

## From NEETs to FEETs

**From [not educated, employed or trained]  
to [fully educated, employed and tax paying]**

**A Policy Learning Platform peer review  
Kiel, 17. / 18. December 2024**

### Final Report



## **1. Brief presentation of the beneficiary and its motivation to host a peer review**

The Schleswig-Holstein Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SHIBB) is a state authority in Kiel in which the tasks of vocational education and training in the state are bundled.

These include:

Matters relating to in-company training, state matters relating to non-academic healthcare and nursing professions, upper school supervision of vocational schools and regional vocational training centers, personnel management of teaching staff at vocational schools as well as initial and further training of teaching staff.

The SHIBB is also responsible for the state vocational schools Seemannsschule Travemünde and the Fachschule für Seefahrt in Flensburg.

The SHIBB is a state office and reports to the Ministry of General and Vocational Education, Science, Research and Culture.

For further information see below:

[www.schleswig-holstein.de](http://www.schleswig-holstein.de) - Schleswig-Holsteinisches Institut für berufliche Bildung

## **2. Specification of the policy challenge encountered**

The state government of Schleswig-Holstein, in particular the responsible Ministry of General and Vocational Education, Science, Research and Culture, has set itself the goal of increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training and thus contributing to reducing the number of NEETS.

As the responsible authority, the SHIBB therefore has the task of exploring ways in which more young people and young adults can find their way into the vocational training system and fewer pupils and trainees drop out of training prematurely or do not start one in the first place. In addition, people who have already left the system without success are also to be qualified via the vocational training system.

Questions to the Peers:

We would like to hear from successful measures aiming at reducing the number of NEETs, which might be taken up in our region.

Such measures could cover for instance specific practices such as:

- Practices fostering young people to enter a vocational education and training program after school
- Practices aiming at reducing dropouts from vocational education and training program

- Practices fostering NEETs re-integrating the vocational education and training

We are also interested in learning about overarching measures involving for instance multiple stakeholders and aiming at increasing the overall interest in vocational education and the efficiency of existing approaches.

### 3. Participants

List of Participants
Interreg Europe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erwin Siweris, Policy Officer</li> <li>• Thorsten Kohlisch, Lead Manager</li> <li>• Luc Schmerber, Thematic Expert</li> <li>• Mario Vadeplied, Platform Assistant</li> </ul>
Peer experts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inga Balnanosiene, Lithuanian Public Employment Service</li> <li>• Chantal Fijalkowski, Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand, Belgien</li> <li>• Gunnar Anderzon, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions</li> <li>• Anders Bergström, Norden Association Sweden</li> <li>• Marco Costantino, Regione Puglia - Youth Policy Department, Apulia, Italy</li> <li>• Aftab Sandooyea, Director of Education and Student Life, La Réunion, France</li> </ul>
Beneficiary organisation and stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jörn Krüger, Director of SHIBB</li> <li>• Antonia Burgmann, SHIBB, Head of Vocational training in companies</li> <li>• Nils Walbrodt, SHIBB, Vocational training in companies</li> <li>• Petra Priesterjahn-Behre, SHIBB, School supervision</li> <li>• Natascha Gorny, SHIBB, International affairs</li> <li>• Ina Feuerbach, SHIBB, Vocational training in companies</li> <li>• Guest: Johanna Kamin, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Areas, Europe and Consumer Protection</li> </ul>

#### 4. Policy Recommendations

##### Common challenges

- NEETs are not a homogenous group, but are made up of many very individual personalities
- Lack of qualifications and mismatch of skills are major barriers for young people entering the labor market
- The role of family / family patterns can play a strong negative or misleading role
- Lack of motivation and social skills hinder young people's ability to gain qualifications and/or work
- Limited mobility, e.g. in rural areas, limits opportunities for access to education and work.
- Unrealistic expectations (in terms of position, working conditions, salary, etc.) prevent young people from accepting suitable jobs.
- Disabilities also play a role
- Often we are dealing with complex problems that are caused by multiple factors and differ from person to person.
- Lack of knowledge of the problems limits the effectiveness of the measures

##### Strategic Recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive strategic plan / common goals - jointly created and supported by all stakeholders (systemic approach)
- Clear leadership and governance - political backing/commitment required
- Continuity in planning and funding
- Systematic evaluation
- Institutionalize a culture of collaboration/co-creation
- Strengthen the role of SHIBB as a trusted mediator between all stakeholders, e.g. establish a round table as in La Réunion with a final presentation of results to the press
- Give users a voice - involve service users (young people, parents, ...) in the co-design process
- The **prevention of dropouts** should be considered as **early** as possible
- A **special focus** should also be placed **on transitions**, as young people can often be lost here due to a lack of **monitoring**, access to data should be improved
- Personalization/individualization of educational pathways as far as possible, enable innovative and "out of the box" measures, not all people fit into the system, different measures are needed here

##### Recommendations for implementation

- Development of short and flexible vocational training programs, especially for the transition into the vocational training system, **offer flexible shorter paths with high employment potential:**

- Work on informal vocational training - development of **micro-certification** of skills and competences (see Belgium)
- Involve companies and training providers in the development of the system for the assessment and recognition of informally acquired skills and competences (micro-certification). This will shorten the transition from education to work and attract more young people
- Consideration of **alternative offers (outside of the system) that build on the resources of young people** (see “Pugliesi Innovativi” in Italy), entrepreneurship as a way to activate young people, no proactive action but seeing them as an unused resource: “what can we do for young people” turns to “what can young people do for us”
  - Consider bottom-up design of training offers (listen to the target groups)
  - Accept failure and enable learning by doing approaches to support social skills
- Enable similar opportunities regardless of socio-economic background and **involve family and parents:**
  - Promotion of vocational training through various low-threshold programs and events that enable young people and their families to get to know the opportunities better and gain practical experience (see taster weeks (Belgium)) -> similar to internship week in SH, 5 days of internship during the vacations in up to 3 professions, registration of companies at central office, list of companies is then sent to all young people 15-18 years
  - Success factors: few administrative hurdles, lots of advertising, political support, media reports
- Adapt regulations and funding to allow VET students to complete their education abroad / spend a semester abroad for theoretical education and/or on-the-job training
- **Strengthening the transition from school to working life through tailored partnerships:**
  - Expand the regional partnership between schools and companies by promoting collaboration to provide students with practical work experience. This could include workshops, job shadowing and company visits. This could lead to more effective careers guidance.
  - In this way, it is possible to influence the promotion of training that is needed on the labor market (see Sweden)
- Consider more outreach activities, such as regular (weekly) education on job opportunities and work areas
- **Provide more time for the preparation of young people at risk**, e.g. through a preliminary stage before apprenticeship (see “Anlehre” in Belgium)
- **Weighing up the costs** - investment in education versus the costs of dropping out of school (see Lithuania) Do not react when it is too late and interventions are necessary, but take a **holistic approach** from the bottom up (see Sweden). Early interventions can reduce the negative consequences for the individual and at the same time reduce the costs for society. The more you

invest in prevention, the less expensive individual interventions will ultimately be required and you can identify early enough who might be at risk of falling out of the system

- **Focus on preventing early school leaving with a joint strategic plan for all stakeholders**
- Individual plans - better orientation - accepting failures - adapting plans
- Positive promotion of vocational training and early communication on issues of importance to society
- combination of early intervention and financial measures
- act locally and see what the local target group needs:
  - Informal interactions can be beneficial here,
  - create attractive contact points for young people
  - Giving role models space, peer-to-peer is successful
- Youth guidance centers / **youth employment agencies** can play a **central role** as an open space for young people, branding is important here, establish mobile teams if necessary (see Baltic Sea region)

## **5. Possible calendar of implementation**

The SHIBB is actively working on implementing the recommendations within the specified timeframe.

Together with the Ministry of Education, the SHIBB is currently developing a comprehensive reform of the transition from school to work ("RÜSB"). The recommendations of the peers will be carefully considered in this context. A central focus of the reform is on strengthening and further developing the youth employment agencies, which act as a central regional point of contact for young people. The state's measures to promote vocational training will be reviewed in terms of their effectiveness, with the recommendations of the peers providing valuable support. We will also pay more attention to how early we can approach young people and how partners in the transition area can be jointly involved in this process.



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Calendar of implementation of the proposed recommendations

Applicability [1]	Recommendations	month 1 (Ja	month 2	month 3	month 4	month 5	month 6	month 7	month 8	month 9	month 10	month 11	month 12	Comments
Very likely to be applied	Development of a comprehensive strategic plan / common goals - jointly created and supported by all stakeholders (systemic approach)													Comprehensive reform project called "RÜSB": stocktaking of all projects of all stakeholders. The areas of school-to-work-transition are examined in eight sub-projects. Results are expected from this summer.
Depends on specific political decisions/conditions	Development of short and flexible vocational training programs													Sub-project of RÜSB, currently discussions with chambers on whether shortening is possible, political considerations on specialized training courses, entry qualifications, modularization of training
Very likely to be applied	Offers (outside the system) that build on the resources of young people													continue promotion of the project "Werkraum" and extension of promotion projects "Freiwilliges Handwerksjahr" & "MOIN" with adjustments
Very likely to be applied	Enable similar opportunities regardless of socio-economic background Involve family and parents													Already present in projects like "AIM" and "Regional School-Business-Partnership", parental work of the Youth Guidance Centers are already present but should be considered to be more focussed in future projects.
Very likely to be applied	Enabling semesters abroad													Elly-Heuss-Knapp-Schule sends pupils to la Réunion as a result of our Peer Review vocational schools are widely active in Erasmus+
Depends on specific political decisions/conditions	Provide more time for the preparation of young people at risk													already implemented "Freiwilliges Handwerksjahr", wait for results of RÜSB and eventually implement more low-threshold projects, consider more inspiration from abroad (e.g. efterskolen)
Depends on specific political decisions/conditions	Weighing up costs - investment in education versus the cost of dropping out of school - holistic approach													contact Inga Balnanosiene from Lithuania to learn more about the study she presented in the Peer review
Very likely to be applied	Focus on preventing early school dropouts with a joint strategic plan for all stakeholders													Pilot project from July onwards, bring students into production schools, evaluate RÜSB results
Very likely to be applied	accepting failure													Model project: utilizing synergies by sending school absences to production schools in order to strengthen the motivation and self-efficacy of production school students
Very likely to be applied	acting locally: Youth Guidance Centers													develop a quality frame work with all 14 YGC in SH contacting Anders Bergström to learn more about his work in Baltic Sea Region and connect the YGC--> bringing YGC abroad
Very likely to be applied	focus on interests of target group: individual solutions	we already do this: YGC elaborate individual solutions, coaching as an approach for individual support, multiple offers for different target groups												
Rather seen as not applicable at the moment	Continuity in planning and financing													massive savings targets set by the state government make long-term planning difficult

## 6. Conclusions

During the two days of the event, we discovered that many countries face similar challenges to those described above. Various regional measures and approaches were presented, some of which followed similar approaches, but some of which also brought very different perspectives, such as the Italian approach of starting from the impulses of young people and trusting them to do more on their own.

In summary, it can be said that there is no universal solution for NEETs. Each young person follows their own individual path and different measures can be helpful. Sharing experiences has enabled everyone involved to learn from each other. The peer review experience was very inspiring for everyone and showed how cooperation in Europe works and enriches the work of the members.

The peers were extremely considerate, listened carefully and made constructive recommendations. The open exchange about successes and failures encouraged reflection on further steps. The focus was on the positive further development of the measures offered by the SHIBB.

We are looking forward to continue working with the peers and are planning an updated review in around 6 months' time.