised support, and governance of the schemes. In the 2021–2027 programming period of the EU Cohesion Funds, Member States are required to devote at least 25% of their ESF+ resources to social inclusion.

Another action at EU level is the EU Youth Employment Support package, which outlines targeted actions and structural reforms to support youth employment, education and training. One of the four strands is the 2020 reinforced Youth Guarantee. (7) This initiative aims to ensure all young people under 30 years of age receive a good quality offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. For 2021–2027 programming period of the EU Cohesion Funds, Member States with a rate of people aged 15–29 not in employment,

(4) For more information on the Pillar see here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/european-pillar-social-rights_en

(5) European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, The European pillar of social rights action plan, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/89>

(6) European Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion of 2022. Available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=26076&langId=en>
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=10417&furtherNews=yes#navItem-1>

(7) Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee 2020/C 372/01. Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32020H1104%2801%29>

education or training (NEET) above the EU average for 2017–2019 are required to devote at least 12.5% of their ESF+ resources to young people.

Furthermore, the 2016 Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market ⁽⁸⁾ recommends that Member States provide individual support to long-term unemployed and encourage better coordination of relevant services. Lastly, the Directive on adequate minimum wages ⁽⁹⁾ seeks to establish a framework to improve the adequacy of minimum wages and to increase the access for workers to minimum wage protection, thereby contributing to addressing in-work poverty and low-wage traps.

1.2. Background to the Peer Review

In line with the 2008 Active Inclusion Recommendation, minimum income benefits and activation policies across Europe go hand in hand as part of the systems of social protection of national welfare states. The spending of Member States on minimum income schemes is rather modest in comparison with other budget headings such as health. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Nonetheless, such schemes represent an important last-resort financial safety net for participating young people who often have limited rights to contributory social protection schemes. The design of social assistance (or minimum income support) schemes differs greatly across countries, varying in coverage, take-up, adequacy, and generosity.

When tied to activation policies, social assistance schemes tend to face a trade-off between the goals of poverty reduction (equity) and avoiding inactivity traps (effectiveness). In many European countries, there has been a trend towards strengthened conditionality attached to the receipt of benefits and an enhanced focus on activation policies to mitigate the equity versus efficiency trade-off. Frequently used conditions include an obligation to register with the public employment services, the drawing up of a labour market integration contract or plan, concrete job search activities, a willingness to take any job offered or the participation in mandated training or development activities.

The dominant perspective in European active labour market policies on the problem of unemployment is that it is an individual problem that will be solved through the individual's ability to become a more employable citizen, for instance through upskilling and enabling strategies, or through job-seeking and/or coercive strategies. In this context, the responsibility for the situation of unemployment is placed on the shoulders of the individual. ⁽¹¹⁾

The aftermath of the global financial crisis (2007-2008), which caused mass youth unemployment, highlighted the need for policies and measures to give young people better prospects of labour market integration. For many young adults, entering the labour market does not guarantee economic security or stability. The prevalence of atypical or non-standard employment contracts over full-time, permanent positions results in young entrants to the labour market often ending up in precarious jobs, which in turn has implications for both their earnings and the extent of individual social insurance entitlements.

⁽⁸⁾ Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. Available here: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220(01))

⁽⁹⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=10422&furtherNews=yes#navItem-1>

⁽¹⁰⁾ Thematic Paper, available here:

⁽¹¹⁾ Thematic Paper, available here:

Furthermore, previously linear transitions from education to work for young adults have been disrupted and transformed into a complex and extended process where employers are demanding more specific qualifications from job candidates. For example, globalisation and technological change have led to a decline in demand for unskilled labour. It has therefore become increasingly important for job market entrants to arrive with a higher education diploma or specialised vocational skills to move successfully from school to work. Young adults without further education are particularly vulnerable to labour market marginalisation and social exclusion. ⁽¹²⁾

2. Host country practice: Social assistance and activation policies in Norway

In the Norwegian welfare system, there are five main income maintenance schemes ⁽¹³⁾ for people of working age, unemployment benefit, sick pay, work assessment allowance, disability benefits, and social assistance. In addition, there is a qualification benefit, which is tied to participation in the qualification program. In Norway, social assistance is a means-tested minimum income that covers basic needs providing a short-term safety net with a reactivation approach. Social assistance is a responsibility for the municipalities managed by the local NAV offices. The NAV offices are established as a partnership between the municipality and the state (The Labour and Welfare Agency) and work to find appropriate measures to quickly get unemployed young people into work, education, or other activities, which depends on the funding available and the local labour market.

Social assistance has a long history of being tied to activation requirements as part of an active inclusion approach in the Norwegian welfare administration. Since the 1970s, a series of labour market inclusion and education policies have targeted young adults to prevent permanent social exclusion and poverty. The ‘Youth guarantees’ first introduced in the 1970s, the ‘Follow-up guarantee’ in 2007, and the ‘Measure guarantee’ in 2009 aimed to support young adults to move out of inactivity and strengthen their possibilities of becoming employed and economically independent.

Since 1993, the Social Service Act has provided municipalities with a legal framework to attach conditions to the receipt of social assistance, including employment-oriented measures. Municipalities could decide whether to impose activation requirements on beneficiaries. In 2017, an amendment to the national Social Services Act introduced a legal obligation for the municipality and the local labour and welfare services (NAV) to provide activation measures and for the benefits’ recipients to participate in such measures .

The provision of training and education that provide formal qualifications has also been a focus of NAV services. In 2019, a new regulation was introduced in Norway concerning who is entitled to training that results in formal qualifications (certificate, diploma from upper secondary school) making it possible also for those who were not defined as having a reduced work capacity to be eligible for such qualifying measures. This meant that also social assistance recipients under 30 in principle could be entitled to activation measures that provide formal qualifications.

⁽¹²⁾ Eurostat, 2022. Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex [ILC_PEPS01N] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_peps01n/default/table?lang=en

⁽¹³⁾ In addition to survivors’ benefit, daily cash benefit in case of absence from work due to care for children, daily cash benefit in case of maternity and adoption and benefits to single parents.

The implementation of the activation duty by Norwegian municipalities can broadly be grouped into three different strategies. The first is aiming to move the beneficiary into employment or work placement as fast as possible. The second involves training at job centres and carrying out job-seeking activities. Finally, some municipalities created job teams of young people that carried out work for the municipality, such as the distribution of food to older people.

There is little or no evidence that the young adults' duty to participate in and the municipalities' obligation to offer activation measures has had any effect in the form of more young social assistance recipients making the transition to employment or education. The exact impact of the Social Services Act amendment is difficult to measure as some municipalities were already carrying out activation measures before. Caseworkers did report that the activation duty facilitated closer follow-up of the young service users, which in turn allowed for thorough mapping of needs to clarify appropriate measures and trajectories. The focus for the future is on how to create long-term individualised measures that ensure the permanent labour market integration and social inclusion of these young people that often face multiple social inclusion barriers.

Box 1: NAV Grorud – Evaluating and adapting the outreach and support to young adults

The NAV office from Grorud, a borough in Oslo, presented a new local youth department to the Peer Review participants during the meeting.

Grorud is a low-income area in Oslo with a diverse population (over 150 nationalities) that was facing an issue of non-take-up of social assistance and activation support. A combination of factors, including a poor understanding of the system, stigma in receiving benefits, NAV not being visible, and a fear of intentions have made many young adults not in education or work go without the support they needed.

The local NAV office employees carried out a year-long internal evaluation, which concluded that the timeline from first contact to take-up of services based on the needs of individuals was too long and that outreach needed to be more tailored to the needs of young people. Based on the results of the self-assessment, a new department dedicated to young adults was established in 2021.

A new career centre was built to house the new department bringing together a wide range of specialist services, such as psychologists and social workers, under one roof. The one-stop shop was in a separate building from the NAV office to create a more welcoming atmosphere for young adults. Breakfast is offered every morning. The new department brings a new culture that emphasises supportive over punitive measures. To support relationship building with young people, the centre is always available either by phone or with someone present to welcome them in person. In addition, two-person 'roaming teams' go to places where young people meet to build relationships and raise awareness of the support and services available.

As a result of the new department, registered unemployment levels are low (1.9% as of October 2022) and the measured satisfaction levels of young adults receiving assistance are high.

3. Key Peer Review discussion outcomes

3.1. Individualised active inclusion programmes, measures and activities for young adults

3.1.1. Shifting from employment-led activation towards a social inclusion approach

As previously stated, social assistance schemes for young adults across Europe tend to be tied to conditionalities based on employment-related activities. For instance, in the Netherlands, the 2015 Participation Act introduced activation conditionalities, such as a four-week job search period before receiving benefits and a cost-sharing standard, to income assistance for young adults. However, as outlined in the thematic paper, the needs of the target group are very diverse and complex, such as personal and psychological problems, low skill levels, childcare or a lack of affordable accommodation. For young adults, these non-employment-related challenges, which are often accumulated, translate into barriers to employment and may prevent them from achieving employment. For example, having children before finishing education can delay the completion of education and achievement of paid work.⁽¹⁴⁾ Therefore, in addition to financial benefits and employment-related support, other supporting services should be available to respond to these needs.

Activation policies should be designed with a holistic approach where health, education, housing, social inclusion and employment are all considered important factors to activate young people furthest away from the labour market. This approach is grounded in the perspective that if the basic needs of a young person, such as housing and health, are taken care of the ability of the young person to concentrate on qualifications, education, and employment will improve. In turn, it will improve the likelihood of becoming independent and, therefore, decrease the likelihood of future reliance on the social assistance system.

In practice, this translates to mainstream public employment services linking up with other services to provide specialised programmes of outreach and intensive support. To increase the take-up of services, entry points for new beneficiaries should be easily identifiable and friendly. This could take the form of a one-stop shop or a referral system between organisations that may come into contact with young adults. For instance, the municipality of Grorud in Norway has centralised all services supporting young adults in one building which has led to easier interactions between organisations and easier access to different services for young people who seek support. (see Box 1).

Box 2: ‘A roof over your head, a job in your pocket’ in Lyon, France

During the Peer Review, participants were introduced to examples of public authorities integrating services for young people by the European Social Network. The EU funded project ‘A roof over your head, a job in your pocket’ was one such example from Lyon, France, a programme that provides integrated access to multiple services such as housing, job counselling, social assistance, training, internships and essential services for young unemployed people, who are between 18 and 24 years old. Participants engage in an autonomy support programme, which is jointly defined with a case manager, and follow-up

⁽¹⁴⁾ Thematic Paper, available here:

meetings every three months for a maximum of two years.

The project was introduced after Lyon Metropole collected data that showed that almost a quarter of young adults in Lyon were living below the poverty line. In France, there were no minimum income schemes available for this population meaning there was a gap in the social welfare system. An essential component of the programme is the Youth Solidarity Income (RSJ), which functions as a minimum income for young people who have left the education system, earn less than 400 euros per month, or do not have their parent's support.

3.1.2. Tailored Support

Given the diverse profile of the target population, there is no 'one-size fits all' approach to activation. Interventions and policies need to be adapted to the beneficiaries and local contexts. In line with the individualised approach and as it is the case in Norway, activation should start with a needs assessment of the young person together with a relevant professional to understand their interests, aspirations, and challenges to create tailored support plans.

Sufficient time, competency of the professional, and a relationship of trust between the professional and the beneficiary are the necessary elements that lead to a successful needs assessment. The young beneficiaries may have low self-esteem, so the assessment should allow them to feel seen and heard. In some cases, young people's needs may not be at all related to employment but to difficulties to integrate in society. Therefore, beyond entering the labour market, the objective of the support plan is to build the person up again and should be flexible and adjustable over time. The *individualised project for social integration* in Belgium is one example (see Box 3).

Box 3: Individualised project for social integration (GPMI) in Belgium

The individualised project for social integration (*Geïndividualiseerd Project voor Maatschappelijke Integratie (GPMI)*) is a tailored support programme for young adults receiving minimum income with the aim of activation and social integration. The programme is provided by the Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSWs) across Belgium.

Young adults who qualify for the programme undergo a consultation with a social worker where they discuss their needs and problems, professional and personal ambitions, strengths, improvement areas, and how they would like to feel included in society. During the needs assessment, the different ways in which the PCSW can support the claimant are also explained. The outcome is the creation of a personal development plan with consensually agreed targets and timeframe.

Guidelines or criteria for needs assessment can support professionals in their work and ensure uniform approaches. However, several methods can be used to carry out the same systematic set of procedures i.e., to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future action. For instance, in Norway, although public agencies are legally bound to carry out a needs assessment of young adults that contact their services, there are no specific guidelines or assessment grid from the national level. Each municipality implements the needs assessment at their own discretion. Therefore, facilitating the exchange of lessons learned and critical assessments between professionals can be an effective tool to develop competency.

3.1.3. Close follow-up and accompaniment from qualified staff

Activation measures should include close follow-up of the beneficiary from qualified staff or mentors. The accompaniment should also continue in employment to ensure permanent inclusion. In a way, the follow-up is akin to the support from a family unit, which many young adults participating in these programmes often lack. These professionals could be case workers, counsellors or job specialists with social work and relational competency.

For example, in Gjøvik, a city in Norway, young adults participating in a ‘career house’ (located in a premises separate from the local labour and welfare services) are accompanied for as long as they want up to a maximum age of thirty. The counsellors, who provide emotional support, practical help, and guidance to other services, are available outside of working hours and can meet in neutral locations (outside of the job centre). In Bulgaria, there are financial incentive schemes for mentors who can receive a bonus after providing motivational accompaniment for social assistance beneficiaries in a traineeship or employment for twelve months.

The diversity of needs of the target group requires a tailored follow-up approach rooted in empathy. Professionals responsible for follow-up measures need to therefore be educated in a holistic manner to be able to understand the issues around the individual. Due to the intensive effort per case, high caseloads can be seen as a barrier for professionals to fulfil the desired level of comprehensive support required by the young person.

Box 4: ‘Mentor’ Programme in Galicia, Spain

The ‘Mentor’ Programme in Galicia, Spain is an individualised social and employment support for young people leaving the public care system. There is a prevalence of young people in the care system with issues, such as disabilities and mental health problems that impacts their inclusion in society and the labour market. Former users of the programme act as mentors for these young people to support their transition into independent living and improve their professional integration. In addition, volunteers from the community and local companies provide guidance as job coaches.

The programme provides individual support according to the person’s needs, skills, and aspirations. Participation by young people between 16 to 21 years (in some cases up to 25 years) is voluntary and they can avail of workshops and training to improve their labour market skills. The programme has seen improved participation of young care leavers in the programme and improved their employment rates when they leave care.

3.1.4. Long-term employment perspective

Effective activation measures require a balance between support and mutual obligations for professional integration. Meaningful employment activities for young adults are designed from the perspective that labour market inclusion is a long-term process. The target population may include people who are not immediately employable or are confronted with multiple vulnerabilities that need to be addressed prior to employment. Therefore, tailored and reasonable pathways for labour market inclusion that cater for the needs of the individual should be designed as part of activation measures.

The current labour market as referred to in the Thematic Paper is a challenging environment for young entrants with no guarantees of permanent employment. Quality of employment is therefore an important factor in its own right; in this context, quick labour market activation - e.g. young adults entering a job with a zero hour or temporary contract - is not an effective activation measure. Instead, a shift towards a more training-orientated approach, which increases the chance of placement in a higher-qualified job and better contract conditions, was described by participants of the Peer Review as crucial to the success of sustainable labour market activation.

Furthermore, there was agreement among participants that the motivation and work capacity of the individual is a result of the interaction between the triangle of job, timing and the employer. Appropriate and relevant employment-enhancing measures focus on matching jobs with the interests of beneficiaries, as job-seekers themselves know best what job they want. At the same time, building relationships between public employment agencies and employers require regular follow-up and a fixed contact person, such as a job specialist, counsellor or case worker.

In line with the perspective of labour market inclusion as a process, support should continue also in employment. Providing ongoing income support in the short term can reduce the risk of poverty and an eventual return to the social assistance system. For instance, in Malta, social assistance recipients who find employment have a gradual reduction of their benefits over three years; from 65% of the benefit during the first year, 45% during the second year, to 25% during the third year. This allows them to re-integrate into the workforce and pay into the pension scheme while enjoying some income security.

3.2. Designing and implementing integrated and tailored services for active inclusion

3.2.1. *Coordination between actors responsible for active inclusion*

Individualised and integrated services require close coordination between actors responsible for active inclusion to ensure people get the most effective support. However, these actors are not always aware of each other's roles and responsibilities. Peer Review participants noted that in their countries most government competency areas exist in silos. For instance, in Norway, temporary housing is a responsibility for the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the NAV offices at local level, while social housing is the responsibility for the Ministry of Local Government and Region Development and not a mandatory task for the local NAV offices.

Therefore, integrating these services begins with mapping all the available support services and creating or re-designing the network of partnerships with key agencies such as training bodies, employers, providers, and local services. Formalised agreements between the involved organisations and government levels help ensure the collaboration is institutionalised and continues with staff turnover.

In practice, coordination between governance levels, sectors, and professions may bring up issues between departments that might have different priorities. For example, health services may want to keep an individual out of work for health reasons, while an employment agency has the objective to move the same individual into employment. Steering committees or boards can provide a platform for regular consultation and communication between all involved organisations to prevent conflicting objectives to impact the support given to the target population.

Social services at the local level should play a leading role in this coordination, be that between practitioners in multi-professional teams or between public and private organisations. For example, in Bulgaria, mobile outreach teams bring together social assistance and public employment agencies that are in separate institutions to provide integrated support directly on people’s doorstep. Similarly, Vienna, Austria also developed integrated services for unemployed young people through multi-professional teams (See box 5).

Box 5: U25 One-stop shop for unemployed youth in Vienna, Austria

The City of Vienna in Austria set up an agency responding to the rising number of unemployed youths seeking social assistance and a lack of coordination among employment, vocational training, and social services. These young people are facing obstacles to labour market entry due to a lack of or incomplete training or qualifications, homelessness, or debt.

A one-stop-shop combines youth and labour market counselling services. In addition to the joint premises, the agency joining the regional public employment service and the regional social authorities have a joint client steering system, logo, website, and mission statement. The client steering system is used to optimise procedures based on data collected on client frequency, waiting times and duration of the advisory sessions. To ensure integrated delivery of support both services moved into a central building in which young people with social needs receive a holistic needs analysis including a joint social and labour market inclusion plan. More complex cases are reviewed by a multi-professional team from employment, social and financial support services.

3.2.2. Involvement of users

The involvement of service users in the development and evaluation of measures targeted at young people can increase their effectiveness and take-up. In Malta, municipalities hold regular meetings with service providers that have direct contact with users. In the Netherlands, an NGO, the National Client Council, organise focus groups with people receiving social assistance on their experience of social assistance and activation policies in the municipalities. The outcomes are regularly communicated in regular meetings with the National Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

In Belgium, the ‘experts by experience’ programme structurally integrates the concrete experience of poverty to reduce the gap between the administration and the poorest citizens. The programme connects people with lived experiences of poverty and social exclusion with federal public services at the local level, such as health, employment and social security, to give feedback on their policy framework and improve the accessibility of these services. All the signals given by the experts across the country are collected in a national database, which allows for the identification of structural problems that can lead to policy change.

3.2.3. Funding tailored and integrated services

Integrated and individualised programmes require significant human and adequate funding resources on behalf of the local-level organisations responsible for implementation. Tailored funding to provide tailored services is crucial. For instance,

building a relationship of trust between caseworkers and young social assistance recipients is a time- and effort-intensive process. Municipalities need sufficient funding to keep the ratio of caseworkers to beneficiaries low enough that facilitates this kind of relationship building for better quality support and outcomes. After the initial increased short-term costs, the return on investment for municipal budgets comes from more effective case management and better labour market outcomes for young adults who then remain outside of the social assistance system.

The Peer Review participants recognised that specific evidence is needed on the impact of integrated services and tailored activation programmes. The impact of funding is dependent on the tools to measure it. For a municipality to offer tailored support with a long-term accompaniment, national funding for these measures should reflect the outcomes of long-term employment and social inclusion activities. At the same time, municipalities need a certain level of freedom to organise services in a way that corresponds to the needs of the area. To assess the impact of integrated services as part of inclusive activation policies, new models are needed for academia and policy-makers to be developed that include other enabling services, such as education, health, and social services. In addition to indicators for measuring activation measures in terms of employment, there is a need to develop qualitative indicators to gather data on social inclusion.

4. Conclusion

The activation of young people receiving social assistance benefits is a policy priority for Member States and the EU. In the systems of social protection of national welfare states across Europe, minimum income schemes are tied to employment-related activation measures. However, pathways into employment for young people have become increasingly challenging in the context of the labour market that negatively impacts new entrants. In addition to global trends, young adults receiving social assistance benefits may have very **diverse and complex needs**. Therefore, the target group may include people who are not immediately employable or are confronted with multiple vulnerabilities that need to be addressed prior to employment.

Recognising these complexities, effective activation measures require a balance between support and mutual obligations for professional integration. Activation policies should be designed with a holistic approach where health, education, housing, social inclusion, and employment are **integrated** as relevant and considered as important factors to activate young people furthest away from the labour market.

Needs assessments together with **targeted and personal development and support plans** are essential to the activation process. The earlier the needs are identified, and relevant support provided, the more likely the success of the activation measures. Access to support should be clear and easy for the young person. To this end, integrating mainstream public employment services with other services to provide specialised programmes of outreach and intensive support is an effective model to follow. The relationship between the staff and the person in need of support is crucial for successful and longstanding integration in the labour market, especially of people in vulnerable situations. Including past users in the development and evaluation of measures can improve take-up as they work better with the young person thanks to their experience.

In practice, there are **coordination, workload, and funding challenges** to developing integrated services for tailored and personalised support. Developing integrated services is a continuous process that requires structures and systems for coordination, such as joint case management systems and steering committees with all involved organisations.

Caseloads for professionals responsible for the follow-up of the beneficiary need to match the intensity required.

While the legislation for and funding of individualised and integrated services stem from the national level, the local level plays a key role in service provision and contact with the target population. National activation policies that promote integrated services and tailored support and personal services need to be supported by adequate funding for the municipality that is responsible for implementation. The resources available and the needs of the area determine the services provided at the local level. To ensure the continuation of funding for activation measures with the social inclusion approach as discussed in the Peer Review, new qualitative indicators related to social inclusion are needed to measure the impact.

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