

## **Preventing and mitigating school and academic dropout rates – Fostering the employment rate of young people**

### **A Policy Learning Platform peer review**

**28 – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

### **Final Report**

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

As a reminder, Reunion Island is a French region located in the Indian Ocean near Madagascar classified by the European Commission as one of the Outermost Regions (ORs). Like every Ors, its development is impeded by structural issues based on its distance from France and Europe. Its unemployment rate, poverty rate, proportion of NEETs are one of the highest across all French departments.

Under a few of its jurisdiction, the regional council of Reunion island is tasked with overseeing the diffusion of information regarding possible career paths to the youth, as well as promoting ways for the unemployed to go back into training or facilitate their access to the labour market.

By applying to the Peer review project, the regional council was looking to have experts and unbiased opinions on the matter of academic resilience and the actions that can be taken to promote it.

A few appealing aspects motivating the regional council to apply to the program were :

- a wide selection of qualified experts in the fields related to the challenges encountered, specifically here the integration of NEETs in the labour market, with already applied solutions and clear feedbacks on those ;
- both having experts coming from countries with social and economical backgrounds similar to the local one and experts coming from entirely different social and economical structures, offering as such an all encompassing view of the issue at hand.

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

*This information is mainly taken from the background paper and the application for the peer review. The “thematic blocks”, i.e. the guiding questions of the peer review should also be mentioned.*

Based on its social and economical specificities, Reunion island is faced with many structural challenges. A study by INSEE published in June 2023 showed that one of the key factors to be considered independent (own housing and employed) was to have a qualification. In order to obtain a qualification, attending a course (school or otherwise) or having some kind of formal training is required, except that Reunion Island is showing one of the highest dropout rates and proportion of NEETs of all France, and that, despite all the policies from various stakeholders across the island (both pre-emptive and supportive). Thus, the regional council chose the issue of high school dropouts and the integration of NEETS as the subject to address through this peer review.

The questions raised by the subject by the regional council while applying to the peer review were the following :

Which actions could be recommended in order to lower the dropout rate without a certification ? Which solutions from countries within the Peer Review program have shown convincing results in terms of preventing dropouts and/or encouraging the employment rate of young people ? Has any peer done studies on the link between academic resiliency and the employment rate ? If so, what are the results and what could we learn from it ?

### 3. Participants

*List of participants in the peer review*

- *Members of the beneficiary organisation*

Regional Council	
Huguette BELLO	President of the regional council
Céline SITOUZE	Vice-President in charge of Education
Lorraine NATIVEL	Vice-President in charge of
Karine NABENESA	Vice-President in charge of Training and Apprenticeship
Nadine CAROUPANIN	Deputy Director of Human Development and Solidarity
Anaëlle BRILLARD	Mission Manager for the Deputy Director of Human Development and Solidarity
Aftab SANDOYEA	Director of Education and Highschool life
Pascale GRONDIN	Supervisor of the Strategy and Prospective Management Department
Alexandre LIEME	Administrative agent for the Strategy and Prospective Management Department
Jean-Luc MINATCHY	Director of Professional Training and Apprenticeship
Laëtitia VARENNE	Direction of Professional Training and Apprenticeship
Salim OMARJEE	Direction of Professional Training and Apprenticeship
Sylvie LAGOURGUE	Direction of Professional Training and Apprenticeship

- *Local stakeholders involved (based on invitation, see the attendance list for the details)*

Local Stakeholders	
Jérôme FILIPPINI	Préfecture (State)
Brian TOURRE	Préfecture (State)
Christine TORRES	Préfecture (State)
Michel MULLER	Rectorat (Academy)
Laurent BRAULT	Rectorat (Academy)
Médéric HOARAU	Rectorat (Academy)
Jean-François FONTAINE	Rectorat (Academy)
Laurence CALENGE	Rectorat (Academy)
Valéry Léo BENSARD	Rectorat (Academy)
Nathalie ALEU-SABY	Direction de l'Alimentation de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt
Remy CORRADO	Direction de l'Economie de l'Emploi du Travail et des Solidarités
Angélique GOODALL	France Travail
Virginie DERAND	Caisse d'Allocations Familiales
Catherine PITARQUE	Caisse d'Allocations Familiales
Richard MARDEMOUTOU	Apprentis d'Auteuil
Marie-Andrée POTA	Missions Locales
Sabine BANOR	Missions Locales
Sabrina IMAZOUTE	Ecole de la 2eme chance
Emmanuelle DELEFLIE	Ecole de la 2eme chance
Estelle LOEUILLE	Ecole Inclusive
Marie CLAUDE	Chambre des Métiers et de l'Artisanat
Loup WOLF	Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques

Lucy BELL	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Valere SITALAPRESAD	Conseil Départemental
Bruno OUDAR	Conseil Départemental
Sonia TAYLLAMIN	Conseil Départemental
Laëtitia IDMONT	Académie des Dalons
Olivier HUGARD	Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l'Illettrisme
Henri-François ROLAND	Entreprendre pour Apprendre
Alexandre THELLIER	Régiment du Service Militaire Adapté
Christophe FONTENEAU	Régiment du Service Militaire Adapté
All highschoools' principals	Rectorat (Academy)

- *Peers*

Peers		
Raphael SCERRI	Jobsplus	Malta
Marco COSTANTINO	Apulia Region	Italy
Indre LAUCIENE	Lithuanian Employment Service	Lithuania
Jana ROZAC	Employment Service of Slovenia	Slovenia
Alexander GRIT	Hanze University of Applied Sciences	Netherlands
Francisco CAPARROS	Balearic Islands Government	Balearic Islands – Spain
Chantal FIJALKOWSKI	IAWM Institute for Training and further education in SMEs	Belgium
Dany MEESEN	Ministry of the German-speaking Community, Job Creation Measures and Social Economy	Belgium

- *Interreg Europe team*

INTERREG Europe Team	
Erwin Siweris	Programme Director
Thorsten Kohlisch	Lead Manager – Policy Learning Platform
Luc Schmerber	Thematic Expert - Smarter Europe - Policy Learning Platform
Mario Vadeplied	Project assistant -Policy Learning Platform

#### 4. **Policy Recommendations**

*Description of the policy recommendations, with reference to good practices and other information mentioned during the peer review. This section can also include a brief analysis of the feasibility of each recommendation in time (e.g. categorisation of the recommendations into short-term, medium-term, long-term implementation potential).*

##### **Recommendation 1: Develop a comprehensive strategic plan**

- Make a thorough diagnosis of the regional environment (actors, measures, beneficiaries, labour market statistics and trends).
- Continuous communication and exchange between the stakeholders
- Include the strategic plan with others long-term strategic goals (regarding economy, culture...)

- Define a strategy with realistic goals and measurable results, target a specific area to develop, and define concrete actions and projects to do so
- Ensure sustainable funding

#### ***Recommendation 2: Culture of collaboration & co-creation***

- Involve beneficiaries (youth and their parents) when defining new measures
- Test with pilot groups for new services
- Involve all members of the parliament (also opposition)
- Involve enterprises in the definition and implementation of vocational education measures
- Involve different actors (e.g. NGOs) in the definition and delivery of services on behalf of Employment Service or local authorities

#### ***Recommendation 3: Systematic evaluation of measures, and acting on outcomes – continuous improvement***

- Involve groups of beneficiaries (compare pathways of beneficiary groups vs non beneficiaries).
- Collect data on a beneficiaries' evolution throughout its involvement in a support programme (for instance every 3 or 6 months) in order to follow up closely on its evolution and be able to take corrective measures
- Aim to collect input before, right after finishing and also a long time after the end of the support (face to face and informal activities are preferable as they provide more honest answers from beneficiaries)
- Use external help from academy or technical assistance : external evaluators are more likely unbiased
- Involve the organisations providing help to the beneficiaries, consult with them regularly about the program and its results

#### ***Recommendation 4: Improve access to data and monitoring of youth***

Better monitoring of the youth pathways, aim for an individual follow-up for adequate support measures and opportunities

##### Quantitative data :

- Cooperation agreements among institutions to collect data and avoid GDPR issues are needed
- Combine data from different actors to sharpen knowledge about the youth

##### Qualitative data – up to the individual level :

- Traditional methods : interviews, face to face meetings, tests, profiling process about the person
- Alternative methods : use for instance critical friends' networks to access specific data and perform qualitative research

##### Youth observatory :

- Involve academic organisation to compile knowledge on regional youth and develop studies as needed.
- Create own and specific regional knowledge about youth, school dropout and NEETs

### ***Recommendation 5: Allow for innovative / out-of-the-box measures***

Peers' experiences in their countries show that NEETs are a very diverse group of people with different backgrounds and difficulties to cope with the traditional education and training systems. It is therefore not always appropriate to aim at bringing them back into these systems.

There is a need for innovative and demand-driven approaches outside the traditional pathways to reach and motivate these individuals. These approaches can put spotlight on soft, emotional and transversal skills for personal development, rather than academic knowledge transfer.

### ***Recommendation 6: Develop/reinforce the collaboration with enterprises***

- Trainings about skills for tomorrow for employers
- Ask the employers what they expect from the administration
- One contact point within employment service
- Constant communication
- Involve enterprises in elaborating VET measures
- Create an Employers' relation unit – dedicated measures (employers relation officers) + monitoring unit (meeting with employers on initiatives + feedback on specific training)
- Mediate between expectations and reality : job design service

### ***Recommendation 7: Acting more on prevention, e.g. in vocational education***

Emphasis on the prevention of school dropouts

- Early orientation
- Promote professional education positively and early
  - Involve employment services
  - Inform better career guides
  - Ask parents to talk about their profession and what they do at work
  - Organising 'weekend camps' (outside the school system) to bring young people in contact with professionals
- Personalise learning route
  - Aim for a 1 to 1 learning support assistance when people at risk are identified
  - Validate specific skills developed by young people during their training period, even if qualification is not achieved
- Develop and acknowledge soft skills such as creativity, teamwork, entrepreneurial mindset, communication and collaboration

### ***Recommendation 8: Better valorise the potential of the island as being an island***

- Consider developing stronger economic sectors such as blue economy and agri-food
- Capitalise on the short ways between the government and the population : a laboratory/regional development lab could be set-up to study the subject of the local needs and identify niche areas for economic development and job opportunities

- Identify and capitalise on specific job opportunities based on the geographical local in the Indian Ocean

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

*This section helps the beneficiary to start working concretely on the implementation of the recommendations, by reflecting on the possible time frame and resources to be dedicated for such actions. A Gannt chart can be proposed, or any other easy to use format to visualise and plan a calendar of activities. The information provided here is never binding.*

## **6. Conclusions**

*In this section, very brief considerations on the peer reviewed recently experienced can be indicated, including possible desired follow up activities to stay in contact with the peers or with the Policy Learning Platform (if deemed relevant).*

The experience brought by this peer review has been invaluable, for the regional council for starters, but the all of the stakeholders in academic resilience and integration of NEETs. As it has been pointed out, the schemes in order to help the youth stay in school or enter the labour markets are plenty on the island. Every stakeholder has its own view and policies on the matter. The peer review was the opportunity for everyone to gather to:

- Learn how every stakeholder has been tackling the issue;
- Talk about the difficulties encountered and sometimes shared.

The more information about the issue (the profile of the youth, the schemes that exist and who to contact), the more prepared each stakeholder will be to face it. Having this opportunity to listen and learn from each other, and from our peers will hopefully be the jumpstart to a better and more fruitful collaboration in order to tackle more efficiently the issue of school dropouts and NEETs integration in the labour market.

The regional council would like to thank the program and the peers for their incredible work and very insightful and human approach to the issue. We've learned a lot through this experience and hope to keep capitalising on the peers' experiences and feedbacks. As such, the regional council wishes to schedule a follow-up exchange with the peers on its plan of actions as presented in the possible calendar of implementation.

*Place, date*