



# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT FOR A TRANSITION TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

Report on data analyses and results of the  
first project phase



Changing lives. Opening minds.



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### FOREWORD: SOME REACTIONS ON THE PETE PROJECT

#### *A young person in Ireland*

I feel that the PETE project will be helpful to me and my friends because they value the opinion of young people and will take on board our suggestions. A lot of us have training for jobs that we would like to do but we don't feel prepared to actually enter the workplace. I think we need more help with things like interview preparation and feeling confident dealing with other staff and my boss when I get a job. I have the technical skills, I just need some help with the people skills too.

#### *Some young people in Belgium*

With the PETE project, finally there are people listening to us, giving us a voice. Normally there's no space for that, normally it's about what youth workers think. We hope that the things we say and emphasize will be heard. We would be proud to make a change.

#### *A youth worker in France*

After questioning, we were really surprised by the maturity of some of the young people regarding their own view on their situation and their needs. The PETE program was also the occasion for one of our young people to discover the Erasmus+ program and the European Voluntary Service (EVS). After engaging in PETE, the young person contacted me in order to have information on doing an EVS in 2018. Our organisation will accompany him during the procedure.

#### *An employer in the UK*

For many employers the prospect of employing a young person is daunting. The most heard phrase at any employers meeting or event is that "young people are just not ready for the world of work". I sincerely hope that the PETE project can allay those fears and break down the myths.

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## PETE: INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

The objective of the PETE project - a project in the Erasmus+ program - is empowering unemployed young people and their youth workers through analysing, developing, testing and disseminating successful methods and tools for activation towards employment. The target group are NEETS (Not in Employment, Education or Training) between 16 and 25, youth workers who support these youngsters towards work and employers who may employ them. The project strategy to do so is divided in three phases:

- Phase 1: **Exchanging and analysing activation methods for NEETS...**  
*Observing and questioning youngsters, youth workers and employers (from now on they will be collectively be referred to as beneficiaries) about factors for success and failure within current support measures*
- Phase 2: **... to develop and test new activation methods and tools ...**  
*Developing new methods and tools based on the analyses and questionnaires from phase 1 and the testing of it within existing support measures.*
- Phase 3: **... and disseminate the positive evaluated methods and tools among youth workers.**  
*The successful methods and tools are worked into different training schemes (hands-on train-the-trainer, webcasts, ...) and disseminated through the internet, training workshops, events, ...*

The partnership consists of six European partners. The lead partner is (1) Strood Community Project, United Kingdom. The other partners are (2) Ballymun Job Centre, Ireland, (3) Centre Social Eclaté, France, (4) Medway Youth Trust, United Kingdom, (5) Mentor vzw (Belgium) and (6) Reussir Ensemble (France). The duration of the project is 3 years, from September 1st, 2016 until August 31st, 2019.

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## THE AIM OF THIS REPORT

This report brings together the analyses and results of the first phase of the PETE project. Phase I consisted of 3 parts: (1) a literature review to research existing studies to avoid a “re-inventing the wheel” scenario, (2) a questionnaire for NEETS, youth workers and employers to understand the “gaps” in provision from the perspective of our beneficiaries, in order to create innovative supports to meet their needs and (3) a more in-depth analysis of the current provision by preparing detailed case studies to showcase beneficiary stories & identifying their “whole” experience.

Towards the end of phase I of the project, data and research findings were compiled in this report as an intellectual output of the project. This publication will inform the second phase of the project and enable other organisations in the EU to take a step back & assess their way of working with NEETS.

### OVERALL WORKING METHOD AND ANALYSING FRAMEWORK

To collect the data of each of the three research activities, the partnership made use of a digital platform (first Google Drive, later also Dropbox) and shared database documents that were created together, to be filled in (and translated if necessary) by each partner separately. As lead partner on the first project phase, Mentor took responsibility of bringing together, processing and comparing the data. In order to do so a qualitative coding method was used.

Depending on the particular aspect of research, the specific database documents of all partners were put together and transformed into a working document in Excel. First of all, the input was divided into 4 basic categories:

- Successful elements within Youth Work
- Successful elements beyond Youth Work
- Unsuccessful elements within Youth Work
- Unsuccessful elements beyond Youth Work

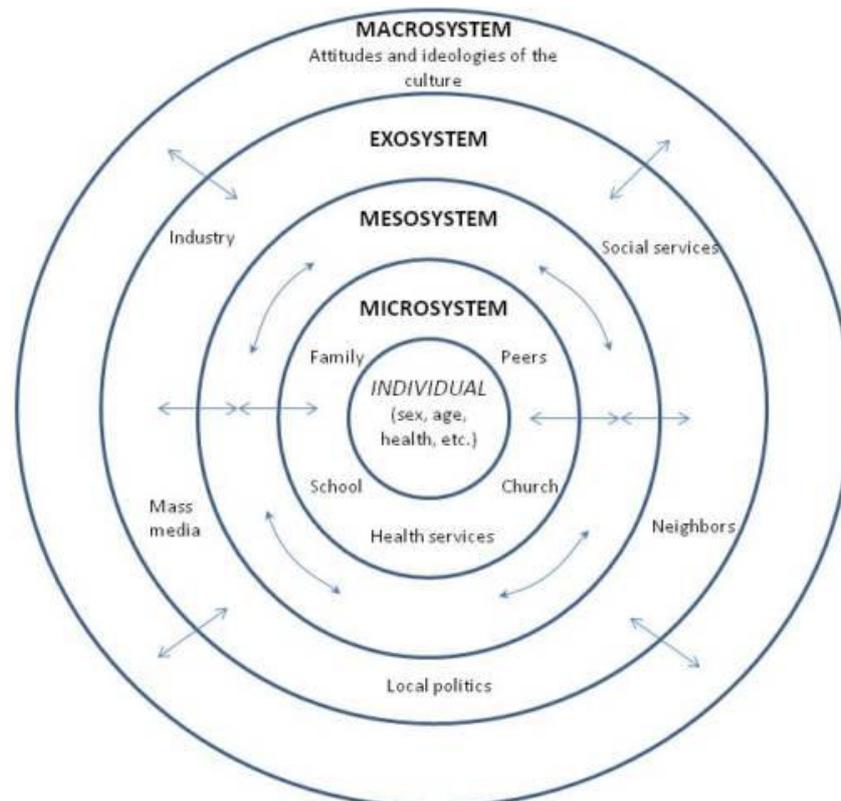
The successful and unsuccessful elements **BEYOND** youth work are themes that are beyond the reach of the young people or youth work, for example because of societal trends, legislations, high demand for a specific profile. Those themes can still be of interest to policy makers, researchers and other engaged actors and third parties in the field of education and work. Therefore we still added them to the list in this publication. The successful and unsuccessful elements **WITHIN** Youth Work are those themes that can be influenced or even changed by youngsters and youth workers, with the right tools at hand. What these tools can be, will be researched, developed and tested in phase 2 of the PETE project.

From then on identical answers/quotes/outcomes were unified, and letters were allocated to them to indicate how many times it was mentioned and by which partner. For instance, if in questionnaires 4 youngsters pointed at the fact that being homeless complicated their job search, this quote would get 4 letters next to it in the Excel working document. If 2 of these youngsters are English, one French and one Irish, the letters would be 'EEFI'. At a further stage, all of these quotes were processed into more coherent 'themes'. As multiple quotes could refer to the same theme, they were grouped together once again. For instance, the quotes 'not having a driver's license is a barrier to finding work' and 'I need to pass my driver's license' are put together as they both refer to the importance of having a driver's license as a job seeker. Once again, the letters referring to how many times the particular theme has been mentioned, were added to the theme in the working document. Later on, the letters were counted, showing us how many times a particular theme is referred to, signifying its importance. It is important to note, that we chose here not to count how many people have referred to a theme, but rather the frequency the theme was referred to. A recurring theme denotes its increasing importance.

During the data coding of the questionnaires of young people it became clear that all successful and unsuccessful factors of guidance towards work they pointed at, could be assigned to 1) the youngster as a person 2) the personal context of the youngster, 3) the (official) support the young person did or did not receive and 4) the bigger social context. As this framework made it much more comprehensive to overview the data, and as it was equally applicable to all other data collections of our different parts of research, we made it our conceptual framework for all analyses.

We want to emphasise here the ‘bottom-up’ way in which this framework became the overall structure of our analysis. Nevertheless, in research we found even more support for this way of framing factors of influence, as the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner<sup>1</sup> confirms the development of a person as a result of interaction of the individual with their different environmental systems.

For a view on an example of a final analysis working document, see annex 3.



<sup>1</sup>

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9b/Bronfenbrenner%27s\\_Ecological\\_Theory\\_of\\_Development\\_%28English%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9b/Bronfenbrenner%27s_Ecological_Theory_of_Development_%28English%29.jpg)

## LITERATURE STUDY

The objectives of the literature study were to:

- Identify successful service elements for incorporation
- Explore what has been unsuccessful to innovate improvements
- Consider how PETE results could be upscaled.

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## WORKING METHOD

For the literature study, all partners conducted a desktop research, summarising the findings of earlier projects and research on NEETS and youth (un)employment, as well as national and European reports on this matter. From the gathered information we developed a collective database, making up lists with successful and unsuccessful elements within and beyond youth work. We then processed this list into recurring themes, ordered in the conceptual framework discussed above.

For our sources, see annex I.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ANALYSIS

	YOUNG PERSON						PERSONAL CONTEXT	BIGGER CONTEXT
	personal characteristics	knowledge	skills	attitude behavior	work experience	certificates		
SUPPORT			knowledge the job market	skills (gap)	employability as mindset		barriers to work	(lack of) social mobility
Training				training soft skills				
Collaboration training education						(validation) of informal learning		
Education						a degree in STEM subjects		
Collaboration education youth work	lack of preparation of school leavers		lack of career guidance		avoid drop-out			
Youth work					active and participatory methods		(insufficient) geographical coverage	(limited) knowledge of the diversity in the NEET population
		individual action	promoting information and		outreach strategies		building a network for	simplifying registration
	low threshold offers		clear communication		temporary projects: difficult to build confidence and progress		early intervention and activation	focus more on highly educated NEETS instead of low-skilled
Collaboration other organisations					facilitating community volunteering		holistic/partnership based approach	welfare benefit sanctions are ineffective and counter-productive in finding work
Collaboration employer youth work	seeing the benefit of getting involved (branding)					enable work experience	better monitoring	policy and practice gap
Collaboration education employers		language acts as a barrier between education and world of work		exchange on basic, job specific, transversal and high-end skills				
Employer	dedicated advisors/mentors in the workplace	employer engagement/cooperation	knowledge transfer between older/experienced workers to young people and vice versa	getting to handle unwritten rules	unrealistic reciprocal expectations	find work experience places		lack of jobs for young people/youth unemployment keeps rising

This study was used to assess the current provision and lessons learned and will be contrasted with the feedback from our beneficiaries in the questionnaire research and case studies, reported on further in this publication. Comparing the different sets of data will help us to understand why the current system of transitional support is not working for our specific target group. It will highlight key areas of innovation we need to inject to rejuvenate the support system to make it fit for purpose.



## QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaires were conducted to exchange and study the current practices in guidance of young people towards work in the 4 partner countries United Kingdom, Ireland, France and Belgium. As explained above, the results from these questionnaires will be used to assess the existing provision and will be contrasted with the results of the literature study and a 3rd and last set of data, see next section. We need to understand the “gaps” in provision from the perspective of our beneficiaries, in order to innovate support to meet their needs. Equally, by revealing good practices in current provision, we can promote further distribution of them, improving the situation and guidance towards work of our young people.

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## WORKING METHOD

To gather the information from all target groups (youngsters, youth workers and employers) we developed three separate questionnaires. Some of the questions were already formulated in the original project application form. During a partnership meeting all partners suggested additional questions and the questionnaires were then adapted and amended until complete. All questions revolved around what worked and what didn't work in trajectory of young people towards employment.

The partnership decided to allow every partner to decide how to conduct the questionnaires. For example: One-on-one or in group, face-to-face or online, internally (in existing job clubs, youth programs, ...) or externally (different youth organisations outside the partner's own organisation). The approach depended on the target group (young people, youth workers or employers) and the identity of the program the youngsters were in (e.g., individual support and consulting or group workshops). We used creative methods to engage the three target groups based on what suits them. In many cases the existing job clubs or meetings that beneficiaries were already engaged in were used to conduct the questionnaires. When necessary, specific additional meetings or information sessions were organised to gather information.

## RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A total of 178 young people were questioned in local areas of the 4 partner countries. We gathered the most recurring themes - within the conceptual framework discussed above - in an overview:

MAJOR RESULTS QUESTIONNAIRES OF YOUNG PEOPLE		
Conceptual framework factors	20 most recurring themes	Amount of references to this factor/theme*
Young person		1201
Personal characteristics		32
Knowledge		72
	(support on) orientation	34
Skills		254
	(support on) communication skills	20
Attitude/behaviour		608
	(support on) (self)motivation	121
	Having/working on confidence/self-belief	78
	Being focussed/determined/having goals/ambition/drive	47
	Willingness to work/working hard	21
	Perseverance/not giving up	17
Work experience		150
	Having (relevant) work experience	67
Certificates		85
	Having leaving (QQI, college) certificates/grades/qualifications/diploma	36
Personal context		254
	Money/financial resources	36
	(support on) mobility	56
Support within personal context		100
	Support from parents, family, friends and environment	61
Support		941
Training		29
Education		77
	Education/college/university/school helps to access a job	32
Collaboration education-employers		46
	Support on work experience/internship/apprenticeships/business emersions	37
Employer		64
Recruitment		52
Support		12
Collaboration employer-youth work		7
Youth work		667
Content		432
	Support on job application (forms)	27
	Support on job search	25
	Help with CV	31
	Support on job interview (skills) (via mocks, simulations,...)	27
	Getting more information (on jobs, courses, education,...)	19
methodology		190
	Enough/more/good/thorough (job) support/help/assistance	33
Youth worker		45
Collaboration youth work-other organisations		51
Bigger context		48

\* Note that the numbers in this table are not addable as many more quotes than the ones displayed make up the total amount of references on each conceptual framework factor.

The other (less frequently nominated) themes of importance coming forward in the questionnaires (having 5 references or more), are listed below:

- *Good/professional guidance support/counsellor* (15 references)
- *Having the necessary skills* (15 references)
- *Advice (advisors/centres) (in and outside of education)* (14 references)
- *Being respectful* (14 references)
- *Support (with application)(funding) towards the right training/courses/upgrades* (14 references)
- *(not getting out of) a bad/unsupportive (friend/family) environment* (14 references)
- *Help from job centre* (13 references)
- *Language/literacy* (13 references)
- *(good) attitude (towards work)* (13 references)
- *Lack of support from others* (12 references)
- *Putting effort in/trying the hardest* (12 references)
- *Being kind/friendly/nice* (11 references)
- *Independency/autonomy* (11 references)
- *(email) referrals to jobs/vacancies* (11 references)
- *Leaving school early/lack of education/qualification* (10 references)
- *Meeting/(better) knowing employers/bosses/(persons in charge of) companies* (10 references)
- *Financial support* (9 references)
- *Interpersonal/social skills* (9 references)
- *Listening/doing as you're told* (9 references)
- *Searching for a job together* (9 references)
- *(good) (more) training* (9 references)
- *Active searching behaviour* (8 references)
- *Being a people person/having an outgoing personality* (8 references)
- *Being brave/no anxiety (of failure, going door to door for a job, of asking)* (8 references)
- *Being caring, helpful, supportive, thoughtful* (8 references)
- *Being dynamic* (8 references)
- *Being punctual* (8 references)
- *Doing (many) internships* (8 references)
- *Employment agencies being unsuccessful as they just give an appointment for registration* (8 references)
- *Having a network that provides you with more (info about) job opportunities* (8 references)
- *Having organisational skills (time management, planning)* (8 references)
- *Interim/employment officers should be more honest: they promise to call but they don't* (8 references)
- *Knowing where to go (for support)* (8 references)
- *Knowledge* (8 references)
- *Problems at home* (8 references)
- *Willing to learn (more) (new things)* (8 references)
- *(age/gender) discrimination* (8 references)
- *Employment agencies being unsuccessful* (7 references)
- *Local mission (workshops)* (7 references)
- *Personal issues* (7 references)
- *(upgrades by) the school of second chance* (7 references)
- *Availability of internet* (6 references)
- *Being well dressed/nice hair cut* (6 references)

- *Discovering (more/good) companies (6 references)*
- *Good at presenting/selling himself (6 references)*
- *Having a can do attitude: find a way to adjust your weaknesses so they do not limit your chances of success, positivity (6 references)*
- *Help from job/employment/interim agency (6 references)*
- *Intelligence/being smart (6 references)*
- *Interim/employment/job agencies compensating for unemployment with temporary jobs (6 references)*
- *Lack of network/isolation (6 references)*
- *Medical/(mental) health problems (6 references)*
- *Step by step guidance/being accompanied in steps (6 references)*
- *(telling me to get a job when) there's a lack of jobs (for young people)/high unemployment (6 references)*
- *Always being refused by 'lack of experience'. It's hard to get work experience as a young person when you don't get the chance (5 references)*
- *Being active (5 references)*
- *Disability (5 references)*
- *Having a good appearance/look (5 references)*
- *Help with employability/job skills (5 references)*
- *Laziness (5 references)*
- *One to one meetings, individual support (5 references)*
- *Socialising with others/meeting new people (5 references)*



## RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES FOR YOUTH WORKERS

A total of 102 youth workers were questioned in local areas of 4 partner countries. We gathered the most recurring themes within the conceptual framework discussed above, in an overview:

MAJOR RESULTS QUESTIONNAIRES YOUTH WORKERS		
Conceptual framework factors	20 most recurring themes	Amount of references to this factor/theme*
Young person		447
Personal characteristics		7
Knowledge		52
	<i>Realism in expectations</i>	45
Skills		93
Attitude/behaviour		177
	<i>(support on) motivation</i>	74
	<i>(support on) confidence/self-belief</i>	22
Work experience		100
Certificates		18
Personal context		201
	<i>Importance of mental health (support provision)</i>	16
	<i>(support on) mobility</i>	15
Support		1711
Training		36
Education		77
Collaboration education-employers		58
	<i>(more) quality apprenticeships/internships (instead of exploitative/too short internships)</i>	22
Employer		145
Recruitment		76
Support		69
Collaboration employer-youth work		115
	<i>(more) involvement of (links with) (big and small) employers in youth work</i>	27
Youth work		909
Content		296
	<i>Empowerment</i>	39
	<i>Active listening to the young person</i>	45
Methodology		141
	<i>(thorough) individual approach/accompaniment/follow-up/coaching, one to one guidance</i>	25
Youth worker		472
Approach		305
	<i>Empathy of the youth worker</i>	28
	<i>Patience of the youth worker</i>	31
Skills		120
	<i>Good communication skills</i>	21
Knowledge		47
Collaboration youth work - other organisations		371
Kind of organisations		198
	<i>Involvement of (other) youth (work/employment/support) services/centres/workers/organisations/groups</i>	25
	<i>Involvement of training programmes/centres</i>	15

	<i>Involvement of school/colleges/universities/education organisations</i>	45
	<i>Involvement of social/welfare organisations</i>	22
	<i>Involvement of public service of employment</i>	15
<b>Way of working together</b>		<b>173</b>
	<i>Regular meetings and (more/better)(close) (face to face) open communication</i>	32
<b>Bigger context</b>		<b>174</b>
	<i>Lack of (different) opportunities (for the least academically able)</i>	16

\* Note that the numbers in this table are not addable as many more quotes than the ones displayed make up the total amount of references on each conceptual framework factor.

The other (less frequently nominated) themes of importance coming forward in the questionnaires (having 5 references or more), are listed below:

- *Employers offering (practical) work experience (so that they can learn skills required to succeed in the workforce) (14 references)*
- *Disadvantage because of poor education (drop-out) (14 references)*
- *Lack of suitable/unskilled jobs (no match between supply and demand) (14 references)*
- *Youth professional being honest and open (14 references)*
- *Youth professional being flexible (to adapt to the needs of young people who present with different engagement levels) (14 references)*
- *School system failure: not relevant/stimulating for practical/vocational/less capable youngsters (too narrow academic curriculum) (13 references)*
- *Involvement of the (central/local) government (on education) (12 references)*
- *Youth professional having a non-judgemental (impartial) attitude (12 references)*
- *Youth professional being professional (keeping a professional distance, not losing himself in becoming a friend of the young people) (10 references)*
- *Youth professional being approachable/accessible (9 references)*
- *Youth professional having a great knowledge of the Labor Market (9 references)*
- *Apprenticeship employers still want to employ the ones with good skills (8 references)*
- *Disadvantage because of drug/substance misuse/addiction (8 references)*
- *Funding cuts/lack of money to organisations that support young people most at risk/most vulnerable (8 references)*
- *Involvement of the job centre (8 references)*
- *Knowing which organisation offers what kind of support/expertise (in order to successfully refer to each other) (8 references)*
- *Youth professional having understanding (8 references)*
- *Youth professional being CEIAG-skilled: (counselling) careers education, information, advice and guidance skills (8 references)*
- *(mock) interview skills workshops (8 references)*
- *Involvement of local companies/businesses (networks) (7 references)*
- *One person following the whole process of the youngster until (s)he has found work, but systematic meetings with all stakeholders (holistic view, but one responsible who coordinates) (7 references)*
- *The will of employers to take on young people who do not have experience, being less demanding (7 references)*
- *(more) time to work with the young people (7 references)*
- *(regular) participation/attendance (7 references)*
- *A lot of expectations in (capitalistic) society, which don't work out for disadvantaged youngsters (6 references)*
- *Positive group working between different organisations: all working together instead of competing/working next to each other (6 references)*

- *Strong supportive, communicative relationships between different organisations (6 references)*
- *Visits of companies (getting to know the jobs) (6 references)*
- *Youth professional having a proactive and solution focussed (recovery focussed) approach (6 references)*
- *Young professional showing enthusiasm and engagement (6 references)*
- *(focus on) more experience (in a number of organisations) in education (and beyond) (6 references)*
- *Challenging/offending behaviour of young person (5 references)*
- *Employers having more empathy towards youngsters (5 references)*
- *Ensure appropriate referrals (to external programmes) (5 references)*
- *Good (attractive) (career) orientation test/methods, that gives a simple and clear view on which steps to take (5 references)*
- *Good/effective interagency exchange (network) (5 references)*
- *Historical generational disengagement/history of unemployment in the family (5 references)*
- *Holistic approach: any organisation working with the young person and their family has to be involved (5 references)*
- *Home life stability/barriers/chaotic life (style) (5 references)*
- *Involvement of everyone (all stakeholders) that have a role to play in guiding the young person (5 references)*
- *Lack of (basic) skills (and entry requirements) (5 references)*
- *More workshops (supporting in group and one to one) (with professionals) (on specific topics) (5 references)*
- *Personal barriers/difficulties (5 references)*
- *Shared information between different organisations (5 references)*
- *Regular information updates and sharing between different organisations (5 references)*
- *Youth professional being trust building/reliable (5 references)*
- *Youth professional believing in young people (5 references)*
- *Youth professional having humour (5 references)*
- *(social) issues (affecting the person's life (5 references)*

## RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES FOR EMPLOYERS

A total of 21 employers were questioned in local areas of 4 partner countries. We gathered the most recurring themes within the conceptual framework discussed above, in an overview:

MAJOR RESULTS QUESTIONNAIRES EMPLOYERS		
Conceptual framework factors	10 most recurring themes	Amount of references to this factor/theme*
Young person		196
Personal characteristics		7
Knowledge		14
Skills		54
	<i>Good communication skills</i>	6
Attitude/behaviour		84
	<i>Right attitude</i>	9
	<i>Motivation</i>	20
	<i>Desire/willingness/commitment to learn</i>	6
Work experience		34
Certificates		3
Personal context		9
Support		263
Training		11
Collaboration training-education		5
Education		38
	<i>Involvement of schools/education(alists)</i>	10
Collaboration education - employers		25
Employer		123
Recruitment		47
Support		47
	<i>Providing/develop (more) alternation/apprenticeships/internships...</i>	16
	<i>Mentoring/tutoring on the workplace</i>	14
In-company training		29
	<i>(more/better) training at the workplace</i>	6
Collaboration employer – youth work		24
	<i>More involvement/closer links with employers/business with youth work and training centres</i>	12
Youth work		17
Collaboration youth work – other organisations		20
Bigger context		31
	<i>Measurements to stimulate employer engagement</i>	13

\* Note that the numbers in this table are not addable as many more quotes than the ones displayed make up the total amount of references on each conceptual framework factor.

The other (less frequently nominated) themes of importance coming forward in the questionnaires (having 3 references or more), are listed below:

- *Young person having work experience (in different jobs) is ideal (10 references)*
- *Social/interpersonal skills of the young person (5 references)*
- *Young person having life skills (5 references)*
- *Adaptability of the young person (3 references)*
- *Involvement of the government/state (3 references)*

- *Involvement of training centres (working with apprenticeships) (3 references)*
- *Lack of literacy of the young person (4 references)*
- *Lack of numeracy of the young person (4 references)*
- *Preparing young people for the work place by offering work (experience) placement (opportunities) (3 references)*
- *School does not prepare the young people for work (it rather makes them open-minded) (3 references)*
- *Young person having enthusiasm (3 references)*



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## COMPARISON OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Comparing the questionnaires of young people, youth workers and employers, it is obvious that ‘attitudes’ and ‘behaviour of the young person’ are important themes. However, of all the themes ‘motivation’ stands out to be very important. All three of our target groups refer to motivation frequently. Reading their concrete answers though, the topic might be mentioned from different perspectives. For example, youth workers point several times to the necessity of the young person engaging and attending their support activity; employers focus on motivation for the job and the will to work hard for the company, whereas young people address the need for experiencing empathy, being listened to and getting the chance to prove themselves. Nevertheless, although this could be interpreted as majorly different views, the fact that all stakeholders recognise the crucial role of motivation, could be a strong leverage for improvement of guidance towards employment.

A second theme recurring throughout the three questionnaire databases is the importance of ‘education’, the ‘disadvantage of dropping out of school’ and the need for ‘involvement of schools’ in the guidance of young people towards work.

One factor in the employer questionnaires that didn’t get mentioned as explicitly in the questionnaires for NEETS, is ‘in company (or in-house/on the job) training’. Of course the young people referred to learning at the workplace as part of ‘education’, ‘training’ or ‘employer support’, but the employers made 29 particular references to ‘in company training’ as an element of success for NEETS to get a chance in the job market/workplace. The fact that employers are open for the responsibility they have to train youngsters, corresponds with the need that youngsters and youth workers raise to facilitate a collaboration between an employer and a young jobseeker and the huge emphasis on ‘work experience’ and more particularly opportunities for quality apprenticeships by all beneficiaries. To enable them to activate this role however, the employers explicitly indicated the need for support from the government in funding and tax reductions.

In the youth workers questionnaires, we noticed a few critical remarks about the ‘bigger context’ as well. Not only is there a need for extra funding, there is also a disparity between demand and supply of vacancies. There appears to be a lack of suitable employment/unskilled labour opportunities for less academically able candidates. Although this area is outside of the remit of the PETE project, we can call attention to this for policy makers to notice.

What stands out to us, is that the personal context of youngsters is mentioned a lot by the young people (254 times) and the youth workers (201) but only 9 times by the employers. If we look specifically at what young people and youth workers mention about the personal context, the points raised concern ‘mobility’ (or even more having a driving license), having ‘financial resources’ and having ‘moral support’ from parents, family, friends and environment. The lack of attention to this from employers can be due the fact that they are either unaware of the importance of this issue, or perhaps don’t care significantly about this potential barrier for young people. This may be the reason why some youngsters feel they don’t have a connection or match with certain employers. On the other hand, it’s possible that employers do know about this barrier but the questionnaire for employers didn’t focus on this topic enough for them to think about it.

From the questionnaires, we notice a lot of self-knowledge and self-insight within the youngsters, but still youngsters seem to be underestimated. It’s noteworthy that, despite youth workers in the questionnaires claiming that it is important to work on the empowerment of young people, tasks are often ‘taken over’, not allowing the young person the opportunity to fully undertake themselves. For example, as part of the self-assessments in the case studies we will report on later in this publication, it became clear that some of the assessments were not filled in by the youngsters themselves, but by a third party, most likely the enquirer.

Not really clear from the summarising result overviews above, but very noticeable in the databases are local differences and nuances between the partners and their target groups. For example:

- The French youngsters and youth workers put a lot of focus on the importance of a drivers' license. In France much employers require to have one, so with a drivers' license young people gain access to more job offers. It's not clear if there's greater emphasis on this in France because in and around the region the commuting traffic is further than in other partner regions or because the public transportation is less available for certain journeys.
- In Kortrijk (Belgium) a lot of youngsters, youth workers and employers mention the fact that the system of unemployment benefits is not designed to motivate jobseekers to find employment, because the benefit of having a job is not high enough in regards to unemployment benefits. This 'unemployment trap' was hardly mentioned by respondents in any other region.
- The French and Belgian questionnaires refer to job agencies and interim agencies, something that is mentioned less in questionnaires from the UK and Ireland.
- In Ireland and the UK there is a big emphasis on community services and community jobs. This seems less applicable in the French and Belgian questionnaires.

## CASE STUDIES

The case studies are a more ‘in-depth’ analysis of the current provision by showcasing beneficiary stories in detail and identifying their ‘whole’ experience over a maximum of 9 month period.

In outline, the case studies contained an ‘initial needs assessment’. From this baseline, a second and third assessment is done a few weeks or months later to identify appropriate progression pathway and milestones. With each new assessment, the young person was asked to point out his opinion on reasons for evolution. Furthermore, the partners recorded step-by-step difficulties encountered, solutions found, achievements & setbacks on each contact occasion with the young person. The partners also captured additional information about the individual’s circumstances & specific challenges. Focussing on them in an holistic way, project workers noted details such as family situations/emotions/health/housing, that the beneficiary may have need additional support with, in order to progress. They registered the findings of the young person on (un)successful elements separately from their own views/observations. This provided an excellent record and third perspective to assess potential “gaps” in services and highlight good practices to feed into our developing new methodology in phase 2.

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## WORKING METHOD

The partnership used three forms to collect the data. The first form collects the personal details of the young person. The second form is a self-assessment for the youngster to fill in and the third form – the core document – summarises the findings of the case study, consisting of 2 parts. Part 1 describes the evolution between different self-assessments and part 2 provides a logbook for every encounter with the youngster, but separating the ideas of the young person from the ideas of the youth worker. The data was structured again based on successful and unsuccessful factors within and beyond youth work, later on analysed as described above in 3 separate analysing documents.

To engage the youngsters for the case studies, the partners organised one-on-one meetings, focus groups of youngsters and tried to reach them by phone call, social media, ... Some meetings took place in alternative meeting places like a pub or a youth centre. To motivate youngsters for the case studies, one of the partners (Mentor vzw) arranged goodie bags, including football tickets and sport arrangements, sponsored by the City of Kortrijk.

## RESULTS

Although the partnership started with engaging more than 70 young people to participate in the case studies, only for 63 of them the project was able to record case study data. For 8 out of these 63 young people the data collection stopped earlier than planned. Sometimes this was because the young person found a job. Mostly however, withdrawal from the young person was the (main) reason.

Incorporated in the case study, 60 young people gave their views on reasons for the evolutions they had made during their guidance towards work, using a self-assessment. 55 of these young people made it to a 3th self-assessment and thus the second interrogation on their view of causing factors for evolution.

Although this drop-out resulted in incomplete data, we were able to assemble the most interesting findings.

MAJOR RESULTS CASE STUDY RESEARCH		Amount of references to this factor/theme*		
Conceptual framework factors	7 most recurring themes (4 most recurring themes per case study part)	Case study self-assessment	Case study Young person	Case study observer
Young person		87	292	277
Personal characteristics		2	7	4
Knowledge		15	46	44
	<i>Knowledge of employers' expectations</i>			14
	<i>Need of good orientation (discover own capacities)</i>		10	
Skills		13	35	30
Attitude/behaviour		48	159	184
	<i>(support on) motivation/full engagement</i>	8	26	28
	<i>(support on) self-confidence/self-belief</i>	6	27	26
	<i>Pro-active/continuous job search</i>			9
Work experience		5	24	8
	<i>Temporary (volunteering) jobs</i>	10		
Certificates		4	21	7
Personal context		38	53	46
	<i>passing a drivers license</i>	5	16	
Support		51	264	175
Training		6	14	9
Collaboration training-education		0	4	3
Education		2	8	7
Collaboration education-employers		2	2	3
Employer		15	44	17
Collaboration employer-youth work		1	4	1
Youth work		24	180	135
Collaboration Youth work-other organisations		1	11	2
Bigger context		0	16	5

\* Note that the numbers in this table are not addable as many more quotes than the ones displayed make up the total amount of references on each conceptual framework factor.

The other (less frequently nominated) themes of importance coming forward in the case studies (having 3 references or more), are listed below:

For the self-assessments:

- *Having own accommodation* (3 references)
- *Drug use* (3 references)

For the input of young people in the case studies:

- *Good listening skills of youth worker (9 references)*
- *Active search/looking for a job (8 references)*
- *Being able to get help (call a coach) (immediately) when help is needed (8 references)*
- *Not finding/not enough (suitable) jobs (8 references)*
- *Feeling ready to work (7 references)*
- *Independence/autonomy (6 references)*
- *Young person not having (a) qualification(s) (for the job) (6 references)*
- *Having a diploma (5 references)*
- *Knowledge of expectations of employers (5 references)*
- *Active searching together with the youth worker (4 references)*
- *Being able/getting time to explore the various options (4 references)*
- *Good practical tips (4 references)*
- *Lack of support or help (4 references)*
- *Respect between youth worker and young people (4 references)*
- *Self-knowledge (of capacities) (4 references)*
- *A coach knowing and understanding young people (3 references)*
- *A good coach can motivate/stimulate/encourage you, focussing on positive things, achievements (3 references)*
- *Attending a local mission (3 references)*
- *Being focussed (vs distracted) (3 references)*
- *Doing efforts (fight) (3 references)*
- *Getting responsibility, help and support but letting young people do things themselves (3 references)*
- *Having/obtaining a degree (3 references)*
- *In summer employers are only looking for students (3 references)*
- *Keep going, not giving up (3 references)*
- *Not being able to speak to employers (3 references)*
- *Practical exercises like how to do a job interview (3 references)*
- *Sitting together about/support on how to applicate (3 references)*
- *The feeling the coach is trying to help (3 references)*
- *Young people drop-out of school (without diploma/too early) (3 references)*
- *Youth worker doing as promised (3 references)*
- *Youth worker taking action on a fast way (3 references)*

For the input of observers on the case study:

- *Becoming (more independent/autonomy (7 references)*
- *(having power to- taking action yourself (7 references)*
- *Having a driving license (can expand job search/independency) (6 references)*
- *Setting realistic goals helps (to stay positive and engaged) (too long term plans can be frustrating) (6 references)*
- *Discovering the (business) world of work (5 references)*
- *Feeling supported by your surrounding (5 references)*
- *(difficult to make young people) attending support meetings (unless forced by welfare agency (5 references)*
- *Increase of mobility (not to have refuse offers because of distance) (4 references)*
- *Need of support on searches (4 references)*
- *Putting up excuse (4 references)*
- *Too many/multiple barriers (4 references)*
- *Adaptability (3 references)*
- *Behaviour adapted to the situation/improving way of being (3 references)*
- *Being focussed (3 references)*
- *Being positive/having hope (3 references)*

- *Difficult to steer clients away from everything opposed to what they are interested in/engage them once they have own goals and focus (3 references)*
- *Getting professional experience with internship (3 references)*
- *Need of workshops/preparation on job interviewing (3 references)*
- *Volunteering (helps building a network) (3 references)*

## CONCLUSIONS

### DATA COMPARISON

Comparing our different data collections it becomes clear that there are some connecting themes dominating the 'data scene'.

Starting with the knowledge of young people, the need for orientation occurs in the questionnaires of young people as well as in the case studies we conducted. Young people have to identify their capacities and formulate a suiting realistic job goal. In this, they should get (more) support, as according to the literature research there's a lack of career guidance.

Besides this, there is the importance of knowledge of the job market and more specifically knowledge of expectations and needs of employers, both pointed at in the questionnaires of youth workers, the case studies and the research of literature, stating that there are unrealistic reciprocal expectations between employers and young people nowadays.

In the questionnaires, all beneficiaries put great emphasis on skills of young people and often the lack of them. The research of literature points at skills too, more concretely mentioning the importance of soft skills. In the other data sets as well, social/interpersonal and communication skills are accentuated.

The 'biggest theme' as it occurs in every database we collected is the theme 'motivation'. The research of literature goes further as naming 'employability as a mindset' a major factor and arguing that active and participatory methods improve guidance success. In their questionnaires youth workers also point to the need for an individual approach and a personal follow-up to encourage young people. They state that youth workers have to be flexible so as to adapt the guidance to the specific needs of young people who present them with different levels of engagement. The research of literature confirms this, addressing the use of individual action plans as well. In their responses to the case studies, young people identified that listening to them was a factor of key importance. Youth workers confirm the importance of listening skills as characteristic of a good youth worker.

Support in developing confidence and self-belief also dominate questionnaires of young people and case studies. This is evidenced by quotes from young people as well as observers.

Moreover, young people ask in their questionnaires for more meetings with employers to get confidence in communicating and contacting them. This links also with the overall question of more involvement of employers (in youth work and education) throughout all the research we did. Specifically, support by mentors and tutors is emphasised in the research of literature and questionnaires of employers. Also, the provision of opportunities of work experience pops up in all data. In this matter, the research shows that not only is it important to actually gain work experience (voluntary/temporary internship), but even accessing such opportunities can be prohibitive. This leads to wide-spread frustration, as beautifully described by this young person:

*"Often adverts want you to have 5 years of experience, 7 Olympic gold medals and to be the first man on the moon. 18 year olds do not have the experience required."*

The outcomes of the questionnaires also point to the value of education, together with the research of literature stating that dropping out of school is a big disadvantage. Throughout the data collected, the responsibility of education itself in this area is highly emphasised, charging the education systems with not preparing young people properly for work and not being oriented enough at the job needs of today's job market.

Respondents would also prefer to see more and effective inter-agency support, as is addressed by the research of literature as well, saying that young people should be supported with a more holistic approach.

With regard to the personal context of the young person multiple barriers have been mentioned, but mobility and the need for a driver's license recur most, in the case studies and the questionnaires of young people, as well as those of youth workers.

Concerning the 'bigger context', the general lack of suitable jobs is addressed in both the research of literature as the questionnaires (mostly by youth workers). Of course, with our project we will not be able to change this situation, nor will we be able to address other policy issues highlighted by respondents. Nevertheless, our data provided some recommendations that we might be able to distribute to the relevant stakeholders in a later phase of this project.

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## SOME CRITICAL REMARKS

### *Representative proportion of NEETS*

Although a large number of NEETS were questioned, one can argue that the results may not be a representation of all NEETS. Although the partnership tried to incorporate young people with different backgrounds and out of different initiatives, only NEETS in the local region and network of the partner organisations were involved. In Belgium for example it was striking to see that the young people involved in the case studies are almost all boys. Although the regional number of young job seekers do show an overweight of the male sex (data prove by Arvastat<sup>2</sup>), it's also due to the rather gender specific job guidance activities of the involved initiatives.

### *Interview process*

We make a similar observation relating to potential subjectivity of responses. For example, questioning, recording answers and analysing responses qualitatively always rests on some interpretations. Although the partnership did put effort on formulating clear questions, answers on one question about characteristics of successful young people came back with answers pointing to how you can see that a young person is successful – nice clothes, an expensive car, ... – as well as on what a young person needs to be successful in a job – motivation, a degree, ...

### *Translation*

Due to a large amount of translations (from French to English - from English to Dutch - ...) some answers in the questionnaires were also affected and unexpected nuances occurred. For example, the French verb 'avoir' was translated to 'credit note' several times, probably because of the use of translation generators. A few of these wrong translations were picked up by the project partners analysing the results but it's possible that a few less noticeable mistakes in translation made it to the report.

### *Case Study Observations*

For the case studies the youngsters had to get really involved in the project and had to assess their own situation. We noticed that in some cases, the youngsters did not fill in the self-assessment themselves, which begs the question 'does the self-assessment reflects the youngsters own idea about his situation?'. Also, none of the partners succeeded in motivating the targeted amount of youngsters to participate throughout the whole period and all moments of data gathering. It was one of the greatest difficulties of the project to trying to involve youngsters to participate and secondly to keep them motivated to stay in the project.

### *Conclusion*

We are well aware that our research and analysis methods have not been conducted in a perfectly scientific or academic way. Despite this however, our research methods have been successful in allowing us an insight in what

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<sup>2</sup> according to Arvastat in January 2017 there were 4402 male job seekers under the age of 25 in the region West-Flanders, compared to only 2851 female job seekers.

young people, youth workers and employers find important in the world of work. Our main goal was to identify key weaknesses and strengths to work with for the next phase of the project. Every step in the research was also first and foremost taken with the young people in mind, their voice was the most important one to reach.

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## NEXT STEPS

The study results in this report shape the starting point of further actions of our PETE project in improving guidance of young NEETs towards work.

As the results point out, the project needs to develop tools that take into account the many different issues at stake in individual situations of young people and in different partner regions. This is reflected in the words of the youth workers and young people in our studies who mention that listening and being flexible with a young person is important. The partnership needs to focus on tools that will allow youth workers to react in a flexible manner to whatever issues the young people are faced with.

Furthermore, the partnership needs to focus on the highlighted key themes as areas to develop tools for. Doing this, the project will keep looking for areas in which it can take valuable action, even though at first sight some factors might seem out of our control. While the project cannot do much about drivers licences, it can look at tools of how to problem solve this issue within the guidance setting for example.

Specifically the issue of experience is something that comes up again and again in different projects and it is no surprise that it seems to be a big issue here as well. The project needs to particularly look to discuss with employers how to overcome this barrier and improve opportunities for young people.

Finally, above all this study made it very clear to the partnership that giving a voice to young people in our project was the right decision to make. Looking at the research output, you might be surprised with the maturity of young people in 'diagnosing' their own situation and needs. The study outcomes and the reactions of young people after being questioned confirm that it is crucial to them that they feel listened to. As our partnership wants to play a role in improving the guidance of these young people towards work, we stay convinced of our responsibility in engaging and empowering young people to make these changes together...

## ANNEX 1: SOURCES OF LITERATURE STUDY

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## ANNEX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FORMATS

### Questionnaire PETE for youth workers

1. In what country do you live?
  - England
  - France
  - Ireland
  - Belgium
  
2. By what organisation are you asked to fill in this questionnaire?
  - Strood Community Project
  - Ballymun Job Centre
  - Medway Youth Trust
  - Réussir Ensemble
  - Centre Social Eclaté
  - Mentor
  
3. What activities does your organisations provide to meet employment needs of young people?
  
4. What are your lessons learned in youth work until now:
  - a. what are success factors in guiding young people?
  - b. what are pitfalls in guiding young people?
  
5. What are the tools you use to improve employability of young people?
  
6. Do you have any ideas of what methods/tools could be developed that would be effective to improve employability of young people?
  
7. What are the skills required for youth professionals?
  
8.
  - a. What organisations should be involved in working on improving young people's employability?
  - b. What are the required relationships between the various organisations?
  - c. (How) do employers need to be involved in the process of guiding young people towards work?
  
9. Do young people and employers have a say in how your services are shaped and what is provided?
 

Yes/no

  - a. If it does currently happen how and when does this happen?
  - b. If it does not currently happen, why not? What are the perceived barriers?
  
10. Why do we still have a lot of NEET youngsters according to you? What is (not) happening?

11. In an ideal world what would be the best way to support young people into employment?

### Questionnaire PETE for employers

1. In what country do you live?
  - England
  - France
  - Ireland
  - Belgium
  
2. By what organisation are you asked to fill in this questionnaire?
  - Strood Community Project
  - Ballymun Job Centre
  - Medway Youth Trust
  - Réussir Ensemble
  - Centre Social Eclaté
  - Mentor
  
3. To what sector does your organisation belong?
  
4. How many FTE employees does your organisation have?
  
5. How many young employees (-24 years old) are currently working in your organisation?
  
6. A. If you have experience in employing young people: What works well in your employment of young people?  
B. What are the challenges of recruiting young people according to you?  
C. If you have no experience in hiring young people: why is that?  
D. Do you offer any specific support or training to young people when they join your workforce? If so, what specific support do you offer?
  
7. Which are the three most important factors for you in deciding to employ a young person?
  
8. A. What is the skill gap you may encounter with young people?  
B. How do you think the skills gap could be best addressed?  
C. How well do you think schools, colleges and universities help prepare young people for work?
  
9. What are methods/tools that can be used to improve employability of young people?
  
10. a. What organisations should be involved in working on improving young people's employability?  
b. Do you think businesses should be involved in supporting young people become employable? If yes, how?
  
11. As an employer, what support do you think could be useful from youth professionals/employability support workers for businesses to successfully employ young people?

## Questionnaire PETE for young people

1. In what country do you live?
  - England
  - France
  - Ireland
  - Belgium
2. How old are you?
3. By what organisation are you asked to fill in this questionnaire?
  - Strood Community Project
  - Ballymun Job Centre
  - Medway Youth Trust
  - Réussir Ensemble
  - Centre Social Eclaté
  - Mentor
4. What kind of help did you receive until now from organisations supporting your journey towards employment?
  - a. What aspects of this support to help you find a job do you find most useful?
  - b. What aspects of this support do you think are less useful?
  - c. What bad experiences of employability support did you encounter? And what made it bad experiences?
5. What kind of help did you receive until now from organisations in general?
  - a. What aspects of this support you received have you found most useful?
  - b. What support has not been useful?
6. If you didn't receive help until now, why is that?
7. Ideally, what kind of help would you get to help you access work?
8. How many times you think is ideal for having guidance meetings towards work?
  - Several times a week
  - Once a week
  - Twice a month
  - Once a month
9. What does a successful young person look like according to you?
  - a. What kind of traits, skills, experiences, etc. do successful young people have according to you?
  - b. What helps a young person achieve his goals according to you?
  - c. What hinders a young person to achieving his goals?
  - d. What helps a young person to access education and the job market?
  - e. Do all young people have equal access to this?

