



Summary Report

ESF Transnational Cooperation Platform

Community of Practice on Employment, Education and Skills

Peer Review on effective integrated services for LTU and inactive people

24 – 25 March 2021, online event

The Peer Review explored the question 'How ESF can support the development of effective integrated service models and outreach measures for the long-term unemployed and inactive people?' The Peer Review, organised by the Transnationality Team (ICF) on behalf of the European Commission, was hosted by Lithuania and attended by participants who represented Managing Authorities (MA), Intermediate Bodies (IB) as well as EU-level stakeholders¹.

The aim of the Peer Review was to showcase how Lithuania is piloting two approaches for integrated support for long-term unemployed (LTU) people and to further explore the theme of integration partnerships through examination of different service delivery models. There was further input describing schemes in Belgium (Wallonia), Finland and Spain to facilitate discussion on how the most appropriate models can be designed to meet the needs of a particular policy and delivery context. In the course of discussion participants endorsed the need for soft indicators of employability, recognising such 'Distanced travelled' models as an important area in need of more research and development.

The Lithuanian examples are piloting approaches developed during the previous ESF Transnational Platform Thematic Network LTU Project. The Peer Review considered two schemes currently tested for providing a single point of contact offering intensive personalised support and activation services. Each scheme utilises a case management approach introducing case teams and targeting broadly similar beneficiary groups. The two pilots are testing different approaches to governance, procurement, funding models, and regulation of support measures. One scheme is led by municipalities, managed under a set of pre-existing national legal regulations, and is financed from the state budget. Partners are selected through public procurement and services are defined at the local level. The second scheme is led by the PES, governed through a partnership agreement negotiated between delivery partners, and does not use public procurement. It is funded through ESF and has nationally specified standard services.

The Peer Review was opened by the Inga Balnanosiene (Director of the Lithuanian PES), the CoP Chair Caroline Meyers (ESF Flanders), and Maria-Anna Paraskeva (DG Employment). Ms Balnanosiene noted that there is great diversity of approaches to supporting LTU across Europe, but there are shared common challenge of addressing sustainable integration for those furthest from the labour market. Ms Paraskeva highlighted the person-centred approach being developed in Lithuania, which is key to sustainable labour market integration. She also stressed the strong gender dimension of LTU and importance of the development of gender sensitive outcome measures.

¹ Representatives of the Lithuanian MA and Public Employment Service (PES) were joined by MAs and IBs from Belgium (Wallonia and Flanders), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Slovakia as well as ESF project representatives from Spain.

Steps towards integration from combined case management: discussion on the Lithuania Pilot Practice

The Thematic Expert, Mr Eamonn Davern, outlined the broader context including the 2016 EU Recommendation on the integration of long-term unemployed people into the labour market². He outlined the specific barriers to integration often faced by certain disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including disabled people and migrants. He also highlighted the agile approach to pilot design and development adopted by Lithuania, which enabled rapid development from concept to live testing.

Lithuanian colleagues described the most important objectives of their initiative. These included:

- The Labour Ministry provided a clear steer, but the responsible actors for implementation were given significant discretion in the detail of design.
- Seeking to evaluate the cost benefit of the practice is an important aspect of the pilots.
- Ongoing effective communication was cited as the most important factor in ensuring consistent and complimentary approaches.
- Partnership working can mean that actors can have other priorities or different internal organisational objectives, but it was important to recognise that all of the actors had a common goal: promoting sustainable integration by using multi-disciplinary teams.
- The importance of assessing positive steps and progress towards employment as well as job outcomes was an important success criterion to support vulnerable jobseekers within the implementation of ESF programmes.

In addition, a local focus with significant scope for input from local 'on the ground' support staff, and the joint case management approach were described as a key design feature of the pilots. Effective case management required selection of the right staff, the most appropriate range of delivery partners, processes to enable secure transfer and sharing of sensitive data, realistic well-constructed targets, and a willingness to always be ready to troubleshoot during piloting. The result, following evaluation of the two pilot schemes, may be a third approach drawing upon successful elements from both options currently being trialled.

Offering clients a single point of entry to a wide support network: discussion on the Finland Practice

The Employment Accelerator Programme, delivered in Lathi, Finland, provides a drop-in service for unemployed people aged 30 years and over. It offers tailored one-to-one support through services including career consultations, interview practice, and advice about CV writing. The programme also includes assistance to develop digital skills, such as creating a video CV, and delivers regular recruitment fairs and study days.

The Employment Accelerator Programme one-stop shop model built upon prior projects initially developed for delivery of the Youth Guarantee. All large cities in Finland already had a youth service point so the concept of the practice presented was to extend this for jobseekers aged 30+. A network of walk-in centres was established. Different centres collaborate on various shared initiatives and these are promoted through media campaigns. Within a nationwide objective to integrate services there is significant scope to develop programmes focussed on local specificities. The fundamental element of a jointly agreed service agenda is the most important element in bringing partners together. Further to this, the initiative prioritises human scale support through personalised face-to-face counselling.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220%2801%29&qid=1456753373365>

Combining personalised support to promote client confidence: discussion on the Spanish Red Cross Practice

The Spanish practice – the Challenge +45 programme, delivered by the Spanish Red Cross, provides support for LTU people aged over 45 years. It is particularly designed to address the needs of people with low self-esteem. It assists beneficiaries to acquire professional qualifications following an initial competency assessment. The support includes guidance provided by employees from participating companies with a focus upon enterprises in identified potential growth sectors, such as digital employment. It has a particular focus on promoting gender equality. In order to promote this, it is vital to understand women's journeys in life, especially those of women who have never worked, had a family break and want to re-enter the labour market and who need to re-/up-skill. These are all examples of groups who struggle to combine family responsibilities with re-engaging on the labour market, the programme addresses this through considering a wider context. The programme therefore combines support for specific clients with diversity and inclusion training for men.

A tailored approach is key to this project, so counsellors prioritise getting to know their clients well. In addition to individual assistance small group sessions are organised with a view of building participants' confidence through mutual support helping to tackle social isolation. In addition, Challenge +45 promotes the recognition of the informal skills of LTU. The programme has been involved in the development of an online platform for skills assessment. This enables self-identification of skills, followed by recognition, and support for further skills development. Where a client is developing their digital skills, joint sessions can involve inter-generational collaboration.

Integration focusing services on individual requirements: discussion on the Belgium-Wallonia Practice

The Chimay Centre for Social Welfare in the Wallonia Region of Belgium provides a support methodology placing the individual beneficiary at the centre of all interventions. It offers a clear integration path which provides clients with considerable autonomy to determine and choose which specific support actions they should undertake to best meet their needs. The aim is to optimise the responsibility of the jobseekers through providing them with a structure to make informed choices, thereby increasing the chances of a successful labour market match and sustained integration.

The model is built upon a highly individualised intervention approach. Social workers commence the process with a detailed case interview during which the individual identifies their skills, needs, and personal priorities. Integration pathways are co-constructed, as part of a non-hierarchical methodology. Specialist support workers and service users sit side by side. This person-centred approach supports positive engagement between beneficiaries, social workers, and policy makers. The ethos of the Centre is about encouraging clients to focus on realising their aspirations rather than their current situation.

There are a number of similarities between the Chimay practice and the Lithuanian pilot projects, particularly in seeking to develop customised services putting the individual at the centre of an intervention, with a fully personalised analysis of needs being essential to formulate long term solutions.

Working Group discussions

Participants joined parallel workshops to consider aspects of integration in more detail addressing several questions.

One Working Group focussed upon customer centric approaches to promote empowerment and self-actualisation, the role of municipalities, flexible pilot project management, and the economic dividend from service integration. The other Working Group stressed the importance of holistically analysing the service user's situation through a single point of

customer contact which can provide optimum solutions through the development of partnerships including PES, social services, and the private sector.

What does 'integrated service' mean?

Various elements of an integrated service were considered with a single point of contact/gateway and flexibility agreed as a key criterion. Flexibility required the provision of complimentary harmonised services, which had to be delivered in a customer focussed friendly environment to have maximum impact. Integrated services for LTU people had to be adaptable, with the potential to be varied to meet the needs of individual clients through provision of individual integration packages.

What different forms of integration exist?

Participants identified different degrees of integration and collaborations operating at different levels. Different forms of integrated services exist from case management approaches to one stop shops - the key requirement is to build services around the customer. The tradition/history of partnership working, particularly between the public sector and NGOs can be an important factor in developing suitable integrated service models. Programmes for the integration of LTU and inactive people in most cases involved co-operation between PES (normally organised at a national level) and social support services in most cases organised as a municipal competence. Public/private partnerships were viewed as having significant potential bringing together enterprises and social actors, the role of social enterprises was especially useful in this context. NGOs can provide intensive support and often have expertise in specialist areas. These organisations can therefore often create synergies with other providers rather than being in competition to promote shared objectives. Providing a single point of contact, holistically examining the needs of an individual, and using a person-centred approach are important aspects to working with the LTU and inactive people.

What are the advantages and challenges of integrating services?

Working Groups identified many advantages from service integration. Foremost is an improved user experience through the provision of seamless streamlined services delivered by staff who are trained in their own specialist area and who have the necessary soft skills required to handle complex and sensitive cases. Modernised practices and improved infrastructure can create positive ripples and multiplier effects across the wider support system.

For MAs and IBs, integrated delivery models can provide an excellent frame for the establishment of frameworks optimising the return on disbursement of ESF through identification of gaps and removing duplication. This can be an especially useful tool to assist in assessing the extent to which specific initiatives can deliver policy outcomes through explicitly addressing employment and social integration objectives. In calls for proposals MAs could explicitly refer to service cohesion and added value from bringing together specialist providers to supply seamless services to target clients.

NGOs and municipalities can provide a route into integration and specialist input on particular client group and geographical criteria which might not be available to the PES. This can improve the legitimacy and image of support organisations, with citizens attracting more users. Combined ESF calls for proposals can build upon these potential advantages, including proposals to combine employment support activities with social innovation from NGOs and social investors.

As service integration develops, this can provide a growing body of evidence for MAs on the type of service modernisation best suited to meeting particular client requirements. Further to this, subsequent applications can then be considered in the context of how they meet identified support needs for vulnerable individuals.

Integrated services can also establish a frame for implementing innovative social and employment policy approaches for supporting the integration of vulnerable people, including Housing First and Whole Family approaches. ESF can support systematic policy

experimentation building up from small scale pilots to test feasibility before wider application and if appropriate mainstreaming. Lessons can be learned and transferred from integrated services for young people, but some challenges remain around data sharing, creating a common understanding between partners who are working together and determining 'ownership' (by different partners) of the target group.

An important challenge is minimising bureaucracy to provide streamlined services, which clients can easily navigate. Staff working in partnerships need training to adapt to working in a cross-organisation inter-disciplinary environment. Service integration is dependent upon appropriate infrastructure, especially IT systems that can enable the development of shared case histories. Individual partners may be able to offer existing infrastructure, including higher specification office environments, which can be used by the wider partnership.

What are the success factors of integrated services within the ESF framework?

Personalised support is essential as each integration journey is different. In delivering this, partnerships need to consider both strategic national objectives and local specificities.

Participants agreed that evaluation criteria for successful programme were changing to meet the needs of evolving societal and labour market trends. This is especially important for evaluating programmes that support the hardest to integrate clients. Criteria needs to be developed moving from an emphasis on purely quantitative indicators to a more person-centred qualitative indicators of success, such as increased employability and enhanced self-esteem. User-centric 'soft indicators' need improved data sets and capacity to track individual's reintegration trajectories. Programme targets and success measures can therefore monitor step-by-step progress. It is also useful to measure the extent of partner commitment to periodically assess the health of a partnership, which is an important indicator for future success.

MAs need to plan for the long-term impact of service integration initiatives. This includes building regular evaluation and review of evaluation criteria into long-term programmes from the outset. It is important to ensure agreed and shared responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of outcomes in multi-level partnerships to avoid the risk of a lack of collective responsibility and input to the assessment progress. Success is empowering an inactive or LTU person to realise and decide to develop their potential.

A general change in perspective is beneficial to encourage a positive attitude to creative integration programmes, to facilitate this expenditure on such initiatives should be viewed as an investment rather than a cost. Participants agreed that there is a dividend for the state in the longer term from greater social cohesion, though it is difficult to construct metrics to assess this.

Assessing the standard of support and sustainability of outcomes can take place on a participant, project, Intermediate or Managing Authority level – using both qualitative and quantitative metrics.

How can MAs support service integration?

MAs can encourage partnership working through reviewing applications and drawing the attention of applicant organisations to potential skill deficits in proposed project bids. This can encourage applicants to strengthen applications by seeking stakeholder collaborations, thereby encouraging integration. The MAs can then steer them towards discussion with possible partner organisations who could enhance and supplement bids through service cohesion and greater integration. Co-financing, thematic portfolios, and regular stakeholder events can all encourage service integration. This approach, with suitably designed targets, can help meet the needs of clients with multiple needs. Encouraging consortia bids was viewed by participants as a possible avenue towards increased collaboration. Where possible target beneficiary groups should be involved in design and delivery, this can ensure a necessary focus on provision of integrated client centred services.

Participants noted the special importance of avoiding the creation of extra administrative burdens whilst promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and spreading and managing risk. An important challenge for MAs is to identify 'paper collaborations', which may not deliver genuine integration, and for MAs to establish methods to assess the potential contribution of consortium partners in the evaluation phase of proposals.

What actions and approaches are necessary for ESF to support the integration of services for LTU and inactive people?

Participants identified regular events, expert networks and study visits to connect practitioners as useful ways to foster innovation. It was noted that joint partnership/closer working proposals often follow such events. Calls for proposals explicitly seeking multi-level collaboration are useful to contribute to longer-term mindset changes regarding the design of public services.

MAs can significantly assist in facilitating or conducting service mapping. This is an essential component of any successful joint working initiative. Such exercises need to be conducted regularly to ensure that proposals are informed by the latest knowledge of the evolving delivery ecosystem. It is an advantage if mapping exercises are built into programme design, and if possible, if they are financed by an overseeing organisation e.g. the relevant 'parent' ministry.

Who are the actors in successful partnership working supporting service integration?

Identifying factors in successful partnership working to support service integration was viewed by participants as both highly relevant and particularly challenging. This is a difficult task given the lack of serviceable metrics to apply to consider this in the evaluation of proposals. In the absence of indicators, it is necessary to rely upon consideration of history, reputation, and recommendations.

MAs are often approached by delivery partners with significant subject knowledge but lacking expertise or knowledge concerning partnership working. In such situations MAs could recommend partners before proposals are submitted, ensuring that relevant partners are included at the earliest possible stage of the process. MAs can support training from this point, assist with ad-hoc interventions when a project has started, and could be invited onto a project advisory/steering board.

Calls are sometimes driven by strategic policy objectives and, on other occasions, by stakeholder consultation. In either eventuality calls should address requirements that have been identified, which will help to secure innovative and/or productive outcomes.

Municipalities are often best placed to ensure an appropriate local focus, whilst PES can play a key part in the overall 'hosting' of the integration journey.

The role of employers is key their perspectives must be sought to ensure that integration programmes are orientated towards employability and employment outcomes. Promoting innovation and working with social enterprises can be especially useful in fostering integration especially for the most vulnerable clients.

How can Managing Authorities monitor, evaluate, and assess the integration of services to ensure that measures targeting LTU and inactive people enhance employability and can lead to sustainable employment outcomes?

Working Group participants agreed that although it can seem easier to assess quantitative employment outcomes rather than the 'distance travelled', tracking personal transformation and self-actualisation is essential in order to obtain a deeper understanding of a clients' situation. MAs promoting use of such measures with intermediate bodies and applying them as success criteria, shared by delivery actors, can steer developments of projects well orientated towards removing barriers to integration and improve outcome monitoring. This can be particularly beneficial in supporting the most vulnerable citizens, identifying steps best suited to addressing their issues. Providing clients with as much

control as possible over their reintegration pathways and applying metrics of increased autonomy, self-confidence, and self-esteem, can provide really useful measures, which can help to evaluate the added value of programme for an individual and its overall efficacy. Incremental project development including testing feasibility and assessing saleability in robust evaluation is the best way to secure long term funding to mainstream activities.

The consensus of participants, supported by the literature, is that it is not normally of use to try and assess the impact and effectiveness of a particular Active Labour Market Programme measure for at least two years after someone has concluded their participation³. Notwithstanding this continuous review was important, and partnerships may need to be reviewed to adjust systems for unforeseen events. The recent experiences from COVID-19 being a prime example of the need to do this. Investing in improved integrated services often provides operational cost benefits but should ultimately be understood as a longer-term investment in society.

Learning from the Lithuanian approach

Participants confirmed that they found the collective examination of the Lithuanian approach interesting and useful. Insights from three specific areas are likely to inform future programming in participant countries:

- Multi-level partnerships with shared objectives, including through funding calls which make partnerships obligatory.
- Agile communication and project management.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation, for example through preliminary cost-benefit analyses and use of innovative 'soft indicators' of success such as 'distance travelled' indicators.
- Applying cost benefit analysis is especially useful as this can identify an integration 'dividend' assisting organisations in securing necessary funds to introduce integrated service delivery models.

Closing remarks

The Lithuanian hosts said that they were grateful for the insightful comments from colleagues from other countries which they would incorporate into their next project review.

Mr Davern summarised key developments and future priorities. He said that user centric design, cross-institutional collaboration, a focus on self-empowerment of clients, and innovation were crucial. Calls for proposals encouraging service integration, and MA dialogue with providers to promote partnership working and collaborative design and provision of support, can assist in both identifying and meeting need. This can considerably enhance the return on investment from ESF. A strategic approach was essential, partnership working was needed to achieve this, individual organizations could greatly enhance their added value to supporting vulnerable clients and contribution to wider policy objectives for promoting inclusion when working collectively. There was both a shorter-term business case for integration, through an operational merger dividend, and a longer-term investment case for funding integrated support programs for LTU and inactive people to enhance social cohesion. Appropriate measures were needed to reflect progress and secure resources, cost benefit metrics, and longer-term analysis of net societal state benefits from reducing inactivity should both be explored.

³ See Kluge J and Rani U (2016) A review of the effectiveness of Active Labour Market Programmes with a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean Geneva ILO
Vooren M C, Haelemans W, Groot and Maassen van den Brink (2019) The Effectiveness of Active Labour Market policies: a meta-analysis. Journal of Economic Surveys. Volume 33 Issue 1

Ms Bettina Reuter (MA, Germany) thanked the host country, presenters, and the ICF team for a very fruitful discussion and announced that the next Peer Review on the mobility of disadvantaged groups would take place in early May.

Further information and additional resources

European Commission resources: [European Commission \(2019\) The feasibility of developing a methodology for measuring the distance travelled and soft outcomes for long-term unemployed people participating in Active Labour Market Programmes](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3315180b-9ecf-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en) (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3315180b-9ecf-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>)

European Commission (2019) Job Carving and Job Crafting: A review of practices (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a9fe5636-9ece-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1>)

European Commission (2021) Resources for developing shared case histories ([970c0413-58aa-4090-82ef-c8db131df8cf.pdf](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/970c0413-58aa-4090-82ef-c8db131df8cf/pdf) (next-ma.eu))

Interesting country examples:

PEEPI methodology, Belgium ([Plaquette PEEPI 2018](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1a1a75ed71a1/language-en) (next-ma.eu))

PEEPI approach video, Belgium (in French) ([Découvrez la démarche PEEPI - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...))

Peer Country Comments Paper - Finland "Comprehensive and individual support to LTU locally - with multi-sectoral joint service" ([51eff48d-61e6-443d-9d5b-a78a6a9aa0ca.pdf](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/51eff48d-61e6-443d-9d5b-a78a6a9aa0ca/pdf) (next-ma.eu))

Sweden's Double Decade for Roma Inclusion: An Examination of Education Policy in Context ([45ee59e9-3d53-4114-8de7-5cb46cd62ca5.pdf](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/45ee59e9-3d53-4114-8de7-5cb46cd62ca5/pdf) (next-ma.eu))

Interesting examples delivered by Public Employment Services:

Lifelong Career Guidance Centre (CISOK), Croatia (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=22341&langId=en>)

PES Success Story: Better supporting long-term unemployed, young people and other vulnerable groups at the Cyprus Public Employment Services (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20858&langId=en>)

Employment Stimulus, Portugal (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15310&langId=en>)

PES Success Story: Fast integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market - Slovenian Public Employment Service (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20853&langId=en>)