



LABO JEUNES
JONGEREN LABO
YOUTH LAB

Guide for **humane accompaniment** of **youngsters** towards **work**

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Foreword

This methodological guide is based on the teachings of “Youth transitions participatory Laboratory», the YOUTH LAB is a project supported by the European Commission (DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), for a duration of two years with the aim of better understanding and act on the phenomenon of youth transitions from school to employment, from unemployment to training, from training to employment amidst the same employment market.

Through the implementation of an original **group analysis methodology** this participatory laboratory for transitions will enable the various actors concerned at various levels of responsibility to analyze, build public action together for the matters of youth transitions between school education and employment: institutional decision makers and organizations, teachers, employers, field professional (employment advisors, social workers, trainers, insertion agents...), unemployed youth... The project is focused on the Brussels Capital Region and will be fed through the **comparison between experiences in other regions and European countries** as well as the exchanges with several European employment public services.

The project relies on the condition of scientific knowledge and will contribute to the production of new knowledge instruments, both at quantity and quality levels. The project fosters a mobilization and capacity strengthening of the actors and it will develop concrete tools for analysis, self-assessment and proposals for the interveners on the field, the decision makers and the political and institutional authorities.

In order to make this possible, a partnership has been created in Brussels between Actiris, the Consultive Commission for Training Employment and School Education (CCFEE - Commission Consultative Formation Emploi Enseignement) and the Saint-Louis University Faculties (FUSL) in collaboration with the MAG Network. For the regional and European side, three public employment services have associated to the project: the Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich (AMS), The Bundesagentur für Arbeit (PES Germany) and the Forem.

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Introduction

Drawing up a guide for professionals of inclusion and transition of youngsters (more particularly towards work) is a serious challenge. All at the same time, account needs to be taken of various aspects: the reality of the professionals, the reality of institutions and organisations and the ways in which they interrelate in the network; the contributions of numerous human science researchers with an interest in the problem; the reality of the labour market and employers and most of all the reality of the actual youngsters who, after all, are the ultimate destination of this guide.

This guide is not the guide of the “YouthLab” team. It is the guide of all the participants of the group analyses (youngsters, employers, professionals,...). This guide is based on their questions, their realities, their remarks, their practical experience, their challenges and their knowledge. The “YouthLab” team would like to thank them sincerely and we hope that this guide breathes the same high level as their participation to the process.

The factors which contribute to the inclusion or exclusion of youngsters are numerous. The quality determinators for the transitions of youngsters between the different components of the transitional space are layered and fragmented. Still, the inclusion and transition of youngsters should be understood systematically. Inclusion and transition are determined by the modalities expressed by all components of the transitional space (youngsters, labour market, education, social protection, transitional space...), which also play on different levels (macro, meso, micro, nano).

Transition is a complex phenomenon, and it is difficult to come up with exhaustive views on the matter. Besides, the view we have about transition is limited to what the involved parties expressed during the group analyses and to certain scientific articles and books. With this guide, we do not really focus on the actual transitions and their analysis (that should be included in the “final report” of the “YouthLab” project). We rather focus on the involved parties, on the problems they encounter, the answers they have come up with and the factors which they identified as determining in the transition of youngsters. This guide is not an analytical guide of public actions with respect to the transition of youngsters but rather a reflective and pragmatic guide. Obviously, views will be shared, but mainly action plans and practical perspectives will be covered. Things which were uttered by the involved parties out in the field during the group analyses and by researchers. The pragmatic nature of this guide is based on the fact that we have departed from situations which are problematic for the involved parties and which practical examples, tricks, clever solutions can be used to face these problems. This has been drawn from the group analyses in order to answer three major questions: How should one intervene with a youngster in first line? How can an inclusion action plan be organized? How should the network function to favour the transitions of youngsters?

The “YouthLab” team shares the same concern with all the field players, i.e. how to increase the quality of transitions, how to enable low-qualified youngsters to insert lastingly in work, how to make sure that transitions become easier and more secure. In other words, contributing to the construction of just and efficient public actions which allow each and every youngster to find a place within society. The quality of the transitions needs to be strengthened on different levels (network, action plans, professionals).

One of the major challenges in the construction of public policies for low-qualified youngsters is the fact that the huge variety of experiences, routes and lives of these youngsters needs to be taken into account. To elaborate policies which are just, correct and efficient, one has to understand who these youngsters are and how they live. Understand that the lives of these youngsters cover more than gender, ethnic dimensions, socio-economic aspects and family situations. It is important to also take account of the specific, singular and multidimensional experiences of the youngsters; not only where they come from, but also on what they can rely whilst choosing, starting or constructing a route which enables them to be included durably.

When certain experiences are hindering (segregation, discrimination, poverty, lowly valued statute...) and others are stimulating (obtaining a diploma or certificate, positive professional experience, financial stability,...) we can see that, under the same circumstances, some youngsters will feel weak, ashamed, hardly motivated, without any competence, whereas others will experience themselves as competent, proud, in control of their situation.

Besides the objective dimensions of existence, subjective dimensions will play a role in whether or not youngsters are capable of taking things in their own hands. It is just as important to take account of these subjective dimensions as of the objective dimensions. Then it becomes possible to construct action plans which tap into capacities, but which also stimulate self-confidence, self-control, the capability to steer one's self, the capability of creating constructive, meaningful relations. All these dimensions and variables are primordial in the context of social and professional inclusion, but also whilst managing transitions.

Approaching youngsters in a multi-dimensional way also implies that there should be interest for situations experienced by youngsters in different settings and modalities. It is important to understand how these situations were experienced, represented or translated, before commencing with their life project.

In the context of socio-professional inclusion, main interest is expressed in the relation between youngsters and school, their relation with unemployment, with employment, with their original culture and with their new country, as well as their relation with activating and including action plans.

It is also useful to be interested in the more general situations of these youngsters. What is a low-qualified youngster exactly? One could say that being young is not being an adult like the others. The youngsters we refer to are youngsters caught in the middle, in transitions, social transition and, even more so, identity transition. In other words, they are situated between two statutes (pupil-unemployed-worker), often between cultures (original family culture - working culture). Situated in-between all this, without recognised statute or the negative statute of the unemployed, the low-qualified, the "youth delinquent", these youngsters often lack resources, not only financial resources, but also social, network-related and identity resources. Without a statute, they can only play a single role, and that is the role of job seeker. Does this imply that they are "lost"? Far from that, and there is a huge diversity in situations. They might not be activated, because they have encountered exclusion, relegation and stigmatisation, all this negatively affecting their role in the world, but they quite often have more capacities than various involved parties dare to grant them.

If the transitions of youngsters are partly determined by known sociological factors, as we have indicated before, we support the vision on inclusion developed by Claude Trottier and Madeleine Gauthier:



“One could be tempted to attribute these variables (determining factors related to social origin) with an excessive effect. However, this is not the case when these youngsters are defined as actors of their own inclusion. As actors, they are neither completely determined by their family history or their gender, nor are they prisoners of their original environment or the conditions related to their gender. They can free themselves from these conditions, they can make the most of the occasions and resources they find on their path whilst entering the labour market, albeit that these resources can vary in importance and intensity depending on where one lives or the moment one appeals to them. However, it is not certain that they can overcome the difficulties related to their cultural heritage or those inherent to the situation on the labour market, nor that they can make the most of the resources at their disposal. Precisely this image defines our approach: youngsters are not reduced to victims, but they are not totally assured that they can realise their professional project with all the efforts they make and strategies they develop. What is more, in some cases it is not sure how to develop a precise project, to construct appropriate strategies using the resources they have at their disposal”¹.

This way of considering youngsters, neither completely responsible for, nor victim of their situation, has the advantage of pointing out the possibility for youngsters to elaborate insertion strategies, despite of these social determinants, without ignoring them either. It also enables the clearing of a path for public action: by making sure that youngsters have tools, resources and real competences at their disposal to set up a favourable project. As such, they can have the hope to actually realise their projects, in a respectful relation.

In transition, neither real adults when adulthood is defined in terms of autonomy, nor real children, since they have to take hold of themselves, youngsters are also caught in between a not yet completed self-realisation and a not yet attained self-dream. “The grandeur of aspiration at this age is often dissociated from the adult self-realisation which still needs to take place”². This age is significant, it will to some extent determine what sort of man or woman one will become, an age during which the view of others matters, particularly the view of adults, be it parents, friends or professionals. This perspective underlines the role of the view held by professionals on youngsters as a significant variable of the inclusion process.

Youngsters can be torn between an inherited identity (the immigrant), their hoped-for identity of being integrated or a negative identity (for instance, the young incompetent). Being stuck with the status of bad pupil, delinquent or incompetent youth, they will see their employability diminish and this might lead to rebellion, apathy, anger or fleeing from the scene. In other words, quitting, leaving or assuming all known clichés, becoming marginal, difficult to reach...

In Brussels, these phenomena which are never definite or unavoidable, do have the tendency to become larger with respect to the ethnic origin of youngsters.

For Vincent De Gaulejac³, ethnic discrimination strongly affects self-esteem and it provokes deep identity wounds. Whether it is political, cultural or institutional racism, young immigrants have to do more than others to justify themselves, to prove what they are worth and to fight the stigmatization they are victims of.

1. See: Vultur Mircea, Claude Trottier and Madeleine Gauthier, *Les jeunes Québécois sans diplôme. Perspectives comparées sur l'insertion professionnelle et le rapport au travail*, in, Diane-G. Tremblay and Lucie F. Dagenais (dir.), *Ruptures, segmentations et mutations du marché du travail*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Ste-Foy, 2002

2. Cyrulnik B. Mourir de dire: La Honte, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2010.

3. De Gaulejac V., *Qui est "je"?: sociologie clinique du sujet*, Paris, Seuil, 2009.

Encountering an unemployed youngster whilst being active yourself in the field of inclusion, often reveals a triple stigma. The first one related to ethnic origin, the second one related to educational failure and the third one related to his unemployed state. The youngster in question could also be lethargic, with few job interviews, a youngster who is said to be not motivated or who does not have the required social competences to find a job. Understanding that the behaviour of youngsters cannot be explained by intrinsic traits, but by social phenomena; understanding that the failure at school and the experience of unemployment might well have contributed to young individuals with low self-esteem and perhaps loss of faith in the system (sometimes angry, sometimes shifting, sometimes lethargic...) where the perspective of finding a job, also consists of thinking in terms of processes and objectives for identity rehabilitation and social recognition.

These conclusions might seem frightening, but they are - fortunately - far from inevitable. Ending up in unemployment might be long-term for some youngsters, but transitory for the majority. And if the capacity to leave unemployment mainly depends on resources and available networks to construct another self-image, the role of the inclusion actors can be vital in the construction of rehabilitating, qualifying, capacitating experiences.

The first objective of this guide is to offer the actors comprehension and action tools in order to enable readers to construct their action in a perspective of capacitation or empowerment⁴.

How can professionals and organisations acquire the required capacities and tools to favour positive transitions amongst youngsters? That is the core question of this guide which has been conceived as an overview, on the different levels of public action (professionals, action plans and partnerships) of the factors leading to failure and success in the context of the transition of youngsters.

This guide will therefore oppose different levels:

Things which assure ►	◄ Things which do not assure
Things which make grow ►	◄ Things which slow down
Things which make proud ►	◄ Things which make shameful
Things which capacitate ►	◄ Things which disable
Things which make active ►	◄ Things which make inactive
Things which mobilise ►	◄ Things which immobilise
Things which motivate ►	◄ Things which demotivate
Things which bring work nearer ►	◄ Things which bring work further away
Things which include ►	◄ Things which exclude

4. Empowerment can be defined as the social construction of the ability of individuals or groups to act on their own social, economic or political positions, conditions and situations. Various translations are possible in French: "capacitation" (capacitation), "développement du pouvoir d'agir" (development of ability to act), "autonomisation" (becoming more autonomous), "responsabilisation" (responsabilisation), "émancipation" (emancipation). In the context of accompanying low-qualified youngsters, empowerment or capacitation is translated by the initiation, together, youngster and professional, of a relation in which the youngster can increase his power, his ability to act and react on his social and professional situation. To hence become capable of managing the various transitions in a positive and manner, with as final goal, inclusion and finding a place which suits him within society.



1. How to accompany youngsters towards work?

Introduction

This part of the guide is mainly destined for all those who, one way or another, accompany youngsters on their path towards successful social and professional inclusion. It also addresses coordinators, managers or directors who accompany or manage inclusion projects or professionals. Finally, it also addresses everybody who holds an interest in the accompaniment of low-qualified youngsters towards work.

Employment counsellors, inclusion agents, project accompaniers, active job-seeking counsellors, facilitators, follow-up agents, CEFA accompaniers, teachers, job coaches,.... all share the objective to enable youngsters to find a place in society by offering an individual (or collective) form of accompaniment.

All these people have a job which is not really formalised yet, in development and professionalization, bordering on various disciplines (psychology, sociology, coaching, social work...) and on the crossroad of different institutions and organisations which all have their own working method (Public Employment Services, CEFA, Missions Locales, inclusion operators, CPAS, AMO, PMS, temporary work offices specialized in inclusion....).

This part of the guide does not want to present an accompanying theory, nor a 'recipe book' explaining accompaniers how they should behave. It is rather situated somewhere in the middle, hoping to associate reflection, comprehension, analysis and knowledge on the one hand and pragmatism, action, the actual work on the other hand.

By guiding the reader through the different dimensions of accompaniment (multidimensional analysis of the situation of the youngster, orientation, constructing the project together with the youngster, place of motivation, responsibility, autonomy, freedom, restraint...), this part of the guide offers - to some extent - a sort of professional posture for accompaniers. Rather to be seen as a horizon to be attained than factual reality, rather a reflective and critical exercise than a manual, rather a combination of possibilities than a defined path, this part of the guide tries to make accompanying professionals think about their practices from the perspective of emancipating and capacitating youngsters. Ethical dimensions play a central role. The core question is "How to offer accompaniment which is just on an ethical level and efficient on the practical level, from a humane and emancipating perspective?" Its name could be: "25 suggestions for emancipating accompaniment."

Although one might read specific parts which hold strong personal interest, it is preferable to read the entire guide from back to front. After all, it forms a connection of all parts involved, rather than a collection of independent parts.

1.1. Analysing the youngster's situation

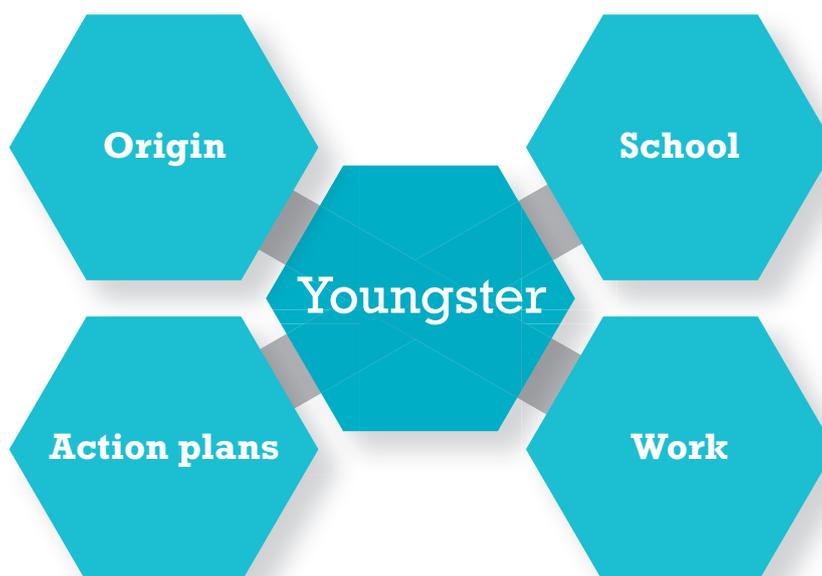
Approach 1: The youngster and his relation to the world

Youngsters know plural situations. As correctly stated by those out in the field, one youngster is not the same as the next one and when one considers a youngster, his singularity, his particular aspects should also be considered. Believing that ready-made solutions exist for the accompaniment of low-qualified youngsters is an illusion, obviously. The interventions of professionals need to take account of the complexity of the situation of the youngster, his singularity and the way he relates to the world, others, school, work,...

Analysing the situation of a youngster, is first of all adopting a comprehensive posture, a position of actively listening, willing to listen to his words and to decode his personal representations, behaviours, experiences. It is about understanding where the youngster stands with respect to a collection of dimensions in his existence. Understanding the situation of the youngster is indispensable before formulating any personal or professional project.

The approach to work with in order to establish real accompaniment is a global one. Obviously, this is not possible (at least not completely) in certain institutional contexts. Quite often, the political and institutional context, the necessity to manage the flow of ever-increasing audiences and the lack of time make such an approach difficult. Still, as a start, it is interesting to focus on what ideal accompaniment could be before drudging down to the more prosaic reality of institutions and organisations.

Understanding the reality of a youngster, is understanding that this reality is connected to a set of dimensions in his existence - in other words, seeing where that youngster stands. In the context of socio-professional inclusion and the related transitions, a youngster should be considered in view of his relation with 5 main dimensions: his origin, his relation with school and training, his relation with work, his relation with action plans and inclusion professionals, and his relation with himself.





Taking account of the origin of the youngster

Every youngster arrives with his own rucksack in life. There is social origin, family relations, he is part of a culture of belonging. These three dimensions of his existence contribute to the construction of his social identity (the way he is perceived by others) and his personal identity (the way he perceives himself). The accompaniment of the youngster occurs through an analysis of these dimensions and by relating these dimensions mutually. It is hence essential that the accompanier manages to identify what in those dimensions could be a hindrance or a stepping stone for inclusion and that a number of questions are asked to make a diagnosis.

KEY QUESTIONS

What is the original culture? How is the youngster positioned between the original culture and the welcoming culture? What is the socio-economic statute of the parents? How does the family picture the inclusion and work experience of their child? What are the psycho-affective resources the youngster can rely on within his family? Does the youngster experience his origin as a handicap or as a resource? What is the relation between family and work?

Questioning the relation with school and education

“School, that unfair system”

Youngsters have had an often chaotic or difficult school past. They did not attain their higher secondary diploma, they have changed schools numerous times, missed out on opportunities... Although some youngsters appreciate school and feel that it has been useful or that they have learned interesting things, the majority of them have a negative or ambivalent relation with school. The educational failure and the feeling of social exclusion can sometimes lead to the school being perceived as inhibiting factor. School itself can also be the reason why these youngsters have constructed a low self-image or why they feel they have to fight a system they consider unfair.

Securing the passage between the worlds

Questioning the relation with school and training is vital for the accompanier. The environments of origin and education experience are the two main identity markers for youngsters in transition. Being in transition, also implies passing from dependence on the family to autonomy, and from passing from a relatively protected school world to the world of employment with all the associated demands and responsibilities. This transition is a difficult passage, undoubtedly for everybody but even more so for low-qualified youngsters with less content in their knowledge rucksack. Accompanying a youngster in transition, is taking account of the youngster and his different worlds and ensuring that the passage between these worlds shall be safe, by handing the youngster the necessary tools and capacities to make sure that the experience of this passage is positive, not leading to exclusion or withdrawal into the self.

The capacities which the youngster has acquired at this moment of passage are capacities stemming from the family world, the world of school or the world of his peers.

In order to move forward, the youngster should have a positive self-image and he should realise that he is not merely a youngster who dropped out of school, but also a youngster who has had rough times from which he has learned.

This is translated by underlining these learnings and the capacities which the youngster managed to acquire in the school world, the fact that a youngster acknowledges this is an important thread for accompaniers. Questioning the relation with school, is creating means for the accompaniment of the transition school-work.

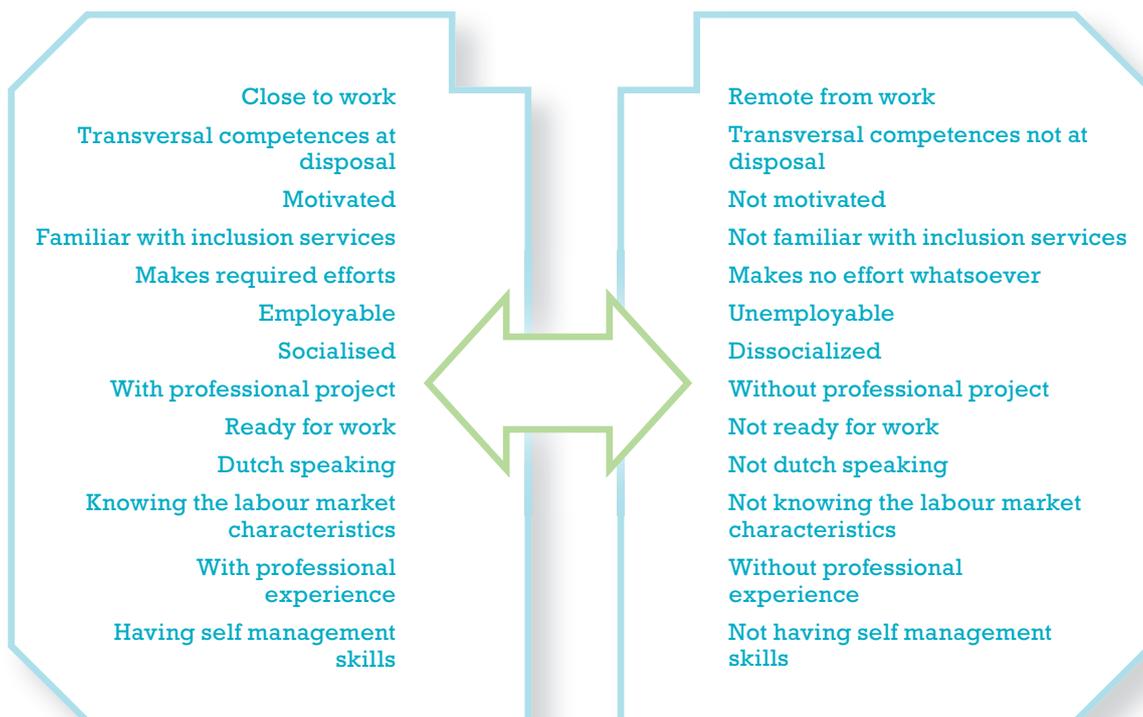
KEY QUESTIONS

“How does the youngster perceive school? Is he aware of the learnings he has gathered? Does he feel guilty about not going all the way? Is he capable of displaying acquired competences? Does he experience his school past as a failure? What can he take out of his school experience? What is his relation with training and traineeships? Is he capable of imagining attending training?”

Analysing the relation with work

After the social and educational dimension of the youngster’s experience, it is useful to question his relation to the future in general and work in particular. If the global approach is the attainable horizon, numerous parties involved mainly or exclusively work on this dimension. The relation youngsters have with work is the main dimension of their potential inclusion and the essence of action plans consists of categorizing youngsters in terms of distance to work or employability.

However, the relation with work cannot be limited to some sensible indicators which tick off the box, such as:





Like the relation or connection with his origins or school, the relation with work is a complex and multidimensional reality which should be explored and analysed, before it reveals means for action for the accompanier.

“Who would hire me?”

The relation youngsters have with work is embedded in a diversity of modalities which depends on multiple factors. The way in which youngsters imagine work is a determining factor for their potential professional inclusion or exclusion. Various researches indicate that the perceptions people have of the employment market will determine their chances of inclusion⁵. A youngster who perceives the labour market as closed for instance, thinking that there will be no opportunity for him out there, that employers do not employ low-qualified youngsters or that they always demand experience or that there is no work due to the crisis, will decrease his chances of inclusion considerably compared to the youngster who sees the employment market as open, dynamic, offering opportunities, provided you are there to take them.

The role of mediator

The work of employment counsellors, inclusion agents, accompaniers... can be accompaniment based on inclusion experience. It then becomes necessary to act as mediator, for instance in the concrete experience of work or traineeship. This type of accompaniment has a lot of chance to succeed.

“Those wicked bosses”

In general, low-qualified youngsters without any work experience have an idealised, even slightly naive view of the employment market. They can perceive it as completely closed, considering employers as ‘bad guys’, thinking that working is not worthwhile. This sort of perception can stem from a feeling of rebellion with respect to the unfairness of a system, from family associations, or from actual experiences with work or traineeships which went bad. However, they can also perceive the employment market as easy to access, and be filled with hopes and dreams which will quickly crash against the walls they will encounter (no answer from employers, job applications which are constantly turned down,...) or, quite the contrary, if they have the required resources at their disposal, also lead to concrete access to work.

Working on the perceptions of youngsters

It is therefore useful to work on the perceptions of youngsters so that they can develop knowledge and perception of the labour market which are both correct and which will lead to the development of a project. The labour market is neither an air-tight sealed, inaccessible box, nor an open space with easy access. Feeding the youngsters’ defeatism by presenting the labour market as closed on their level of qualifications is just as dangerous as nurturing the utopic view that a bit of good will and a little effort will suffice to find interesting work.

In between these two extreme views we find the correct middle which can be viewed as horizon for accompaniers. The employment market is dynamic, offering opportunities which can be had and which can be accessed through certain useful traineeships. The youngster can then come up with the possibility of a traineeship, associated with a personal project.

5. On this topic, also see the works of Cerisis (UCL)

“I want a job, whatever job”

Understanding the relation with work, is also understanding the fact that, for a youngster, the expression “I want a job, whatever job” is legitimate. Youngsters often have little knowledge of the employment market, they have few valuable competences at their disposal and they most of all want to earn a living. They give up their dreams and choose to take on low-qualified work, often temporary, with difficult hours,... rather a resignation than a positive choice.

The fact that they do not have a precise project at this stage is perfectly normal in their situation and should not be judged negatively by companions. Holding an uncertain and low-qualified job would be nobody’s idea of fun or positive project.

Understanding the relation youngsters have with work, is also understanding what motivates them to look for a job, and to underline the negative or positive aspects youngsters see in the fact of working, analysing their fears and hopes, to hence mobilise all positive enhancing factors whilst looking for work. It is also about assessing any possible obstacles, such as refusal by employers for instance.

The importance of co-evaluations

The youngster should not feel wholly responsible for the failures he will experience, because this would demobilise him completely and because it does not correspond with reality (if he cannot find work easily, this is also connected with the context). Nor should he feel completely irresponsible, because this would cultivate the feeling that he has no control over the situation, due to the context.

The concept of responsibility will be fathomed more deeply in this guide, but at this stage it is useful to remember that the companion should open up, together with the youngster, the path towards the real possibility of inclusion. Efforts made by the youngster while looking for a job should not be smothered by complete failure or by exclusively negative experiences, this would contribute to demobilization, would weaken confidence or it would lead to isolation.

Hence, one of the roles of the companion is to accompany the experiences in such a way that they can be evaluated together with the youngster while underlining the positive aspects of the experience and the learning effects which result from them.

KEY QUESTIONS

Does the youngster have professional experience? How did he experience these work-related issues and what are positive or negative conclusions? Which are, according to the youngster, the hindrances or stimulations he encounters while accessing work? What are his representations of the labour market like? Does he perceive the labour market as open or closed? Does he know people who work? What do these people tell about their work? Does he have a professional project? Does he want to work? If not, why? If yes, what are his motivations? Which knowledge does he have about the classic tools for job seeking? Which type of work does he consider to be accessible?



Exploring the relation with action plans

Understanding inclusion institutions, services and professionals is difficult. Often referred to as lasagne, gas factory or patchwork, the world of inclusion and training is a complicated one with various logics. Even the professionals admit that they themselves only have a very partial understanding of the sector they work in. The world of inclusion is also a world where contradicting or even paradoxical action logics rule. One of the tensions of the world of inclusion is help or accompaniment versus control. This tension will be covered further on.

Questioning the relation

A youngster who turns to any service, takes a step into the unknown, takes a risk, reveals his social identity and is confronted with a game of categorical definitions and negotiations. When he arrives at the service, be it voluntary or compulsory, he has a personal idea and representations about the service and professionals in question, about their role, the way he will be treated, what they will or will not be able to offer him,...

Some youngsters think that these professionals are only there to supervise or force them to do certain things in order to maintain their right to financial help. Others feel that the professionals will help them to find a job or actually offer them a job. Some come in with a rebellious attitude, questioning the point of all these institutions. Others, who have more tools at their disposal, try to make the most of the action plans and begin to behave like clients who need to be served. In other words, the usage youngsters can make of action plans is varied, as is their representation of these action plans.

Understanding the singular relation of every youngster with the action plan, is an absolute requirement to weave a relation between professional and youngster. The professional will offer the youngster a service to come closer to work and the youngster will be able to consider the action plan or the professional as a valued and competent reference, offering him tools with which he can increase his chances of finding work.

Getting youngsters to connect

One of the problems which all transition professionals mention concerns the commitment of the youngsters in the action plans. The youngsters are difficult "to connect with", state professionals, whether they are accompaniers or trainers. One of the core questions of the group analyses was the following: How can we make sure the youngster accesses the action plan and how can we make sure that he is committed, that he stays connected and that he does not take off? Whilst considering the earlier mentioned dimensions is one of the keys for understanding situations, representations and experiences of youngsters, the inclusion professional cannot miss out on analysing the relation of youngsters with action plan(s). This analysis does not suffice by itself to "get the youngster to connect", but it is a condition in order to understand the attitudes of youngsters when they present themselves at an institution, a service, an accompanier, a counsellor or a trainer.

Understanding the relation youngsters have with action plan(s), is giving oneself the ability to - if necessary - change this relation in order to create relational work which makes sense to both parties. It then becomes possible to construct the required confidence for connecting with and committing to action plan(s).

The efficiency of an inclusion action plan or an accompanying or training relation lies in the possibility for both professional and youngster to find purpose in their commitment. The youngster has to be able to tell himself that the professional will actually be able to help him in finding work and the professional has to be able to tell himself that he is useful in the youngster's track to work.

“Big brother is watching you”

In the representations which youngsters have of action plans, it is important to differentiate between “micro action plans” for helping and “macro action plans” which hold a double dimension, both help and control. The federal action plan by ONEM, the regional action plans by Actiris, VDAB and Forem and the CPAS (public centres for general welfare) form specific cases of action plans in the sense that they combine a dimension of accompaniment and a dimension of control regarding the access to financial benefit, submitted to relatively strict conditions. These conditions entice that young job seekers have to prove that they do everything they possibly can to find employment.

Quite often, youngsters approach these “macro action plans” with more distrust than the “micro action plans”, because they know that the reception of their benefits will depend on their behaviour and on the professionals they meet along the line.

The reality of the relation youngsters have with action plans they associate with control and accompaniment is doubtlessly much more complex than described above. What is more, it will vary tremendously depending on the individual institutions, services and professionals.

Avoiding mutual manipulation

In this context, the relation between youngsters and professionals will take a specific turn. For the professionals, it is important to accompany or help the youngster and to make sure that he is actually looking for a job. For the youngster, it often means to make sure that the professional thinks the youngster in question has done enough to deserve his benefits. This does not imply any condemnation of the work executed by facilitators, employment counsellors or inclusion agents, but it can easily lead to combatting games and mutual adapting strategies. **Professionals might have the feeling that they are being used and youngsters might have the feeling that they are being surveyed and controlled and that they have to “walk the line” to safeguard their rights.**

In this context, the work consists of establishing a professional relation with the youngster where both parties are winners, which is relatively complex. To a certain extent, the professional needs to turn restraint into opportunity, by breaking away from a context of possible mutual mistrust, in order to create (together with the youngster) a mutual confiding relation, which makes sense for both of them.

Professionals, quite often attached to the possibility of establishing a true accompanying relation with youngsters, can be disappointed by the behaviour of youngsters. Youngsters who hope that they will be offered a job can also be disappointed since they have the feeling that they are only judged on their required behaviour.



KEY QUESTIONS

What knowledge does the youngster have of the action plan? Are the action plans seen as a restraint or as an opportunity? What are the experiences youngsters have already had with respect to certain action plans and what did they take out of it? How do youngsters perceive the offer of services which they encounter? Do they think it is useful? With regards to the action plan, does the youngster seem relaxed or relatively destabilized? How does the youngster present himself to the professional? Which self-presenting strategies does he adopt? What are the perceptions of the youngsters which might be mobilized, transformed or adapted in order for the youngster to perceive the action plan as useful for himself? Does the youngster feel confident towards the professional or is he rather mistrustful?

Approach 2: The youngster and his personal world

Analysing the situation of a youngster in the context of an accompanying or training relation, is, ideally speaking, considering the youngster as the centre of the action plan or the training and/or accompaniment. The youngster is the one who connects or disconnects with all the involved dimensions to hence create a purposeful relation.

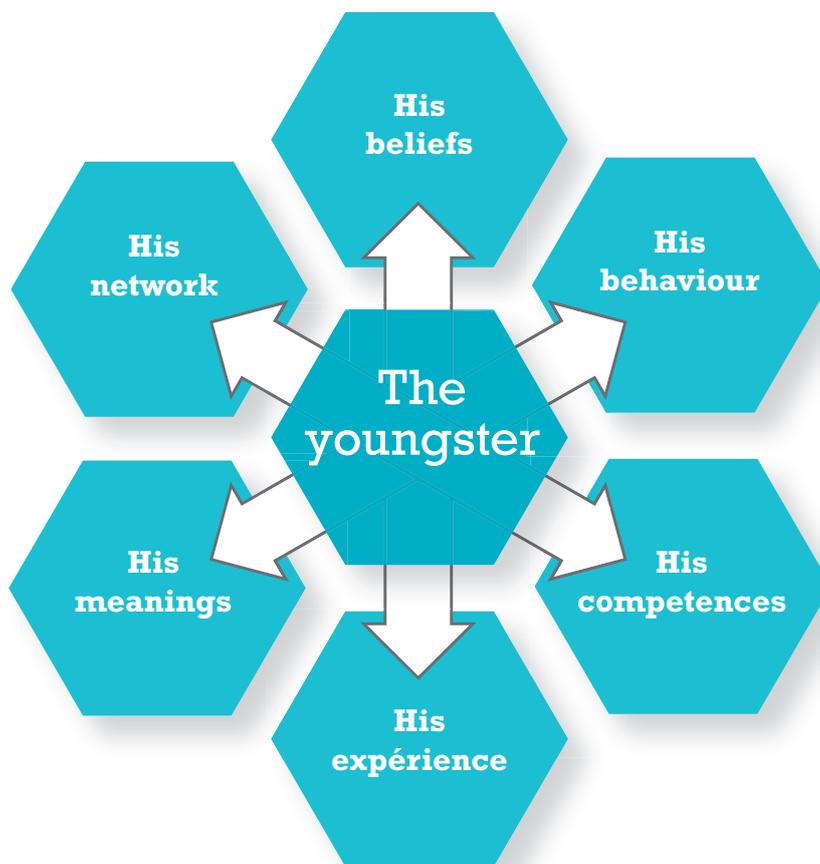
The secret of connection is undoubtedly embedded in the capacity of the professional to construct a relation which makes sense, based on mutual confidence. The professional has to make sure that the "cake batter will rise", he has to make sure that the youngster can consider him as a reference person who will help with attaining his objectives.

Getting away from "it's alright" or "it's bad"

For the majority of the players of inclusion, the behaviour of youngsters does not comply with the supposed expectations of employers or the labour market. Although this conclusion might be debated and although it is far from complete, the work of operators can however quite often consist of making sure that youngsters can learn different forms of behaviour which they can adopt whilst looking for a job, and then keeping that job. **In that respect, simply explaining to a youngster how he should behave, positively stimulating "right" behaviour or sanctioning "bad" behaviour will by no means suffice whilst accompanying a youngster.**

Once again, accompanying work is much more complex. Placing the youngster in the centre, is also taking account of his cognitions, his feelings and his behaviour, and all this in a relation of confidence which is constructed gradually. It is about placing oneself alongside the youngster, to move ahead, together, towards a path which will lead to mutual comprehension. **It does not concern moral judgement about the youngster's attitudes, evaluating what he has done right or wrong, good or bad, but to consider his attitudes as normal by trying to decipher their meaning.**

There is no miracle recipe to do so, but account should be taken of a number of key notes. Before continuing with these keys, it is useful to underline that not everything takes place within the relation between youngster and professional. Even if this relational dimension forms the core, it is still embedded in a context (legal, political, institutional,...) which will determine the training and accompanying work. It is at the crossroad of the youngster's realities and those of the context and the professional where the possibility of a correct and efficient accompaniment will be born.



What he believes and what he does not: the beliefs of the youngster

Taking account of the beliefs of the youngster or understanding what he believes in terms of inclusion, employment, action plans,...

Taking account of what he believes will enable the professional to compare these beliefs with reality, to point out beliefs which clash with reality and those which will act as a starting point to incite an inclusion route, beliefs which hinder inclusion and those which can act as stimulus for inclusion.

Taking account of the beliefs of the youngster also implies for the accompanier to analyse his personal beliefs and being prepared to question these.

What he knows and what he does not: the knowledge of the youngster

By departing from his knowledge, it is possible to question evidences. It does not come “naturally” knowing how the labour market or inclusion work. It is not obvious to know what to put on a CV in order for your candidature to be withheld by an employer. It is not easy to know how to present yourself to a temporary work agency. Youngsters have restricted knowledge of the “profession” of job seeker, they do not know the logics of employers as such, they do not know how a local mission, a CEFA or Actiris works.

But, to commence this work with a youngster, it is important to take account of what he does and what he does not know. Departing from his knowledge in an accompanying relation, is creating the possibility to question it, wonder about it, complete it, to enable the creation of a learning relation.



Theory 1

Analysis of the youngster's situation by behavioural psychologists

Analysing and understanding the situation of a youngster, which is an absolute necessity to commence, together with the youngster, a work which can bring him closer to employment whilst attaining the required personal objectives. It is important to take account of three dimensions as unfolded by behavioural psychologists:

- 1. The cognitive dimension** or what the youngster knows, his representations, concepts of the world, the way in which he pictures the different dimensions of life (e.g. the way in which the youngster views the role of school in his life or the way the labour market functions)
- 2. The affective dimension** or what the youngster feels, his emotions, the modalities in which he views sentiments or emotions (pleasure, suffering, anger, joy...) related to his perceptions or his experiences (e.g. feelings experienced by the youngster when he is obliged to make efforts or steps or feelings experienced by the youngster when he does not receive any answer to job applications)
- 3. The behavioural or experiential dimension** or what the youngster does and experience concretely, like answering convocation of public operator, presenting himself at an employer, adopting an awaiting or pro-active attitude.

For instance, rather than supplying general information about the way the labour market functions, it would be possible to give the youngster personalised information, based on what he knows or believes to know.

Being familiar with the knowledge and perceptions of the youngster is creating the possibility to work on that youngster's scale. Providing a youngster with personalised information does not clash with the implementation of collective processes or groups which can be a truly added value once the singularities have been taken into account.

What he does and what he does not: the behaviour of the youngster

Rather than defining youngsters as "not adapted", as "lacking transversal competences or know-how" or as "not adopting adequate behaviour", the accompanier or trainer should wonder why that youngster presents himself in such a manner to professionals, why he adopts avoiding or rebellious behaviour in view of authority, why he questions the working context, why working shifts is out of the question for him or, from a positive angle, why he sticks to a context, why he assumes a project or an action plan, why he is connected...

Understanding the behaviour of the youngster enables focused work on this form of behaviour.

What he knows what to do and what he does not: the competences of the youngster

Understanding the situation of a youngster, is identifying his competences or what he does or does not know, but it is also, more prospectively, identifying what would be necessary for him to know in order to reach his objectives. As the professionals pointed out, youngsters have more competences than meets the eye. A hasty judgement on the behaviour or perception of youngsters could quickly make the professional think that the youngster is not adapted or incompetent.

During the group analyses, numerous professionals pointed out that youngsters are not (not) adapted or incompetent as such, but that their competences and possibilities depend on the actual institutional or relational context.

As such, youngsters who questioned authority in class, did not adopt the conduct expected by teachers, with low grades and lots of absence from class, actually revealed themselves as competent “entrepreneurs” in the context of a mini-enterprise project. They were able to adopt useful commercial attitudes, they were capable of organizing production work, commercialization and research of efficient financing,...

The context enabled them to reveal their potential, to get to work voluntarily in the context of a concrete project... The perception professionals have of the competences of youngsters is therefore sometimes less connected to the presence or absence of these competences, but rather to the impact of the context on the possibility for the youngster to show or develop his competences.

Taking account of the real competences of the youngster, creating an environment where he will be able to show his competences in a positive manner is an interesting practice in the relation of accompanying or training. Detecting the competences of a youngster without any hasty judgement, is giving him the opportunity of working on them, questioning them, identifying acquired competences and those which still need to be worked on, etc.

What he has and what he does not have: the network of the youngster

The youngster owes his behaviour, his perceptions or his competences to his position and his relations with a network. Whether it concerns family, peers, teachers or any person he is in contact with, the youngster creates a “world vision” with respect to a certain of (or none) of human references situated around him, whom sociologists sometimes call “significant others”. In other words, people who contribute in a significant role to the construction of the self of the youngster, people who contribute to the construction of the sense the youngster gives life in general, institutions, groups, people...

Understanding the meaning which the youngster gives to school, work, the world of inclusion, training,... is analysing who or what **around him**, contributes to the construction of these meanings, hence taking account of this in the accompanying relation. **For instance, a youngster will have a view of the labour market as an invincible fortress because he knows three people in his close surrounding who have given up on inclusion after successive failures.** Another youngster might have a positive idea about learning, because this is what his mother has taught him, that by learning, you grow. A third youngster might be feeling rebellious against society in general, because his peer group feels to be the victim of a global complot, triggered by “the powerful parties in the world”. A third one might rely on his elder brothers to try and find work in a specific domain,...



Understanding the youngster, is hence being interested in his network and in the way his connections to this network could stimulate or hinder an inclusion route. Understanding a youngster, is understanding a youngster within his network and identifying who or what, in that network, can contribute to facilitating inclusion.

What he experiences and has experienced: the experience of the youngster

In the heart of self-construction lies experience. There is nothing more important than experience to enhance competences, perceptions or attitudes. **The youngster essentially shapes his 'attitude' as job seeker based on his experiences.**

For instance, the fact of not receiving any reply to job applications, might contribute to the fact that the youngster will think the labour market is closed. The fact that a youngster will be sanctioned when he does not keep an appointment with an operator, might contribute to the construction of a negative perception of this operator. The fact of having had a working experience within a good working environment might lead to the youngster valuing work. The fact of having met an attentive trainer or accompanier might contribute to a better self-image. The examples are sheerly endless.

For accompaniers, understanding the youngster is also about understanding his different experiences and the resulting attitudes, which can then be worked on concretely. It is about seeing what positive and/or negative attitudes the youngster has taken out of these experiences, to use them as point of departure for future experiences. It is important to underline the learning effects of these experiences (because you can always learn from them), to depart from them to work on the youngster's perceptions. These experiences should be used and mobilised (in spite of downfalls or failures) in order for the youngster to create a positive self-image, by increasing his self-confidence,...

Analysing to make more competent

Accompaniers who apply the comprehension tools as developed above are - to some extent - analysts. They depart from the situation of the youngster to try and understand what connects the youngster to the different dimensions of inclusion and how these connections react to the youngster's situation. This analysis occurs over time, thanks to the relational aspect between youngster and professional. **But the necessity of the analysis should not make us forget the core of the accompaniers' intervention, which we can call 'capacitation'. Capacitation consists of the fact that accompaniment contributes to bringing youngster and work closer together. It should underline, awaken or develop the youngster's capacities to act, to let the youngster move from a situation where it is hardly likely that he will be included to a situation where he disposes of the necessary tools to do so, by giving him power of his own situation,...**

To do so, analysis is necessary, but does not suffice. Certain psychologists state that, **to make a person want to move ahead, you have to value him for 2/3rds and question him for 1/3rd.** Too much questioning, criticism, negative categorisation of the youngster's attitude, too many sanctions will lead to a lack of motivation, dropping out, or a defying attitude. Too much valorisation, positive categorisation, congratulations or encouragement, will lead to a lack of questioning, few learnings, over-developed self-confidence,...

The essence is to find a good balance between de-valorisation and valorisation to make sure that the youngster feels like moving ahead, without believing that everything is already acquired. The professional is hence an analyst of the different dimensions but he uses these different analyses wisely in order for the youngster to identify his competences, his anchoring points, his hindrances and levies. As such, the youngster is able to mobilise the resources of his network, to make a correct assessment of his own possibilities and those of the labour market. In addition he can identify the efforts he needs to make to achieve his objectives, to construct a positive self-image, to question himself... All this will be elaborated in the following part.

1.2. Accompanying the youngster during this professional inclusion

Focus on the social and the professional aspect

Low-qualified youngsters are quite often youngsters in precarious situations with an accumulation of handicaps and risks. For quite a few professionals, the majority of low-qualified youngsters is "not ready for employment", either because they are confronted with difficult social situations (problems with housing, family-related issues, financial trouble,...) or because, for various reasons, they are not capable of adopting adequate behaviour in employment, due to numerous problems arising during inclusion.

When the social situations limits the youngster

Between the notion of solving all problems before commencing professional inclusion and the notion of professional inclusion at all price, it is interesting to ponder upon reflection and see where social and professional meet. Although the social and professional dimensions are sometimes viewed separately, the analysis of youngsters indicates that social and professional are connected and expressed in a systematic manner.

For instance, a youngster can be caught in a panic mood, which highly jeopardises his training route because he did not receive any answer from the CPAS about benefits, and he does not know whether he will be able to pay for his rent or food. Another youngster might reject working in the branch of service checks, because his family thinks that working with service checks is woman's work. A third one might consider working odd hours in a petrol station a good way of quickly settling his debts.

The fact that social and professional are entwined, makes it impossible to make a general comment about these two dimensions. Social problems need not necessarily be sorted out before professional inclusion, and vice versa, professional inclusion will not be a solution for the social problems of numerous youngsters. Once again, the position of social and professional should be part of an understanding and global analysis of the youngster. **It seems equally important to state here that it is necessary for both the social AND the professional to be taken charge of. Ignoring either the social dimension of inclusion or the professional dimension of the social aspect would be a grave mistake.**



KEY ACTIONS

- **Assuming the social aspect:** if, for reasons of mandate for instance (some accompaniers are only charged with a working mission of the professional dimension of inclusion), it is not possible for the accompanier to follow up on the social situation, this should be covered by another actor
- **Collaboration between the actors:** it might be required that the two actors collaborate in certain circumstances.

Orienting and informing

Information and orientation (towards other action plans) are core issues within an accompanying action plan. Various studies underline the place of information while construction an option and creating the possibility to choose. People make choices based on the information they have at their disposal. Accompaniment focusing on autonomy and integration should allow free choice to the individual in question. However, free choice is not possible if you do not have the correct information to do so at your disposal. This might concern information on the labour market, on available action plans and tools, on the activation system, on rights and duties of job seekers,...

Personalising the information

The information given to youngsters should enable them to position themselves, but they should also be able to anticipate any possible consequences of their actions. Good information and good orientation are personalized, in function of the youngster's situation. It is about letting the youngsters make knowledgeable choices which relate to their life and their inclusion.

The issue related to this correct and personalised information is that the accompanier has to be a genuine expert in the concerned domains. He has to know the network resources, how the labour market functions, possibilities of training, access conditions for action plans,...

Making it accessible

Poor orientation or poor information can have tragic consequences whereas good information can trigger positive potentialities. A youngster has to know what will happen if he does not respond to a convocation, he has to know what to expect when he is invited for an interview in a specific sector, what he should put on his CV to draw the employer's attention, what he can expect from a certain action plan, what he should do and know to access certain information,...

Not having this information at his disposal can send him flying off or heading for failure. Having it at his disposal enables him to anticipate the challenges which lie ahead of him. Information provided to youngster can quickly become an insuperable mountain.

KEY ACTIONS

- Flooding youngsters with a torrent of complex and hardly useful (on that specific moment) information can be counterproductive. The use of a correct analysis of the youngster shows its purpose in this context. This analysis enables the professional to give the youngster information relating to his situation and present of future experiences which he might encounter.
- The information should be clear, concrete, practical and instantly applicable. Grand theoretical lectures about the labour market or labour legislation when they do not yet refer to the youngster's situation will be less efficient than practical information about the steps of commitment employers expect when a youngster is about to enter work.

Constructing a project together

The professional project is a choice within the inclusion policy. Whether it concerns CPP, PIIS, inclusion project,... the notion of the project is omnipresent. Whilst analysing the practices of the actors, we notice that the project is a central analyser with various facets. All at the same time, it is tool for judgement, evaluation and categorization, objective (horizon) and injunction. Various actors indicate the paradoxes of the notion of project within inclusion policy.

“Is my project good?”

The project triggers normative expectations of the accompaniers who evaluate the purposefulness of a professional project. They view whether or not the youngster's project is realistic, they judge the project (is it a good or a bad project?), pin-point the absence of a clear project and the fact that, for youngsters, their sole project is work.

The project can hence have negative connotations, making the youngster feel that his project is not good, that he should have a more realistic project, that wanting to work as such is not a project,...

Vulnerability, an obstacle for the project

Those who are asked to formulate a project are often exactly those who have fewer resources to do so at their disposal. Various studies⁶ on vulnerability indicate that the objective conditions of these youngsters actually create the difficulty or even impossibility to launch themselves into a project.

How to formulate a project when you are wondering what you will eat, whether you will find accommodation or when you have no network to mobilise in the project or without any knowledge of the labour market?

A good project is not a must

Other studies indicate that it is possible to establish efficient action plans without screening or setting up projects. The sole access criterion for the IOD action plan⁷ is the willingness to work. Other action plans have proven their efficacy, such as the E.M.R.⁸, tutoring, job-coaching or mentoring.

6. Linking interview

7. Intervention on offer and demand

8. Interview of introduction or meeting with three (employer, job seeker, inclusion agent), preceded by contact between employer and inclusion agent.



But a project can also be the vessel of potential. Fixing objectives can place you in the situation to try and achieve them. We can easily understand the despair of certain companions who see youngsters who only seem to be interested in jobs for which they have no competence whatsoever or the despair of those who see youngsters who claim they are good for nothing. A project as a concept might be useful, but it could be interesting to state there is no such thing as a bad project, to try and understand youngsters whose sole project is wanting to work. This is a legitimate request and the choice in terms of jobs offered to youngsters are rachitic rather than plethoric.

KEY ACTIONS

- The professional project should not discriminate those for whom the project does not seem adequate or hardly realistic, but should act as horizon for the companions.
- The project should not be imposed but should be the object of a mutual construction between youngster and companion. By using the project at the service of the youngster, one works together with the youngster on this project by informing him and providing him with all the tools which will enable him to see where he will go. As such, the youngster will know which requirements result from the choice for a specific project, what the possible obstacles and facilitators are to attain certain objectives, which efforts need to be made to reach that goal,...
- An accompanying relation based on a professional project should lead to a realistic project, triggering the motivation of the youngster. The accompaniment hence enables the youngster to formulate a project which he would like to accomplish. **The project should be carried by the youngster, not the companion. A project is not imposed but chosen.**

Working on motivation

The idea of motivation plays an important role, regardless whether it concerns employers, professionals or the youngsters themselves. Behavioural psychologists tend to ban the concept of will as explanatory factor for human behaviour. Stating that a youngster does not look for work due to a lack of will is an aberration to them. This would imply that some internal entity exists within individuals, whose behaviours are nothing more than an expression of that entity. However, if the behaviour of a youngster needs to be explained, one should analyse his environment, his perception of the interest in working, his representations of the service he turns to, his knowledge of the processes on the labour market or the attraction of other activities besides looking for work.

Motivation? A question of context!

One of the negative effects of falling back on will or motivation is the risk of making the youngster feel guilty by repeating that his problems are a question of will. **Motivation is never an explanatory factor for the inclusion difficulties of youngsters. Motivation is a hazy notion and should be handled with care.** You might lose hope on inclusion because all around you, people tell you there is no work for youngsters. You might have to find work to pay for your parents' debts and to make sure your siblings can attend school. You might adopt a lethargic attitude whilst facing a professional, because there is a fear of commitment. You might seem proactive and motivated facing a professional, because you have learnt that this sort of behaviour is effective. You might feel discouraged after a romantic

fall-out. **But nobody is ever motivated or demotivated as such. It is always a question of context, of experiences,...**

Amongst professionals, motivation seems to be a condition for inclusion (“you can’t be included when you’re not motivated”), a criterion of categorisation (“how can you work with a youngster who isn’t motivated?”), selection (“I can only work with motivated youngsters”) and horizon (“you have to motivate the youngster, make him want to be included”).

KEY ACTIONS

- In this context, it seems particularly useful to discourage the use of motivation as condition, categorization criterion or selection criterion. Motivation might be an indicator of something, the relation the youngster has with an action plan, with employment as such ... which should be fathomed.
- It could also be the object of the actual work and then **be used as horizon**. In that case, the professional has to detect what is the trigger, by evoking enthusiasm or producing a mobilizing effect. He should also detect any resistance, fear or other negative significant. **Working on motivation, is about understanding and reacting to what could be the trigger and point of departure or hindrance and risk of drop-out within the youngster.**

Turning responsibility into a tool

Over time, and due to various public policies, responsibility has become a core notion. Whilst passing from social state to active social state, legislation - amongst others - had to point out the personal responsibility of benefit-receiving unemployed people within their inactive situation. The redistributing policy, conceived as collective insurance against the risk of unemployment, was thought to produce inactive and assisted benefit receivers. Activating policy tries to make individuals more responsible by “conditioning” benefits and connecting them to the efforts made by individuals to find work. It also refers to a contractualisation between individuals (who are committed to make an effort) and the public action (which controls the efficiency of these efforts and which offers individuals tools to realize goals). Whatever one might think of activation policies, the right to social benefit is conditioned by the task of working, of personal employability. The individual is therefore thought to be responsible for his situation and has the power to change that situation.

The idea of individual responsibility of the youngster in his inclusion situation can be questioned. How can a youngster be responsible for his situation of exclusion whereas the explanatory factors of this situation are mainly to be found in the economic system, the labour market and the way in which public action functions?

Responsibility at the service of the youngster

Although the explanation for the reasons for youth unemployment is complex, systematic and multi-factorial, it should not lead to the conclusion some professionals draw that youngsters are victims of an unfair system. **Between the idea of youngsters as victims of an unfair system (“The system is responsible for youth unemployment”) and the idea of youngsters being responsible for their situation (»Youngsters only have themselves to blame for their unemployment”), there is room for reflection, and considering responsibility at the service of the youngster.**



Although it seems obvious that youngsters cannot be held responsible for their situation of unemployment, it does not imply that they have nothing to say about their inclusion. When the weight of social and systematic determinants is considerable, it does not imply that there is no perspective whatsoever for low-qualified youngsters. When the responsibility of exclusion or inclusion of youngsters is shared by a multitude of actors on different levels, it is possible for inclusion professionals to offer the youngster tools, in order for him to assume some responsibility, knowing what he has to do.

Offering tools rather than laying on guilt

It might be useful to differentiate responsibility in the causes for exclusion and responsibility as tool in the accompanying relation. **In this context, making responsible is not placing all the weight of the non-inclusion on the youngster's shoulder, it is about offering him tools to think about his inclusion. The accompanying relation can hence be viewed as a relation which offers a youngster the possibility to assume more responsibility.**

The idea of responsibility is actually closely entwined with ideas such as capacity, knowledge and competence. The possibility of a youngster to assume responsibility in one domain or the other (looking for work, taking a course, living up to contractual agreements, committing to an action plan,...) will depend strongly on the capacities, competences and knowledge of the youngster in question.

Making responsible in the accompanying relation is finding the right balance between the possibilities of the youngster (what he can and knows how to do), his motivations (what he wants to do) and the "project", "action plan" or "prescription" (what the professional and the youngster have agreed about what the youngster should do). Making responsible is also about allowing the youngster to understand and anticipate the possible consequences of the choices he is about to make. It is also - and mostly- about offering the youngster the required knowledge and competences to face his responsibility.

KEY ACTIONS

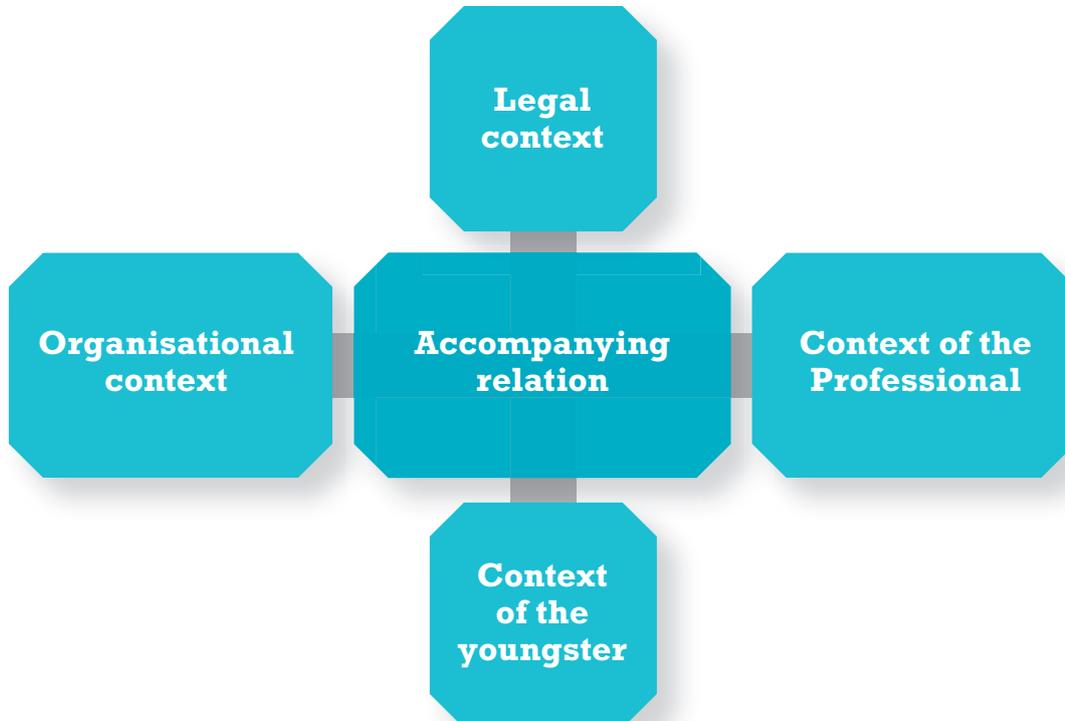
- Sending a youngster off to a job interview when he is not ready yet, inviting a youngster to attend a course which does not interest him, prescribing unrealistic action plans, sanctioning a youngster for behaviour of which he did not know the consequences beforehand, ... can lead to failure, disengagement or loss of confidence.
- Informing a youngster about the expectations of the employer he would like to visit, prescribing actions in line with his competences, analysing with the youngster or giving him feedback about a certain action to prepare the next step, constructing, together with the youngster, a project which suits him and holds his interest, informing about possible consequences in case of non-compliance,... can stimulate responsibility, assure routes, avoid fall-outs, constructs confidence and contributes to the integration of new capacities.
- Accompanying is (possibly) making responsible without making feel guilty, suggesting and constructing without imposing, information about respect, allowing the anticipation of the consequences of personal choices, allowing free and well-informed choices,... This turns responsibility into a tool and a horizon rather than an explanatory factor (for instance the difficulties the youngsters has to become included) or restraint.

Using legal references as mediator

Public action takes place in legal (laws, bills,...), regulated (collaboration agreements, protocols,...) and organisational (methods, procedures,...) contexts. This context might be more or less opposing and they all leave some form of margin to the manoeuvres of the actors implementing the public action. They also define the lines of conduct for the actions, participate in the conception of social problems to be tackled, elaborate hypotheses about the causes of these problems and how to solve them, suggest tools for interpretation and action to the actors... Although the actors have a certain margin in the interpretation and usage of this normative context, they are also largely conditioned and limited by them in their possibilities.

“These youngsters who don’t want to follow the rules”

Numerous professionals have mentioned during the group analyses, the difficulties they encounter when facing youngsters who do not seem to bend to the legal or organisational context. They have a problematic relation with the law, they do not stick to the rules of the game, they push the professional’s limits, they play with the rules. These youngsters also take off or drop out the moment a professional “addresses this disorderly conduct” or they have difficulties with sanctions following disrespect for the context. What to do in these situations?





Theory 2

The question of the law in relation to accompaniment

The question of the law (in the broad sense of the word: legal, regulating and organisational contexts) in the relation with accompaniment forms the core in various debates and tensions which contribute to structure and sometimes rupture public action. Considering the use of the law in the context of accompaniment, is considering the place it receives by accompaniers and intervening parties in the relation they have to build with youngsters to stimulate their inclusion.

The reference to the law in the broad sense of the word with respect to accompaniment can be seen as the use of a normative context which signals interaction. In that respect, it can come in different forms:

- The reference to the legal context. For instance, activation policy which is imposed on job seekers to give competent authorities proof of their quest for work or education policies which determine the context and the way schools function.
- The reference to an organisational context. The norms which rule the functioning of the action plans, such as internal procedures of the public employment service, the regional training operator, CEFA or local missions.
- The reference to a relational context. More subjectively, accompaniment itself also participates in the construction, with the youngster in a context where professional and youngsters make mutual commitments. These commitments are often subjected to contractualisation (inclusion contract, didactic contract,...) and their terms can have legal power. So both professional and youngster have their own normative context.

The reference to the law is hence omnipresent in accompaniment, where it can take on different forms. The use of the references to the law varies, quite strongly in function of the action plans.

The professional is situated on the crossroad of different contexts (legal, organisational, his own context, and the context of the youngster) and he will be able to make different use of them to accompany the youngster towards more autonomy. (Autonomy can be seen as the ability to develop one's own laws). The professional therefore has to mobilise and explain the present contexts to make sure that they are used at the service of the youngster.

Discipline those youngsters!

Certain professionals view their action in an adaptive, integrating logic. For them, integrating or including, equals integrating the normative contexts of the action plan they enter, accepting and respecting the rules, adopting expected attitudes. The work of inclusion professionals then consists of creating individuals who follow the norms of institutions, organizations, the labour market, employers...

From an extreme, not often encountered in its purest form, perspective, work can be viewed as “disciplining” the youngster (“Youngsters nowadays no longer have any discipline, they have to be taught that”). In line with this is the idea of sanctioning youngsters who do not adopt adequate behaviour.

In a gentler form, it is about encouraging the youngster when he displays “good” behaviour (being present during training days, doing what is being asked...) and sanctioning him in case of “bad” behaviour (not showing up at an appointment, skipping class, not respecting his contract...). In the adaptive and integrating perspective, the youngster has to adapt to the action plans and the professional surveys the respect for the law by the youngster. Since professionals shape their own context within the organisational and legal context, they are - to some extent - the incarnation of politics, institutions and organisations, the safe keepers of public moral and the watchers over respect for procedures.

In this hypothesis, the context of the youngster is not taken into account. **The encounter provokes mutual mistrust, the offer does not match the demand, autonomy cannot be constructed and the learning effect is minimal.**

Or becoming their friend at all costs?

Some professionals depart from the opposite logic. It is not up to the youngster to bend to meet the rules of the action plan, but up to the action plan to adapt to the reality of youngsters. The only norms are the youngster's norms and by accompanying that youngster is representing and defending these norms, while losing track of the real purpose of the action plan and the related norms and rules. These professionals depart from the singularity of each youngster to accompany them towards where they want to go. Once again, this is an extreme form which has not been encountered often.

When professionals form their own context within the context of the youngster, they become - to some extent - some sort of friend, whilst abstracting social rules, norms of institutions or the labour market. **In this hypothesis, the society context is not taken into account, the encounter might evoke trust, but leads to few evolutions and only contributes to keeping the youngsters where they are. The learning effects are poor and the youngster can have the feeling that the professional, no matter how sympathetic he is, will do nothing for him in his search for work.**

A correct and efficient solution in between

A correct and efficient accompanying relation cannot be anchored in these two extremes. When a youngster is at the heart of accompanying work and when it is about offering service to the youngster, it is not about turning him into a client and answering to all his needs, nor should he be submitted to the laws of the system. Low-qualified youngsters are quite often youngsters who are looking for themselves, who have difficulty with positioning themselves in the world, who are worried about their future and who look for a guide, an accompanier, a tutor,... to create a nice opportunity for growing, learning and constructing the self. Limiting oneself to being the representative of a system without taking account of the context of the youngster or being the representative of the youngster without taking account of the systems are often roads to nowhere.



The professional should be able to play the role of mediator between the youngsters and the social systems or worlds in which they want to invest, to act as translator and intermediate between the legal, organisational, professional logics and contexts,... and the context of the youngsters. If it not possible to mediate in reality, it could happen symbolically. Trying to find a place in society and in the worlds of employment, is also related to learning about how these worlds function, what their opportunities and their restraints, what are their cultures... Accompaniment is above all a relation in which the youngster can acquire learnings which are useful for his inclusion.

KEY ACTIONS

- Considering the work of accompanier outside his legal and organisational context would be equally wrong as considering it to be completely determined by the legal and organisational context. The professional has to work with the context, but he disposes of a certain liberty in the way he uses it. The place of the law and the obligations related to the statutes of youngsters (job seeker, unemployment benefit receiver, youth in training, traineeship,...) should not be forgotten, but can be the object of specific usage.
- **The usage of the reference to the law can, for instance, enable certain equality in treatment amongst youngsters, hence avoiding that youngsters have the feeling of being submitted to personal will or arbitration by a professional.** In that perspective, each pupil is (or should be) equal with respect to the school regulations, in his efforts for inclusion or whilst evaluating the acquired competences during a training...;and this should not be an arbitrary completion of a professional, but a context valid for all.
- But the reference to the law to stimulate equal treatment and prevent arbitrary treatment should not make professionals forget that youngsters are not equal in terms of resources, life baggage, competences ... and hence not equal whilst facing the demands of the law. **It also seems important to display suppleness whilst using the law with respect to accompaniment or training whilst taking account of the capacities and possibilities of the youngster.**
- While the youngster has the legal duty to give his best for his inclusion, the professional disposes of a margin of considerable freedom in terms of actions, means and tools,... This margin enables him to personalise the accompaniment in function of the realities and possibilities of the youngster in question. **As such, the professional is not the one who obliges as representative of the law but rather the one, as a mediator, who informs the youngster about legal demands and obligations, to anticipate the possible consequences of this behaviour, to use the legal context to stimulate a route which complies best with the aspirations and capacities of the youngster.**

Theory 3

The efficiency of threat and sanction in leading youngsters towards work

Ginette Herman¹ points out the efficiency of the coercing policies focused on the threat of sanction. Comparing groups of unemployed “activated by ONEM” to groups of unemployed “not activated by ONEM”, she indicates that the “activated” groups have more mental problems and higher demobilization than the “non-activated” groups.

As far as she is concerned, these policies contribute to an increase of stigmatization and mental health problems related to an already difficult unemployment situation. There is no room for autonomous and internalized motivation, the sole motivation is controlled and external, and the long-term effects are far from positive.

1. Herman G., *Travail, chômage et stigmatisation : une analyse psychosociale*, Brussels, De Boeck, 2007

Respecting the correct balance between freedom and restraint

Resulting from the legal/regulatory norms and contexts, but also present in the accompaniment, restraint has been the topic of numerous debates during the group analyses. Can one force the youngster to adopt an expected form of behaviour with the threat of sanction? Can one force him to apply for a job which does not hold his interest? Or should one rather depart from the demands of the youngster in question?

Restraint: trigger or obstacle?

Restraint is the object of numerous debates within the field of inclusion. Some consider it to be a necessity, a help and even a trigger (“If we don’t force them to do something, they won’t do anything”, “I wonder whether it should not be compulsory for them to come”) to make sure that they enter an action plan, whereas others see it as a restrictive notion which clashes with the idea of freedom of choice of the youngsters, with the idea of mutual construction and the respect for their autonomy.

Restraint is highly present within the controlling organism for accessing unemployment benefits (obligation to present proof of job-seeking, with the risk of a sanction), and then streams down to the SPE (which offer a compulsory accompaniment and which also release information which might be favourable or not for the young unemployed when facing the ONEM). Operators active in follow-up and training are also involved (who oppose restraint and who are more and more flooded with sanctioned job seekers).



Partial evaluations

The evaluation⁹ of certain public policies focussed on restraint (like the PAS by the ONEM or the CPP action plan by Actiris) shows that these policies contribute to the chances of inclusion for a certain percentage of the unemployed. They seem to have some sort of efficiency, but these evaluations are only partial. They do not indicate what sort of employment has been found, nor the durable aspect of the inclusion. They do not allow the effect of these policies on self-confidence, self-esteem or the feeling of control individuals have who have found work against those who did not find work. No conclusions can be drawn about the type of individual (besides qualification level) for whom the policies have been efficient.

The hypothesis arises to which extent these policies have led to the employment of the best armed, best equipped individuals who were already close to labour, at the expense of the weaker ones, those the YouthLab project is dedicated to.

But how should restraint (legal context, compulsory convocations) be viewed in the accompanying relation?

When restraint leads to disinvestment

Social psychology and the commitment theories¹⁰ indicate that commitment of an individual in an action is weak when he is motivated by external causes (hetero-determination) and strong when he is motivated by internal causes (auto-determination). In other words, the intention to act (to find employment, to enrol in a course, to stay in employment...) is stronger when the youngster has his own reasons to act, instead of being forced by external reasons. The youngster who is forced to act for external reasons will have less commitment, will have more risk of abandoning the project... whereas the youngster who will act "for himself", in function of own interests, to satisfy a personal project... will have more chances of success.

For an accompaniment to start off with the best chances of success, it is primordial to detect and use the things which will motivate the youngster to act. He should be able to appropriate his inclusion project. The latter should not be the project which the accompanier drew up for the youngster or which is imposed by an external context. It should be his own project, either a project he has drawn up and with which he can identify, which is realistic, or a project which has been drawn up by the youngster with the help of the accompanier in the context of the accompanying relation. Hence, the accompanying relation should enable the co-construction of the project and its appropriation by the youngster. An imposed or too quickly selected project which is not appropriated by the youngster is ever so often a project which stands little chance of success.

Although an ideal accompaniment is one without restraint, numerous actors work in a context which is restraining for the youngster.

9. See especially: the evaluations of the accompanying plan and follow-up of unemployed persons by Bart Cockx, Muriel Dejemeppe and Bruno Van der Linden and the evaluation of CPP by L'observatoire bruxellois de l'emploi.(Brussels Observatory for Employment)

10. See especially: Robert-Vincent Joule and Jean-Léon Beauvois, *Petit traité de manipulation à l'usage des honnêtes gens*, Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2012

Three types of restraint

Restraint to be committed to an action plan

This can be viewed as the obligation an individual has to be accompanied (for example the CPP action plan) or followed up by a profession. In this context, **the professional has the “transform the restraint into opportunity”. As such, he ensures that the youngster who is most likely distrustful or distant can pass from distrust to trust. He then realises that the professional in front of him can actually contribute something which will help him in his process.**

The accompanier can then indicate the different advantages the youngster can have when he commits to the action plan. He can underline the added value of the accompaniment in his search for employment. The fact that the youngster is obliged to come does not really hinder a good quality accompaniment. To establish this, the youngster should see the interest, the point and the advantages of being accompanied, that he can see what this accompaniment can offer him concretely.

Restraint to act and undertake

The second restraint is the restraint to act or the obligation that the youngster has to undertake one or several actions in the context of his inclusion.

Whenever possible, the accompanier should be able to avoid restraint with sanction. When it concerns legal, regulatory or organizational restraints which fall beyond the authority of the counsellor or inclusion agent, he can inform the youngster about the origin of the restraint (for example ONEM). He can then present himself as a guide who can help the youngster while facing the restraint.

At the end of the day, the youngster is free to either or not comply with the restraint, but this freedom is conditioned by the knowledge of the possible consequences of his choice.

Relational restraint

A third type of restraint is a contractual and relational restraint. In the accompanying relation, the two parties involved (the youngster and the accompanier) are led towards making mutual commitments (written or verbally). What to do when these commitments are not respected, when a youngster does not show up, that he does not do what he should,...? There is no automatic answer to this question.

It is necessary to understand the point of the youngster's behaviour. In certain cases, it could be interesting to question the youngster with respect to the rule or context. In other cases, the context should be questioned to see whether it is adapted to the youngster's situation. In all cases, it is required to display some flexibility and to keep in mind that the relational context should be sense to both parties involved, otherwise it becomes pointless and counterproductive.

Restraint can have, for certain youngsters, a positive meaning and it can contribute to get them going, whereas for others it will have a paralysing effect. For some, restraint can contribute to a loss in confidence. Contractual restraints which have positive effects in terms of mobilization are, once again, restraints chosen by the youngster, the ones he chose to comply with because he knows that they will do something good for him.



Theory 4

Working with (and not on, for or without) the other

Denis Laforge¹ indicates the asymmetrical character of the ways in which institutions enter in relation with individuals. For him, the institution considers its relation with the other as consistent in hierarchic terms, it cannot be turned around. It is the institution which defines the common good for the individual and which, from this perspective, educates, transfers, protects, controls... and not the other way around.

According to him, institutions define the individual according to "capacitor anthropology" where man is seen as a recipient of innate and acquired capacities and as a "venue of willingness to extend capacity". Institutions hence identify individuals in terms of their "capacitor norms" (working, having the correct attitudes in work, mobility ...) and define their activities as attempts to reduce the distance the public has with these "capacitor norms" in and through an asymmetrical relation.

Further on, Laforge identifies alternative schedules to those of the capacitor anthropology and the asymmetric relation by suggesting "interdependent anthropology". In that case, the individual is less defined by his own capacities, but rather in terms of his anchorage in relations which form, feed and cross this. So he wonders about the possibility of symmetrical relations between public and institutions. He then continues with 4 possible working modalities between institutions and individuals

Work on the other

«Is expressed by topification techniques, which implies for institutional agents to outline a set of rules, which individuals have to follow, and to elaborate action plans (human and non-human) to control the loyalty of individuals. These rules mainly refer to ways of thinking, speaking, acting, rules individuals have to comply with, but which are also related to "daily life" (Giddens, 1987) and to the biographical route of individuals. By doing so, these techniques focus on the normalisation of thoughts, behaviours, and the time and space experienced by individuals. It is also expressed through responsibility techniques which take form of injunctions transferred to the users by the institutional agents. Hence, individuals are requested to inform the institution about the interior state of the individual, with focus on the individual's responsibility when possible problems are encountered. The identity which is hence expressed by the individual is evaluated by the institutional agent according to predefined codes, which might lead that the latter, as moral entrepreneur (Becker, 1985) will bring the user back "from the path he strayed from".

Work for the other

"The ideal-typical work for the other could be the following. First of all, far from supporting a capacitor concept of individuals it actually is the "interdependence of humans" which qualifies the latter as far as institutional agents are concerned, when they work for the other. Work for the other then results in an asymmetrical relation scheme, which can take on two opposed forms.

1. See: Laforge D., *Pour une sociologie des institutions publiques contemporaines: Pluralité, Hybridation et fragmentation du travail institutionnel*, Revue de l'association française de sociologie, 2012

Either the work for the other takes the form of care (Paperman and Laugier, 2006) and the institutional actor underlines his action from the perspective of the user he takes care of: it is the latter who “defines the situation” and hence the required institutional action ;or the work for the other is “pity policy” (Arendt, 1967) for “underprivileged” groups, in that case it is the institution which defines, asymmetrically, the modes for their action.”

Work without the other

“With this term “work without the other” we want to refer to all situations in which institutional actors feel incapable of elaborating an action which departs from an institutionally defined Good. It is not possible for them to define an action line from the user’s perspective either. This happens when a professional concludes that a user is not in order, for reasons which fall beyond his own ability (personal history, mental problems, insurmountable daily problems,...), without injunction of personal autonomy which would lead to an exit from the action plan (Duvoux, 2008). The accompanying relation (for instance towards work) then becomes a weekly or monthly “cosy talk” with as sole goal the actual talk. The work without the other is hence characterised, from a practical perspective, by an institutional lassitude and survival strategy (focusing on non-problematic missions, management of staff and the “inflow” of users for instance) and from a subjective perspective, by moral dilemmas, job dissatisfaction or, the opposite, “reification” (Honneth, 2007) of the population groups the institution is not concerned with.”

Work with the other

«Forms of “work with the other” have been defined in institutions of social work. Hence, J. Ion indicates that numerous action plans (“clinical”, “listening”, “accompanying”...) in the social sector, are characterised by a “relation looking for symmetry of the places [], placing all the actors of the action plan on the same level” (Ion, 2005, p. 7) and “tend to look for personal resources in the person in question to grow and improve” (ibid., p.9). Astier (2007) reaches a similar conclusion: within the different domains of social intervention, the institutional agent should no longer keep his distance from the user, but should rather come closer, to personalise the institutional action whenever necessary (rather than applying an impersonal and predefined rule which is in the general interest, focuses on equality in treatment). It does not concern normalising but rather accompanying people with difficulties, so that they themselves, while being supported, find solutions “to get out” or “do better» (Giuliani, 2005).”

These readings coincide with the analyses made by the participants of the group analyses. Several participants came up with examples of work without the other where the accompanying offer does not match the demand or where it seems impossible to deliver quality work when the distance between youngster and professional is too large. Work for the other is rejected by field workers for whom it is impossible to “work instead of”, with the risk of encouraging “assistance”. work on the other is the form of accompanying which is currently favoured the most in public policies which invite youngsters to question themselves, to work on themselves in order to reach a predefined, normative goal (employability).

Work with the other makes the most sense at this stage. The accompanier can be defined as a guide who helps the person to tap into internal and external resources in the context of a personalised relation, as an emancipating tool.



Involving the youngster and accompanying his experience

An autonomizing and integrating accompaniment ensures that the youngster is “involved in his role”, that means that he is allowed to play roles in which he is acknowledged and which give him positive gratification. In and thanks to these roles and experiences eh youngster can construct himself, win confidence and acquire competences. The accompanier should ensure that experience and acquisition become the core of his intervention with the youngster. **Popular wisdom coincides with social psychology to indicate that learnings based on concrete action and projects are more efficient, more substantial and longer lasting than learnings in school or based on words.**

Putting yourself in the situation

By offering youngsters concrete experiences like - for example - creating a “mini enterprise”, letting them face an employer during role play, training in an enterprise, confronting the youngster with himself during an artistic or sporty experience.... inclusion professionals will stand the highest chance of constructing learnings for the youngster.

Inviting the youngster to an experience such as enlisting in a temporary work agency, drawing up a CV or applying for a job, is quite often insufficient. The suggested experience should be adapted to the youngster’s state and situation, the youngster should adhere and - preferably- it should be the subject of the accompaniment. Not respecting these three criteria is risky. A youngster who does not adhere to an action will not be sufficiently committed. Suggesting a not adapted action can “set the youngster back” and might be felt as a failure.

Adapting to the rhythm and possibilities of the youngster

An autonomizing and integrating accompaniment is also adapted to the rhythm and possibilities of the person in question. Setting the target too high by asking the youngster to do impossible things in his situation often lead to failure and loss of confidence. Setting the target too low is not interesting in terms of learnings and does not enable a positive valorisation of experiences. The path, action, roles and experiences offered to the youngster should therefore be personalized, with an incline upwards, departing from the real position of the youngster towards the hoped for position.

KEY ACTIONS

- Inclusion professionals win by being “accompaniers of experiences”. Hence, rather than following up on a youngster labeled as unemployable and telling what he should do to become employable, one should allow the youngster to face his challenges with the help of a “coach”. As such, he will be able to prepare this experiences, to analyse, understand and evaluate them. He can then see the encountered difficulties, which points still need work and which learnings have been acquired. The relation between the youngster and the professional is then based on concrete actions, rather than on speculations.

Respect at all price

During the group analyses, one of the common points in “success stories” was the implementation of respectful accompaniment. From the very first time one sees the youngster, up to the completion of his personal project, respect plays a determining factor for the success of relational attachment. Respect might seem self-evident for everybody, but it still forms the primordial base in an accompanying relation.

Not fooled, those youngsters!

Youngsters are not fooled by clinical or moral judgements which are passed, categorisations and negative prejudices which certain professionals might have of them as a group. The way in which they are received, regarded, spoken to, listened to,... will be determining for the possible relation building. A youngster who does not feel respected in the relation will not commit himself; getting him to connect with be difficult or even impossible; learnings will not be acquired.

KEY ACTIONS

- Listening, regarding, words, gestures, attitudes, ..;are the main tools of the accompanier and they steer the relation. To connect, the youngster has to feel welcome and respected. He should be able to move from initial distrust to possible trust. This can only happen when the youngster feels respected, when the professional adopts a watchful attitude where moral judgment is absent. The youngster should be able to see the professional as a tutor and anchorage point.

Investing in the relation

Accompanying work does not coincide with a distant and bureaucratic approach of the relation. While trying to understand the youngster, taking account of his globality and the multidimensional nature of the different dimensions in his existence, the accompanier, in his progressive work of constructing a capacitating relation, should be open and make personal investments. **The youngster has to feel that the professional is interested in his fate, that he invests to help him and that he will do his utmost to realize his objectives.** He has to be able to see an open door and possible windows of opportunity.

You have to believe in it!!!

The context of the employment market and institutions leads to the fact that some professionals “no longer believe in it” and that they adopt ritualised behaviour, acting according to formalised procedures. People no longer believe in it because there is no work, because the demands of the labour market are inaccessible for low-qualified youngsters, because there is not enough time to do the job right, because the weight of institutional norms is too much, because one feels in a position of control rather than in a position of help,....

Although all the above cited aspects form a certain reality, it is not impossible to deliver quality work. Although the markets, transitional space and the activation and inclusion policies need to be modified profoundly, it still does not completely hinder the possibility of offering youngsters quality accompaniment.



Theory 5

Personal and mutual commitment in the accompanying relation

Kristel Driessens¹ studies the roles which help seekers and social interveners adopt and also looks into the combination of roles with an autonomising and integrating effect. As far as she is concerned, turning towards an institution for social help could trigger feelings of shame, humiliation or guilt. It is particularly the experience of inequality on the relational level which forms a source of difficulty in social help.

While observing the interactions between type of help seekers and types of interveners, she indicates the tensions (between help and control, between creation of dependence and autonomisation, between excluding and integrating) and underlines some necessities for integration: working on the acquisition of roles, adapting the services to the context, rhythm and possibilities of the hurt persons, focusing the work on the process rather than on the results, constructing relations based on personal and mutual commitment and suggesting – whenever possible – a voluntary and intensive accompaniment.

Constructing an autonomising and integrating accompaniment is the Leitmotiv of the inclusion professional. The road to capacitation leads alongside the rejection of accompaniment which only strengthens dependence by offering mere assistance or which underlines exclusion in terms of problems with employability resulting from obligations and sanctions.

1. See: Driessens K. and Van Regelmorten T., *La force du lien: contre la pauvreté: sphère de vie et relation d'aide*, Lanoo Campus, 2007

One of the conditions for this possibility is believing that it is possible, in spite of opposition and economic and political crises. No longer believing it is giving up and does not imply the commitment needed by the professional to make sure the youngster connects. Another condition for quality accompaniment is a professional context which enables this.

Acknowledging the youngster as involved party with personal desires and projects

Youngsters have desires, projects and aspirations, sometimes concrete and realistic, sometimes ideal and far from reality. These desires and projects should be taken into account and respected by accompanying professionals. One should depart from the youngsters themselves when developing accompanying work. Although some youngsters have reached the point of no return, who want nothing in life, the majority of youngsters want things for their live, they have intentions, ideas, projects,...Even when these ideas seem unrealistic, when an accompanier adopts a rejecting and critical attitude towards the youngster, blaming him that his project does not comply with the "reality" of institutions or the labour market, this could be completely counterproductive.

Taking the desires and projects of a youngster seriously does not mean that the accompanying work will be focused on the initial project of the youngster, nor does it imply that the initial project will not change. It does mean however that the project will be taken into account and improved to end up as a project which might be quite remote from the initial one, but which is fully endorsed by both youngster and professional. The main factor for the success of inclusion project is the congruency of this project with the desires and aspirations of the youngster. These desires and aspirations are not necessarily the initial desires and aspirations of the youngster; they are transformed during the accompaniment when the youngster, together with the professional, works on the different dimensions of his existence.

Accompanying and offering freedom of choice

Freedom of choice is the first pillar of capacitation. The freedom, the fact of being able to choose and make personal choices, auto-determination, autonomy, self-management,... have become fundamental values in our society. This situation is considered by some as an injunction (which might be paradoxical for individuals who are less blessed with capacities, and hence less capable of using this freedom) or as ignoring the factors which determine the positions of individuals in society (such as social origin). Nowadays, and even stronger than before, **individuals and youngsters in particular hope and want to choose what they will do with their life and they reject anything forced on them beforehand.**

Restraint does not necessarily oppose freedom. The youngster can actually choose to comply with certain forms of restraint (like keeping an appointment, getting up early to go to work, respecting the rules of an inclusion action plan or training,...) when he thinks that this would help him, would be useful for him, in obtaining certain objectives,... Restraint should therefore have a meaning in the context of his situation or his route.

Shared meaning

Such an attitude is not only possible for an accompanier, but it is also more correct, more efficient and more respectful towards the youngster. The accompanying relation finds its meaning, for the youngster, when he is accompanied in his choices and project to help him realise them and, for the accompanier, whether it enables a youngster to obtain the inclusion objectives which were co-constructed and freely chosen by the two parties involved.

When there is no meaning, it is impossible for the accompanier to construct a functioning accompaniment with the youngster and for the youngster it is impossible to see the professional as someone who will help him in obtaining his objectives (which are quite often finding a job). **The accompanier becomes, with the possibility to construct a capacitating relation, an accompanier of the youngster whilst exercising his freedom.**



KEY ACTIONS

- The professional has to construct an accompaniment in which the youngster can choose between different possible options, appropriate his route, understanding that accepting a context (with its restraint) can be in his interest, and finally, committing fully to an action plan. When youngsters reject "you have to do" and when they learn to accept "you can do it", professionals have to pass from "you have to do it" to:



Constructing relations and experiences which are meaningful

The key word within the work of the two parties involved in the accompaniment is meaning. A correct and efficient accompaniment has a meaning for both youngster and professional. The question of the meaning of accompaniment in the current economic context (difficulties with finding the right job, controlling policies for the unemployed) leads to tension. Both for professionals who sometimes feel incapable of actually doing their job and for the youngsters who can become desperate about ever finding their place in society.

The essence of the meaning of accompaniment lies in the possibility for the professional to give the youngster self-confidence and the capacities needed to become included, and in the possibility for the youngster to see a potential exit from the labyrinth of the transitional space.

Youngsters basically want a job which will enable them to lead a good life and to satisfy their basic needs (housing, eating, starting a family and providing for them...), and the role of the accompanier is to enable the youngster to obtain this objective which often seems distant or difficult. The accompaniment can have meaning for a youngster if he knows that his own commitment in an inclusion action plan (with all the restraint this commitment might provoke) will enable him, eventually, to take up a stable position in the labour market, to obtain durable work or to have all required capacities to bounce back.

“They don’t care about us!”

Within the group analyses, the youngsters strongly underlined the meaningless aspect of various accompanying action plans, often disconnected from the possibility of finding a job. They do not care about us, they say, there is no place for us, they pretend to accompany us, but there is no work in the end, you have to tell your whole life over and over again, without any result... Accompaniment which is disconnected from work and which only points out his own responsibility to the youngster holds no meaning for the youngster who does not see his chances of inclusion increase, nor for the professional who does not see that the youngster comes closer to work.

Fixing intermediate objectives

Obviously, in order for accompaniment toward work to be meaningful, it should lead to work, which at this moment is far from guaranteed. Still, work is not the only aspect of meaningfulness in the accompanying relation.

Although the accompaniment draws its essential meaning from finding work (final objective), it can also be meaningful in view of intermediate objectives, such as acquiring competences for the envisioned work, constructing a personal professional project, integrating tools, learning “how to sell” yourself to an employer,... The intermediate objectives can be multiple, but they should always be based on the final possibility to find a job. The commitment of the youngster in an action plan working with intermediate objectives, is based on the connection of these objectives with the final one (finding work). The youngster and the professional have to be able to say that participating in the action plan will actually bring the youngster closer to work

KEY ACTIONS

- The professional accompanies the youngster in his experiences (training, traineeship, work, active search for work,...) and allows him to see the meaning of these experiences and learnings, by connecting them to the defined objectives (final and intermediate).
- The youngster has to agree freely with the suggested experiences. He considers them as steps towards the possibility of finding a place in society and work through the learnings he gathers.



Valuing the youngster

Youngsters who are accompanied and followed-up by inclusion professional are quite often at loss, they look for themselves, not knowing where they stand in life, in a difficult transition period, marked by social and educational experiences, discrimination. They are not fooled by the place they have been given in society and they can have a lack of confidence, in themselves and in the world around them. The feeling of being worthless, of being judged negatively by institutions, of having very few competences lands them in a demobilised state. They are referred to as “drop outs”, “excluded” youngsters,...

It never hurts to hope!

Although their existence is marked by social exclusion, they are in the early days of their life, many things are still possible. They have had useful and transferrable experiences in social and educational life... They might not become academics or big chiefs, but they will be able to find a place in society which complies with them, a job which makes them lead a decent life. At their age, numerous hopes still linger, provided the required resources are found.

One of the major criteria of successful inclusion is that the youngster has a “proud” identity, that he sees himself as a human being with positive potential, that he has the feeling of controlling his own life, of not guiltily living a difficult situation, but to have faith in the future, to feed his hope of success.

Being a “development tutor”

Accompaniment professionals can play a major role here, bringing together all these potential aspects, in becoming a “development tutor”. **This implies avoiding stigmatising the youngster, not “underlining in red” the “list of defaults”, but rather drawing up in green the list of his potential and his competences, to contribute to the construction of a positive self-image for the youngster.**

The professional will not make moral judgement about the youngster, he will not categorise him or see him as “employment disabled”. Rather than enclosing the youngster in the categories “not motivated”, “not ready for employment” or “not adequate for the demands of the market”, he will focus on the things which need to be done to get there, what should be done for the youngster to be included.

In the mobilised categories to analyse the relation of the youngster with the labour market, he will scrutinise the youngster’s defaults, in line with the objectives and he will compensate references to defaults and weaknesses with references to values and strengths.

Break the circle of reproducing inequality

The fact of perceiving the youngster exclusively as unsuited for work (in the relation) will have as effect the reproduction of discrimination, relegation and stigmatisation, demobilising the youngster who feels rejected, zero, without value or discriminated, which would lead to an “against the system” attitude.

The fact of perceiving the youngster exclusively as being competent, adapted to work, motivated and holding all the trumps to manage his transition better is just as illusory as the opposite and will drive the youngster (who believes he can do anything) straight into the wall because he does not yet dispose of the capacities and competences required to face the challenge.

Between these two perceptions, the right balance would be to stay realistic about the possibilities and competences of the youngster with respect to the inclusion objectives he has determined. The youngster should be prepared for upcoming challenges and experiences, and he should learn from them. The professional should ensure constant feed-back, considering the experiences of the youngsters and how he sees them, and he should rephrase the “defaults” as capacities to be acquired (it does not concern defaults in the actual youngster, but rather capacities to be acquired as identified by the confrontation with experiences and challenges).

As accompanier of experiences, the professional will emphasise the learnings and acquired progress of the youngster. He will “certify” these learnings, underline “qualitative jumps”, while adopting a “coaching attitude”.

Moving away from victimisation and guilt

Valuing the youngster also implies letting him lose the weight of responsibility or even guilt about his excluded situation. The youngster should - to some extent - be able to understand that he is not responsible for this social exclusion, that the responsibility for this exclusion can be explained by a much wider action system (economic crisis, educational relegation, discrimination, functioning of the transitional space, lack of jobs,...), but that he should not behave like a victim either. If he is not responsible for his exclusion, he can rise above and take on responsibility thanks to the acquisition of capacities and knowledge.

Once he understands that he is not to blame for the situation, he can be brought, thanks to the professional, to more understanding about this situation and to gain more power of it. **Responsibility is then viewed in a relational matter, connected to all the actors and systems, rather than an intrinsic characteristics of the youngster, either viewed as a non-responsible victim, or the sole responsible one for all failures.** In the accompaniment, responsabilisation and autonomisation are a positive horizon and not some sword of Damocles, a construction site rather than a symbolical prison.

Confronting youngsters with social worlds

If valuing the youngster is one of the central aspects of accompaniment, this valuation does not suffice as such, standing alone. It should be at the service of the path towards work and can only exist in relation to this path. Accompaniment does not take place in a bubble protected from the outside world, but should help the youngster in his confrontation with the world. It allows the youngster to confront institutions, operators, employers, himself and the different aspects of his existence in a secure, confident manner.



Reality, the real one!

Accompaniment is centred around the triangle between professional, youngster and his different existence aspects (of which work). In the end, his relation with these different aspects is something the youngster needs to manage and all these aspects have their own modes of functioning, their norms, their cultures, their values,... The accompanying relation cannot avoid confronting the youngster with the reality of employment (not the reality of the labour market, since this is a huge institution of which the inclusion professionals know the expectations, but not the precise employment sought by the youngster in his will to be included).

The professional hence has to connect the youngster and the aspects he wants to be part of, both symbolically (by for instance explaining the different values and norms of these aspects) and realistically, by accompanying experiences to encounter these aspects (during traineeship, meeting an employer, elaborating a project or actively looking for work). **Accompanying professionals should have broad knowledge of all these different aspects, they should be able to offer the youngster tools for his inclusion.**

Telling a youngster that he is very valuable without connecting these different values (what he is worth, his competences, his capacities,...) with the reality of the worlds he would like to conquer is obviously meaningless. Through concrete experiences offered to the youngster by the professional and through the mediation of these experiences, the youngster will have to know and master the different challenges which he will face. The youngster also needs to be confronted with the reality of the different aspects or different worlds in which he is included (with more or fewer problems) and in which ones he would like to be included.

Securing the confrontation

It is important that the youngster is not confronted with challenges which are too hard, which might discourage him, nor with challenges which are so simple that he no longer has the feeling of actually learning something. The confrontation should be adapted to the rhythm and possibilities of the youngster. It is also necessary to analyse, in each lived experienced by the youngster, which worked well and which worked less. The triggers and hindrances, factors of success and factors of failure, competences and defaults to master should be visible, whilst ensuring the right proportion between displaying weaknesses and strengths. If too much emphasis is placed on weaknesses and defaults, the youngster will probably not feel like moving ahead.

The confrontation with the different realities, where the employment reality is unavoidable, can be done in a secured manner. A transition from one state or statute to another runs smoothly when the youngster is surrounded by sufficient beacons to secure his route. This is one of the core roles of the inclusion professional.

Constructing confidence

The notion of confidence has become a core value in our society. When investors no longer have any confidence in enterprises, they will go bankrupt. When markets no longer have any confidences in states, it might lead to budgetary cuts. When consumers no longer have confidence in society, their spending will be lower, which will threaten economy. When civilians no longer have any confidence in the state or justice, they will head out in the streets,

Ambiguous relation

Mutual trust and confidence which actors share is the condition for their mutual commitment. Whereas confidence stimulates the commitment of parties, distrust provokes disconnection or confrontation.

When we apply this to the transitional space and the inclusion of youngsters, it can be said that the efficacy of action plans and inclusion measures for youngsters strongly depends on the confidence the actors have towards each other. A partnership works when all involved parties can rely on each other, an accompanying relation only works when it is based on mutual confidence and trust between a youngster and a professional.

Various studies¹¹ indicate that low-qualified youngsters are relatively distrustful towards institutions and organisations in the transitional space. They feel that the latter ones are only there to control them, not help them, they think (and it is true) that they are subjected to multiple discrimination, and they think that these organisations cannot help them in their search for work. Quite often, the youngsters avoid addressing these organisations and will only do so when they are forced. The institutions have an ambiguous relation with the youngsters (between help and control, between paternalism and emancipation, between guilt/stigmatisation and encouragement,...). They rarely can offer true entries to employment and they themselves are distrustful towards youngsters who are categorized as incapable, lazy, unemployable or irresponsible. In this context, distrust becomes bigger than trust; the true accompanying relation is difficult and the mutual commitments are sometimes ritualistic and procedure-driven.

A “magic trick”?

Allowing trust and confidence implies a reconfiguration of the action plans, partnerships and collaborations, but also a transformation of the accompanying relation. Despite the difficult context, and by using their manoeuvring margins, numerous professionals succeed in changing distrust into mutual trust and confidence, turning restraint into an opportunity for all. This is a “magic trick” which enables the youngster to become embedded and to use the relational action plan in his own interest and in the interest of his inclusion. Precisely and the threads needed to get there is what this guide tries to describe.

11. See: Van Hemel L., Darquenne R., Franssen A., Struyven L., Vanderborcht Y., (2008), *Un autre regard sur les jeunes enlisés dans le chômage: Recommandations et facteurs de réussite pour l'insertion professionnelle des jeunes peu qualifiés*, King Baudouin Foundation, research report



Conclusion: companions as weavers of purpose and connection

With this guide for companions, the YouthLab collective has wanted to produce a tool which is both reflective and concrete, destined for inclusion professionals. Inclusion and professional transitions are complex realities and accompanying them requires knowledge of various dimensions: knowledge about the reality and situations of low-qualified youngsters in Brussels, legal, institutional, organizational and relational norms, ethical challenges within the accompanying relation, the reality in which the social worlds of inclusion function, ...

Rather than supplying a purely theoretical tool with few applications in real life or a purely practical tool which would do no justice to the complexity which connects the different worlds (components, dimensions, aspects of experience, actors...) of inclusion and transition we opted for something else. It is a median path which has been used to construct this guide which wants to be a reflective tool, the combination of beacons, the progressive construction of forms relating to a professional attitude which combines challenges of knowledge with the ethical and practical challenges of inclusion and transition.

Like the horizons of accompaniment which have been described, this guide wants to be a horizon or guiding star for companions. Accompaniment can be viewed as working with youngsters, their realities and their "selves" as central elements in the construction of a capacitating relation, but companions are first of all weavers of purpose and connection.

A successful transition or inclusion is a transition which makes sense to all parties involved and which ties or unties connections (real, represented, social, symbolical, imaginary,...). There where sense or purpose becomes less clear, companions untie the problematic threads and weave the patchwork where youngsters can find the place they need, whilst offering confidence and security. They are the tutors who allow youngsters to develop and to gather useful learnings, they youngsters understand their situation to be able to grow, and they contribute so that they can harness themselves with a proud identity, with a project in the future. They accompany the youngster's experiences, without putting them down, they take account of youngsters in their globality, and they work with the youngster, turning responsibility into a tool rather than a sword of Damocles. They adapt to the youngsters' rhythm and possibilities, they receive them with respect and pass no moral judgement, they use legal reference just, they appeal to the network, and they confront youngsters with the reality of the worlds they want to participate in...

Criticism about the transitional space is necessary, but this guide wants to offer hope, the fact that it is a real possibility that accompaniment is autonomizing, capacitating and integrating.

2. Which action plans and which work within the network to favour the transitions of youngsters?

Introduction

Transitions of youngsters are produced and constructed according to their own logics and to the logics of a complex system of institutions, measures and action plans, which combined form a “lasagne”, a “labyrinth” or a “patchwork”. The different actors interrelate based on competitive logic (market-wise logic, vertical bureaucratic and/or technocratic logic, horizontal partnership logic depending on the complementarity between actors).

The first part of the guide focusses on accompanying professional whilst suggesting reflective tools to think about their profession; but it is impossible to think about professions without thinking about action plans and their effects.

This part of the guide suggests tools and beacons for the construction and elaboration of action plans and partnership in the context of inclusion. It consists of work sheets with each time conclusions (analyses) and possible actions (suggestions).



2.1. Constructing action plans which make sense for youngsters

Conclusions

Low-qualified youngsters often have a distant or ambivalent relation with inclusion-related action plans and professionals. Their commitment in an accompanying or training action plan will mainly depend on whether or not they can make sense of this commitment. To do so, they have to be able to tell themselves that the action plan they turn to, out of free will or obligation, can offer an added value in their personal process.

Suggestions

Action plans need to be close to youngsters and their realities. They have to “connect” with them, evoke their interest. In that respect, they should:

- **Be clear and transparent in their general objectives** (accompaniment towards work, socialisation, control, self-discovery, construction of a project, training,...) and their intermediate objectives (drawing up an action plan, construction of a cultural or sporty project, contact with employers, elaboration of a CV,...) and in their methods and means to achieve these objectives. The youngster can only commit completely to an action plan if he agrees with these objectives and these methods.
- **Suggest concrete actions and benefits, rather than abstract actions.** Action plans become much more potent when they can offer true inclusion in the labour market. If this is not possible, youngsters should be accompanied in concrete and substantial experiences (traineeship, voyage, project,...) and not abstract ones which are disconnected from reality.
- **Favour a participating and playful approach** rather than a transmissive approach which is limited to some advice or the transferral of content. Numerous youngsters are not willing to attend “class”. They will much more readily commit when, besides acquiring competences and information, they can be active, participate, play a game, and have a good time. Participating in an action plan is much easier when it is fun, rather than a chore.
- **Avoid a clinical logic which consists of listing up the shortcomings with respect to work and of prescribing actions destined to overcome them.** This form of logic implies a stigmatization of the youngster, and it will quickly become counterproductive. Action plans should emphasise the positive potential of the youngsters, gathered through concrete experiences, instead of hammering on their shortcomings in a speculative manner.
- **Enabling youngsters to meet each other and to confront and exchange their experience** by means of collective and group action plans. Informative sessions can be useful, but they should be based on the transmission of information with the participation of the youngsters. One should depart from them and their realities (by letting them participate) to make sure that they will receive the information they need.

2.2. Initiating action plans of recognition

Conclusions

Numerous low-qualified youngsters live in situations where recognition is denied or even negative. Amongst others, these situations result from the negative categorisations they are subjected to (incompetent, unemployable, foreigner, on benefit,...). This often leads to disengagement, withdrawal in the self or own community, a certain apathy, a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, and can hence form a hindrance in the inclusion project.

As far as Axel Honneth¹² is concerned, the expectation people have with respect to society is based on whether or not their capacities are recognised. Every human being, for himself, is fundamentally dependent on the context of social exchange, organised according to the principle of mutual recognition. The disappearance of relations based on recognition stems from experiences of disdain or humiliation which have their consequences on the formation of the individual's identity. Institutions and their arrangements are only valid when they can guarantee, and this on different levels, the preservation of authentic mutual recognition. Political ethics or social morals should, according to Axel Honneth, depart from an evaluation of the relations of recognition which are socially guaranteed at a given moment. What is just or good in a society can be measured by its capacity to assure the conditions for mutual recognition, which enables the formation of personal identity and self-realisation in a satisfying way.

Suggestions

Action plans should present recognition projects and actions, competences, experiences and capacities of the youngsters should be valued. In this context, they should:

- **Emphasise the acquisition of experience, competences and positive potential of youngsters**, whilst questioning them at the same time to make sure that they will continue to learn. The proportion of 2/3 of positive valorisation and 1/3 critical is quite often the winning proportion to make sure that the youngster wants to move ahead.
- **Certify and valorise the acquired competences and capacities** during the different actions youngsters undertake during the action plan. Whether it concerns training, accompaniment, acquisition of tools for job-seeking, traineeships,...;The youngster should have the feeling of having won something, of being more capable than at the start of the action plan.
- **Recognising low-qualified youngsters as human beings like any other, and not as a problem**, treating them with respect, treating them equally so that they can rise above themselves and taking global account of them in everything which connects them affectively and rationally with the different worlds in which they are included or want to be included. Positive recognition of youngsters will be, for the youngsters, a factor for forming a positive identity, a vector for self-realisation.

12. See: Honneth A., *La Théorie de la reconnaissance: une esquisse* and *Visibilité et invisibilité: sur l'épistémologie de la "reconnaissance"*, Revue du MAUSS n° 23, 2004



2.3. Connecting action plans with work

Conclusions

The transitional space of inclusion action plans is quite often characterised by a disjunction between accompaniment, training and finding work, which originates from the rarefaction of work and the advent of activation policies. In micro action plans of follow-up or training (individual training and follow-up, disconnected from the employers) or even macro action plans (institutional rupture between accompaniment and work, separation between services for enterprises and services for job seekers,...) professionals have to act as accompanying or training job seekers, rather than accompanying them towards work. We can hence notice the rise of a new statute situated between unemployment and employment: the job seeker. Neither really unemployed nor really employed, the job seeker is situated in a wedged-in position constructed by public policies. Accompaniers do not prepare people for work, but teach - to some extent - young unemployed people the new profession of job seeker.

Besides this tendency, concrete initiatives suggest a real connection between accompaniment, training and work. Whether it concerns tutorials, case management, job coaching, IOD, social economy or inclusion temporary work, numerous innovating action plans are emerging and they display their efficacy. Their specificity is the proposal of mediation or real triangulation between youngsters, employers and operators, whilst creating means and methods offering real inclusion and accompaniment towards work.

What is more, numerous help measures for work often result for youngsters in a return to an inactive situation, due to investing in a training within an enterprise or in an action plan focussed on secure transition towards work (whether with the same employer or another) or training.

Suggestions

Action plans should use real mediation and triangulation with work, and they should enable youngsters to live concrete inclusion experiences, rather than lingering in transitional space. Youngsters who benefitted from inclusion through "helped" employment should be able to continue with a positive inclusion route. In this context, they should:

- **Suggest accompanied immersions and concrete experiences** of traineeship or employment where youngsters can gather the learnings needed for the acquisition of technical and transversal competences which they will need for their future durable inclusion.
- **Install action plans based on courses, traineeships, working places and employment** the youngsters can actually attain when they commit to an accompanying and/or training action plan.
- **Ensure real mediation and triangulation between youngsters and employers** rather than an imaginary or symbolical one where the youngster only faces himself. Inclusion professionals should work with both youngsters and enterprises at the same time. They have to offer the first group inclusion coaching and the second group management tools for human resources which will enable the integration of the youngster within the enterprise.

- **Not apply an adaptive logic with as objective the adaption of the youngster** to the demands of the employer, but rather apply a more symmetrical logic, with shared responsibility between youngsters and enterprises in the context of integrating in the work place. Inclusion professionals should be connoisseurs in terms of the enterprise's realities and those of youngsters, hence enabling these two parties to get to know each other better and to work together better. They have a portfolio of enterprises and a portfolio of youngsters, and they can hence ensure better adequation.
- **Reconnect the services covering the follow-up and training of youngsters and the services for employers.**
- **Not stick to "matching" which focusses on the adequation of the youngsters' profiles with the profiles expected by employers.** If "matching" is efficient for rapid inclusion of youngsters with the expected "profiles", it also implies over-selection and creaming where the best "profiles" are included at the expense of the weakest. Instead of "unemployable" it might become "unmatchable". The youngsters who are studied in the context of the YouthLab project, for whom more and more measures and action plans are involved, benefit the most from the acquisition of competences and concrete inclusion experiences.
- **Favour the creation of jobs in the sector of social economy.** The latter has the advantage (unlike many other employers) of combining the acquisition of social, transversal and technical competences with holding a paid job.
- **Emphasise the development of tool strategies and methods which enable enterprises to assume their responsibility in the inclusion of youngsters.**
- **Associate numerous helping measures for work, accompaniment** and training for youngsters in an enterprise to prevent dropping out, whilst enabling the acquisition of transferrable technical and transversal competences.
- When a helping measure towards work ends for a youngster and an employer, **make sure that the youngster has continuity in his route to prevent a return to inactivity**, either by the guarantee that his "helped" contract is replaced by a "regular" contract with the same employer or by having him participate in an action plan which enables a secure transition towards other work or towards a training action plan.



2.4. Favour innovating action plans focused on the acquisition of competences through experience

Conclusions

The majority of the offer of services in terms of inclusion for youngsters is based on the context of activation policies and a clinical logic. In this logic, diagnostics are drawn up (in terms of problems with employability like the lack of linguistic skills, the absence of social, technical or transversal competences, not adapted behaviour, lack of knowledge about the labour market...), and these diagnostics are then linked to a professional project and a series of actions youngsters should undertake which are evaluated regularly. This logic has been gradually implemented in the inclusion field and it clearly indicates its restrictions with those youngsters who are the most remote from work. These youngsters often have the feeling of spending their time telling about their life, of being told that they do not make the necessary efforts or that they are not competent enough; they risk of getting lost in the corners of the transitional space, without any concrete perspective on inclusion.

Although this type of policy might have its use and might have some efficacy for certain groups of the young public, it might be insufficient or even counterproductive for youngsters most remote from work, for whom tailor-made, intensive action plans, focused on experience, are designed. When these types of initiatives exist and develop, they are rarely recognised and often drop down due to numerous political and institutional hindrances.

Hence, numerous action plans do not enable youngsters to be committed. The youngsters have an ambivalent attitude between commitment and non-commitment, between pro-activity and abandon, between trust and distrust. The professionals do not succeed in "involving" or "connecting" these youngsters. The majority of these action plans do not offer youngsters concrete inclusion experiences (whether collectively, through traineeship or at an employer), nor do they offer accompaniment of the youngsters' experiences (like meeting with an employer, entering a temporary work agency, attending a course...). As long as accompaniment is limited to working on representations without any concrete experiences, when training is limited to a transmission of contents and matters, there are few chances that these youngsters, who are a bit "lost", sometimes "de-socialised", often distrustful, will "connect" and commit to the action plans..

However, action plans which offer concrete experiences accompanied by professionals work well, whether their objective is socialisation or direct access to work. It can concern inclusion experiences in collectives, artistic project, sporty entrepreneurship or development which enables youngsters "at loss" to think about themselves, to display their competences through playful experiences, to think about their professional future, to confront a group,... It can also concern experiences of traineeship or work experiences accompanied by tutorials, mentoring, IOD or job coaching.

The testimonial "Tous à Durbuy / All to Durbuy" is an emblematic example of an efficient action plan for youngsters who are particularly remote from work. It concerns the experience of a group of youngsters whom the professional have sought in their neighbourhood who are then invited to leave for Durbuy by bike. During a week they enjoyed playful and sporty activities associated to biographical work, projection towards the future, work on a life project, professional project and competences, all accompanied by animators. At the end of this "voyage", the vast majority of the participants had positive inclusion experiences (either work or training).

When we analyse this action plan, we notice a number of particularities which are actually factors for success:

- The youngsters were recruited in their own environment
- The action plan was made to measure the youngsters
- The youngsters voluntary chose to participate
- The youngsters were removed from their daily life and institutions and found themselves in a new setting, away from their environment
- The action plan integrates playful aspects
- The different activities integrate work on self-knowledge and rising above yourself
- The activities connect the reality of the youngsters to those of the labour market
- Context is important and intensive
- It appeals to the youngsters' positive potential (creativity)
- The action plan is focused on significant and authentic commitment of the youngster
- The activities take place in group

This action plan seems to be a “magic” transformation space of the self-image, of identity transition. By means of specific activities, the youngsters can start a process from which they come out stronger, more proud, and better armed to take their life in their own hands.

Suggestions

The public action should allow creation, elaboration and institutionalisation of innovating action plans which take the different realities of low-qualified youngsters into account. The action plans should offer the youngsters concrete and accompanied experiences. These are much more efficient in the context of learnings and development of competences and capacities of the youngsters than simply working on representations or transmission of information. In this context, they should:

- **Offer accompanied immersions and concrete experiences of traineeships or work** where youngsters can gather the necessary learnings for the acquisition of the required technical and transversal competences for their future, durable inclusion.
- **Develop participating and experience-driven dimensions for action plans for training,** construction of professional project or active search for employment.
- **Allow the youngsters who are most remote from work to access playful and participating action plans,** during which they are confronted with themselves, others and the social worlds of employment in a secure way.
- **Integrate in every action plan subjective and identity variables of the youngsters** whilst offering them accompanied experiences which enable them to develop their self-esteem, to gain more understanding of the worlds of inclusion and employment, to test and validate their competences, the underline their qualities and to construct a “proud” identity.

The public action should also enable:

- The support of innovative action plans focussed on those youngsters who are the furthest removed from employment.
- The development and stabilisation of innovating action plans which have proven their worth amongst youngsters who are the furthest removed from employment.



- The implementation of local and multi-partnered action plans, specifically intended for low-qualified youngsters.
- Participating in this type of action plan during the “inclusion process” has as a result that the participating youngsters are (for a while) excused of their duties whilst looking for work and that they do not run the risk of being excluded or barred by the public employment services.

2.5. Evaluating the action plans

Conclusions

Whether it concerns analysing contexts, conditions for implementation, contents or the expected effects of an action or intervention, evaluating process, purpose, validity or coherence of a project or measuring the impacts of a certain measure in order to draw learnings from it, organisations need to evaluate interventions, measures or actions they instigate more and more. Little by little, public power and associations become aware of the necessity to measure the value, impact or efficiency of their action. Nowadays, evaluating consists of taking account of a multitude of actors who all have personal expertise in terms of evaluation.

Within the context of inclusion and the transition of youngsters, evaluations quite often relate to “outcomes” (like the number of enlisted students for a training, the number of youngsters who participated in a measure, or the number of actions undertaken for a specific group) rather than to the “outputs” or the results of the actions (for instance, in terms of progress of youngsters in their inclusion process). It concerns evaluations focused on the process rather than the results and they do not teach us anything about the quality, effect or impact of the action plans. Besides, since the results are evaluated, the evaluations quite often only cover the number of returns to employment or registrations for a certain course. This type of evaluation does not enable a connection between the results (return to work for instance) with the situation of the youngster and his evolution within the action plan. The quality of the action plan or its capacity to make a low-qualified youngster shift from a situation of exclusion to a situation of inclusion by the development of his competences or capacities. This type of evaluation does neither enable the distinction of the effected connected to situations and positions of youngsters at the start of the action plan. Some action plans have very good results in terms of return to employment, because they apply a drastic selection at the entry or they “cream”.

Evaluations based on the number of employed take little account of the type of employment or the quality of it. Once a youngster is included in work, he is out of sight and runs the risk of new ruptures in his inclusion process without specific accompaniment.

The word evaluation can frighten, especially when it is thought to be produced by an expert who pretends to have all the dimensions, criteria and “key” indicators at hand to make an objective judgement about an action plan.

The actors out in the field make an evaluation every day, sometimes without even realising it. They wonder whether they do the job right, draw lessons from their positive and negative experiences, conceive and implement solutions when they are confronted with a problem, they let their practices and action plans evolve in function of context, challenges and actors they encounter, they question the quality of their work,...

Suggestions

In order to really evaluate what the transitional space produces in terms of process and result, a certain amount of beacons are necessary:

- Rather than constructing “key” evaluations in «top-down» logic, **it is constructive to initiate participating in “bottom-up” logic, involving key actors and beneficiaries** in the analysis of work situations and the construction of strategic orientations while taking account of their own expertise. Hence, it is not about evaluating an action plan in their place, but to implicate them in an action plan of participating co-evaluation, taking account of their experience and the effect of learnings from the practice of their professions. The YouthLab project is to some extent an example of participative evaluation.
- **The beneficiaries of measures and action plans should be involved in the evaluations.** An efficient action plan is also an action plan regarded by the youth as having or having had positive effects on his inclusion process. The perception the youngster has of the action plan is a good indicator of the performance of the latter.
- **Evaluations should not be limited to the either or not participation of youngsters or to the fact that they have encountered positive aspects** (in terms of accessing work or a training) during their route in the action plan. The public action should develop means of evaluation based on multi-criteria of progress towards work in the broad sense of the word. The evaluations should be able to measure the capacitation of the inclusion and transitions of youngsters and they should answer the following question: did the action plan succeed in letting the youngster have more power over his situation of inclusion or transition towards work?
- **In that context, an evaluation should indicate the acquired competences and capacities during the process of the action plan, but also the evolution of other criteria such as:**
 - Self-esteem and self confidence
 - Confidence in the future
 - The relation with work and the perception of the labour market
 - The relation to action plans
 - The possibility of entering a project
 - The acquisition of competences (technical, social or transversal)
 - The feeling of making choices freely
 - The degree and quality of the commitment in the action plan
- Evaluations based on the return to employment should also take account of the quality and durability of this employment, and the preservation of a youngster in a positive transition situation.



2.6. Favouring piloting through professions rather than piloting through procedures

Conclusions

The necessity to manage the ever-increasing flow of job seekers, the advent of activation policies and the practices in the network which result from this, have all constructed to piloting through procedures and management tools (especially informatics), rather than through professions. The use of informatics tools in management becomes an unavoidable necessity, but it is a fact that they have been conceived according to modalities which do not really correspond with the needs and realities of the actors and target groups. They have little or no real perspective on the actual problems and challenges of the transitional space. They can hence:

- Be under-used by the actors who only see them as a restraint whilst executing their function.
- Be considered obsolete or not adapted by the actors.
- Lead to opposition amongst actors.
- Contribute to the rupture between the world of job seekers, the world of employers and the world of training.
- Become true blind pilots, not seeing the action of inclusion professionals rather than being tools at the service of professionals in accompaniment or training.
- Incapable of taking account of the reality of transition of youngsters.

One of the core challenges of inclusion professions can be situated in the definition of these professions. This challenge emerges during debates on accompaniment and is structured around central tension, it can be summarised in the following question: are inclusion professions cautious professions¹³?

We can define a profession as cautious when a profession treats the reality of which the complexity (often connected to human factors) does not enable a mechanic approach or an “automatic” reply. Observing the cautious dimension of a profession is about identifying moments, means, resources... of professional autonomy which has become necessary due to the complexity of situations, the singularity of cases... A profession with cautious practices hence implies certain prudence with respect to the answers given to encountered social situations. These situations imply interferences (content of prudence) rather than diagnostics and lead to the inclusion of particular situations in more general cases by means of comparing with other cases, which is enabled by the experience of the professionals.

For example in medicine, similar diagnostics can lead to different answers in function of, for instance, the medical history of the patient, his sensitivity to certain active substances ... Certain diagnostics are not univocal and can lead to interpretations and different treatments in function of different hypotheses. In professions with cautious practice, the professionals - to some extent - take a different view on reality, taking account of risks and opportunities, are forced to work with trial and error; they take account of such a vast amount of factors that it is impossible to formalise them completely.

13. See: Champy F., *Nouvelle théorie sociologique des professions*, PUF, “Lien social (1e)”, 2011

Inclusion professions should be defined as cautious. The rule of procedures considerably reduces the manoeuvring margin of the professionals, especially when they want to reduce the collection of encountered situation to simplistic, administrative categories which do not correspond with the complexity of the youngsters' situation. The accompaniment of low-qualified youngsters requires a personal approach by the professionals and cannot be solved with pseudo-individualisation according to some relatively standardised categories.

The actors refer quite frankly to a "shock" between the procedures and the realities in the field and the counter-productivity of the restriction of social work in view of procedures. The myth of rational administration or the technocratic myth of objectifying complex sociological situations creates problems rather than solutions. Besides, it reduces the work of the professionals to essentially technical-administrative work, which reduces the meaning of the work itself and leading to professional ruptures.

Suggestions

In order to enable correct and efficient correlation between management tools and the realities in the field, various possibilities can be mentioned:

- **Develop the function of accompanier** by the path of the construction of a true profession and a professional culture which is specifically oriented towards "coaching".
- Move from piloting centred on procedures and managing tools to **piloting centred on the development of professional capacities** where management tools are at service of the action of professionals.
- **Construct management tools departing from the necessities of the field** by means of participative processes which enable the implication of the actors while defining the needs.
- **Imply all the actors involved in the conception of informatics** and statistic tools which enables better understanding and acting on the phenomena of the transition of youngsters.
- **Construct informatics working tools within the network**, by involving all the operators and by departing from the field.



2.7. Creating the conditions for co-construction of the public action with all the parties involved, enabling the possibility of symmetrical and transversal partnerships and favouring integrated, local development

Conclusions

The transitional space, which is qualified as “lasagne”, “labyrinth”, “gas works” or “patchwork” does not live up to its mission of including the lowest qualified youngsters. This partial failure (since some youngsters do become included) is mainly caused by the structuration and by the realities of the public action which contribute to the development of relatively vertical logics for piloting. This is accomplished by instruments, competitive logics between operators for the appropriation and capitulation of target groups and the expertise of the latter. Different ways of explaining the phenomena of exclusion of youngsters from the productive setting and ways to face them and, finally, also distrustful logics between operators who all share the same objective of getting low-qualified youngsters to work.

When the field actors are grouped around a table during a group analysis, they all refer to the barriers of institutions, the necessity of an improved coordination between public policies and the relative lack of knowledge of operators amongst themselves, all this in a working field which they themselves consider to be extremely complex and not very obvious.

But they also conclude that they can listen to each other, hear and understand one another, despite their various institutional anchorages; they are all confronted with the same type of problems and they come up with the same type of solutions to face them. They are also the witnesses of multi-partnership action plans which function correctly because when they are based on diagnostic shared between involved operators on an equal basis, with concrete and precise goals and objectives, working on a pragmatic basis, focused on results and avoiding “battles”.

In a testimonial called “shock of the cathedrals”, a coordinator of a joint action plan between Brussels formation and Actiris points out the institutional difficulty to negotiate and to install an action plan where the relation between these two institutions are equal and mutual. One of the major challenges in the field of inclusion in Brussels is embedded in the operator in charge of training and the one in charge of employment, but also in the joint coordination of all the actors.

Suggestions

The public action in terms of inclusion of youngsters should dispose of the tools and measures required for the co-construction of its action with all the operators. It will then be possible to create symmetrical partnerships between the actors in terms of concrete projects and/or territories. In that context, it should:

- Adhere the perspective of Jean-Michel Bonvin and Bernard Conter¹⁴ for public action anchored in a capacitating perspective. This refers to the State for designing a public action which is based on:
 - The participation of local actors in terms of public policies.
 - The neutralisation of forms financial dependence which leads to inequality which might affect or pervert the contractual relation between State and local partners.
 - The equal access to informational resources and power.
 - The equal or equitable possibility to weigh on the decision process.
 - The definition of an informational basis of the general public action which allows local actors some margin for manoeuvring and interpretation (respecting the autonomy of the actors).
 - Contract logic based on the equality between partners, their equal weight in responsibility, their freedom of choice and the capacity to respect the terms of the contract.
- Redefine the modalities and the relations with which the public action is constructed to stimulate transversality.
- Multiply multi-partnerships between different operators based on concrete and pragmatic projects.
- Unwrap active institutions in the transitional space.
- Favour competences connected to training and those related to employment.
- Ensure territorial coherence in actions and handing out more tools to Houses of Employment to capacitate work in the network of the different operators.
- Ensure a coordination policy fuelled by the different operators by a neutral actor who ensures the translation of interests and challenges of all parties involved.
- Clarify and define the prerogatives of the actors based on the reality of youngsters' transitions, and not based on competition between institutions.
- Encourage the development of meeting places for the operators.
- Personalise the relation between operators.

Conclusion: towards working with networks and capacitating action plans

The accompaniment of low-qualified youngsters towards work in the perspective of developing capacities undoubtedly requires a transformation of professional practice of the actors. But it mainly requires important modifications on the level of action plans and their implementations. The capacitation of youngsters hence occurs through the capacitation of the public action.

Whether it concerns constructing action plans which make sense to youngsters, ensuring conditions of mutual recognition between youngsters and professionals (and moving away from "doubt and mistrust"), connecting action plans with work, favouring action plans based on the acquisition of competences through experience, allowing evaluation of action plans based on hard criteria departing

14. See: Bonvin J.-M. and Conter B., *Les politiques locales de l'emploi, reflet des nouvelles logiques d'interventions publiques*, Communication during the colloquium: "État et régulation sociale: comment penser la cohérence de l'intervention publique?", Paris, 11, 12 et 13 septembre 2006.



from practice, favouring the professionalization of inclusion actors rather than multiplying procedures or attempting a co-construction of the public action and action plans based on concrete projects while focusing on local, integrated development, we have tried, in this second part of the guide, to indicate outlines or beacons for public action which is both just and efficient: just because it takes account of situations and expertise of youngsters and professionals from a perspective of capacitation, just because it secures the entire process, avoiding exclusion and leading to durable inclusion in work.

The concrete realisation of the different action propositions to change the “labyrinth” into a “springboard” will undoubtedly be laborious and it will take a lot of political courage, but the possibility of offering youth a guarantee is worth this price.

3. General conclusion: re-attaching the threads of the patchwork, reconnecting all parties involved, ...

Although all the actors of the transitional space share the same objective (enabling each youngster to be included in employment in a durable manner), numerous hindrances and obstacles stop them from realising this objective while turning the springboard into a Labyrinth for the weakest and lowest qualified youngsters. Regardless whether these hindrances are related to the functioning of the labour market, the educational system, structure, organization and implementation of actors within training inclusion and employment, to the difficult situation of the youngster or to difficulties of the professionals to get them “to connect”.

The objective of the YouthLab project is exactly the same as the actors’ one (capacitating youngsters for durable inclusion), with this difference that it is situated in the collective production of knowledge in order to highlight the hindrances, obstacles, threats, problems... and the facilitators, opportunities, triggers, interesting practices,... to enable the required transformations and adaptations to turn the labyrinth into springboard.

In the first part of this guide, essentially dedicated to all professionals who accompany, either up close or from a distance, in different organisations, institutions and services, we outlined the bases of a specific professional posture.

This part can be considered as a milestone in the possibility of professionalising accompaniers, less by means of procedures to be followed, which are often quite remote from the reality of youngsters, but rather by the progressive constitution of a professional with a cautious character¹⁵. This is based on the common experiences of professionals what they have learnt from the different situations and their own professionalism while working with youngsters (whether this is analysing situation or actions to be taken). In this context, it is important, with reference to case management, to construct a case collection of situations of youngsters and the modalities according to which the accompaniers can answer to them. This case collection should not come from above, but it should be invented and collected from the bottom, based on concrete situations.

This guide does not pretend to be an integral accompanying guide, but rather acts as a door which is slightly ajar for the possibility of accompaniment which is just on the ethical and efficient on the practical level. One of its major weaknesses is addressing (in the first part) rather accompaniers

15. See : Champy F., *Nouvelle théorie sociologique des professions*, PUF, “Lien social (le)”, 2011



than coordinators, managers, directors... It goes without saying that the possibility to steer towards the type of accompaniment as suggested in this guide, will require institutional and organizational adjustment. Management practice should also be altered, to encourage case analyses, reflection about practices, using common ground for training and courses based on practice, the possibility of the advent of original and innovating practices, the training of accompaniers,... The manager is then no longer the one who guarantees the respect for procedures, but also the one who driving force for collective learnings, which already exists in various action plans. The professionalization of the actors requires constant training and regular updates and information about the different worlds of employment.

It is difficult to picture this form of accompaniment when accompaniers are both the party which moves ahead alongside the youngster and a judge who evaluates the respect for duties in view of financial aid or benefits. Besides the clarification of the roles between control and accompaniment, it seems useful to create a neutral place where youngsters can be accompanied by a single referent. Although the majority of the actors (including the institutional ones) seem to agree about the perspective of one referent for each youngster, nobody seems to be prepared to assign this role to any of the existing bigger actors. The creation and institutionalization of a centre where youngsters can find this referent and where they can benefit from a capacitating accompaniment, disconnected from control over access to financial resources, is an interesting perspective.

One of the weaknesses of this guide that the world of education has only been addressed barely or indirectly. After all, this world is one of the most important parties within the transitional space, and hence also with respect to the challenges connected to educational inequality, to the phenomena of segregation and relegation, to the challenges connected to orientation or the link between educational worlds and employment worlds.

The construction of tools for directors, coordinators, managers or the educational world would be an interesting route to follow in future work.

All the research work conducted in the past two years by the YouthLab collective has indicated, on the one hand, the failure factors, difficulties, weaknesses or shortcomings of public action, and on the other hand, also its strengths, success factors and triggers. Amongst the indicated weaknesses is the idea of disconnection. Disconnection of the youngsters with themselves, with society and action plans, a disconnection of the action plan amongst each other, a disconnection between inclusion actors and the worlds of employments, a disconnection between the worlds of training and those of employment,...

Although referring to disconnection might seem a caricature (because numerous action plans and measures ensure real connections and have good results in terms of inclusion), the idea of disconnection or rupture (both in the tracks of youngsters and in the structure of the transitional space) enables us to focus on the central perspective of connection. Regardless whether it concerns connecting disconnected actors or improving the quality of connections, personalizing connections,... the different levels of public action (professionals, action plans, network) or "social inclusion worlds" can only gain when their connections are reconsidered, with an outtake on efficiency, justice and quality for all low-qualified youngsters. We hope that this guide will act as fuel for this reconsideration.

The European Youth Guarantee is a hefty opportunity to reshape the work in the networks of the different operators, to offer each youngster the guarantee of a secure route towards employment. We can only hope that the formulation of this guarantee takes account of the different insights of

this guide, and that it enables every youngster to rely on quality accompaniment towards employment. This requires taking things further than matching and selection processes which contribute to the relegation of the least employable youngsters, to realise true, personalised accompaniment of every youngster towards employment.

This guide obviously is incomplete and unfinished work. Neither a scientific work, nor a completely practical guide, it is first of all the reflection of a researcher who has been hired to be at the service of all actors' reflections. More than a dozen field actors - whom we would like to thank sincerely - have read it with great interest before it was published and considered it to be an interesting and unedited resource for thinking about their practices and work context. That is the goal of this guide and we hope that it will be useful for all those who share the objective of allowing every youngster to find a place in society.

