

Nordic Projects to Combat School Dropout

Good practice in helping young people complete upper secondary education



Nordic Welfare
Centre

PROJECT: The Nordic Web Resource on Dropout from Upper Secondary Education

NORDIC PROJECTS TO COMBAT SCHOOL DROPOUT

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Foreword

The Nordic Web Resource on Dropout from Upper Secondary Education was a project commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers and run by the Nordic Welfare Centre between 2012 and 2015. The aim of the project was to compile good examples of initiatives aimed at increasing the proportion of young people in the Nordic region who complete upper secondary education.

On the Nordic web portal, a large range of successful projects from the Nordic countries were presented. The initiatives had been evaluated externally, and showed positive results. Some activities were specifically chosen because of their innovative character or value as sources of inspiration.

Despite bureaucratic and cultural differences between the Nordic countries, the situation regarding young people at risk of dropping out of school is strikingly similar. The differences are sometimes greater between municipalities and schools than between countries. By learning about successful initiatives in the Nordic countries, it is possible to find inspiration and tools to improve the work on helping all young people to complete their upper secondary education.

In this publication, ten projects are described that were presented on the Nordic good practice web portal. Some of the projects have been completed, while others continue. Some activities have been incorporated in ordinary work.

The aim of the report Nordic Projects to Combat School Dropout is to improve and inspire new initiatives for young people, and to create enriching contacts between actors and organisations in the Nordic region.



Ewa Persson Göransson

Director
Nordic Welfare Centre

Young people and school dropout in the Nordic region

Nearly all young people in the Nordic region start upper secondary education, but too many drop out before completion. Employers are more likely to choose young people who have completed their upper secondary education qualification than those lacking such a qualification. Young people who have no school or work to go to during the day are at major risk of social exclusion and disruption to the daily rhythm. Negative habits can be hard to break, and the problems can worsen.

Why do young people drop out of upper secondary school?

The report *I bruger altfor mange ord!* (You Use Too Many Words!) concerns young Greenlanders who move to Denmark to work or study, but who go off the rails. When the young people explain why they dropped out of upper secondary education, few blame their chosen programme; what is emphasised more is how they felt about being in school.¹ This is a recurring theme – it is not the educational programme that causes people to drop out of school, but other factors.

Poor mental health is increasingly seen as a reason why rising numbers of young people drop out of upper secondary education before completion. In Norway, three of ten young people drop out of upper secondary education and, in more than half of the cases, poor mental health is given as the reason.² Disabilities such as ADHD or dyslexia can also make school difficult for the young person.

The report *Ten Reasons for Dropping-out*³ is based on interviews with 379 young people who dropped out of upper secondary education. Bullying and poor mental health are often given as reasons why the young people felt they could not complete their education. Half of the interviewees report that bullying was the main reason.

For pupils who live in rural areas, geographical distance can present special challenges when it comes to education. Most people in the Nordic region attend a school close to where they live, but those who live in remote rural areas often have to travel long distances to school. Sometimes, they may even have to move closer to the school, and leaving their home town or village and their families can cause problems that increase the risk of dropout.

1 *Danish National Board of Social Services, 2016.*

2 *Høj Anvik & Gustavsen, 2012.*

3 *Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2013.*

Projects and initiatives

Initiatives to reduce school dropout are implemented at various levels and in many ways in the Nordic countries. There are large national initiatives that involve thousands of young people, and small local projects with just a handful of participants. Funding bodies, initiators and project owners vary. Municipalities, organisations from the third sector, the business community, schools and other public agencies are most commonly involved. Funding can be public or private, governmental or municipal.

Activities may be directly aimed at helping pupils perform better in schools, such as by providing them with assistive technology or offering supplementary tuition. Initiatives may also focus on supporting the individual's wellbeing to help them get through their studies, such as through counselling or activities to boost their confidence. They may involve working with individually adapted goals, or with an approach that is more tolerant and encouraging.

Many projects are based on increasing collaboration between actors to reduce the risk of school dropout. This may involve coordinating joint initiatives between the school and parents, between schools and public agencies, and between public agencies.

Success factors

Through local projects in Sweden, thousands of young people have been affected by the major national initiative Plug In (p. 38). The final report of the project highlights several success factors. For example, the entire needs of the young person and their life situation must be considered. The evaluation of the Danish project Unge, alkohol og stoffer (Young People, Alcohol and Drugs) (p. 30) shows that a greater focus of municipalities and schools on pupils' wellbeing helps to motivate and support the pupils and encourages them to complete their studies. In Greenland, one project involved pupil coaches in schools (p. 23), an adult that the pupil could trust. Experiences from the trials were that the pupils often contacted the pupil coach first rather than the school counsellor. Problems of absence, homesickness, low self-esteem, poor school performance, trauma and lack of motivation came out in the discussions.

Many experts have pointed out the need for alternative learning environments and individual adaptation of measures. Experiences from the Swedish Plug In project show that many young people in the target group have poor experiences of school and contacts with public agencies. In order to reach these young people, it is important that the project develops flexible working methods based on the participants' needs. Plug In works from the needs of the individual, identifying and following up pupils who need support, and creating good relationships.

Many initiatives focus on the importance of good relationships. The Finnish youth workshops (p. 45) are not public agencies, nor do they implement sanctions, but focus instead on establishing good relationships, characterised by mutual respect between participants and staff. In the evaluation of the Finnish workshops, it was emphasised that the fact that the public agencies did not exert authority was an important aspect in the success of the initiative. In the report from the Danish project (Young People, Alcohol and Drugs), it was pointed out that a dialogue-based approach, where it was assumed that the young people themselves were experts on their lives, brought good results. Games, class dialogues, films, and plays were used to generate dialogue with the pupils.

Low thresholds, voluntary participation, and collaboration

Easily accessible activities for the target group mean that more young people can be reached. This may involve low thresholds for participation or placing the activities in environments in which the young people spend time. In the Uppsala-based Hikikomori project (p. 26), the participants can come to the project in several ways. No referral from a public agency is required, nor is a diagnosis needed. The young person or a parent simply contacts the project team and registers an interest, and they are then invited to a first meeting. In the Icelandic programme Ungt fólk til athafna (Youth in Activity) it was important to reach as many young people as possible. A special youth office was set up in a large shopping centre in Reykjavik where young people could come and ask questions, get advice on studies or work, and register with the employment service. The office served as a first port of call to help young people into activities.

The voluntary aspect is often highlighted as a success factor. According to the evaluation of the Finnish youth workshops, the voluntary participation forms a basis for engagement among the young people. The participants are encouraged and expected to take an active role in their own education and development. In the Hikikomori project, which works with a particularly exposed and vulnerable group, the voluntary aspect is important in encouraging the young person to engage in a more active everyday life.

Through collaboration, public agencies can supplement the existing support systems. The agencies can often fill a vacuum in society's support to the target group. This is the case in the Norwegian project NAV-vejleder i videregående skole (NAV Tutors⁴ in Upper Secondary Schools) (p. 20), where services and initiatives from the employment service are coordinated with the work of the Pupils' Service team in the school. The NAV tutor works in the schools, but retains strong links to the parent organisation. Greater collaboration can help detect problems at an earlier stage, so these can be resolved before they lead to dropout. Close collaboration between actors helps to find pupils who have dropped out of school and motivate them to return to school before too long a period has passed.

4 *Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration; the tutors represent both the social welfare benefit system and measures for labour market assistance.*

School systems and apprenticeship training programmes

Broadly speaking, upper secondary education in the Nordic countries can be divided into three parts, one with an academic specialisation giving qualifications for higher education, and the other two with a more vocational focus. The vocational educations differ by that the practical skills are taught mainly in schools or at an actual workplace. Denmark has separate systems for the different specialisations, while Sweden has a system that includes all upper secondary education, both theoretical and practical education and apprenticeship programmes. Most programmes are three to four years. Outside the ordinary educational system, other initiatives provide study motivating activities. Denmark and Iceland have 'production schools' and in Sweden there are specific study-motivating courses offered by the folk high schools.⁵

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP gives an overall picture of the resources allocated to the sector, but says nothing about how efficiently the resources are used.⁶ The Nordic countries allocate roughly the same amount of resources to education, between 6 and 9 percent of GNP. Greenland is the exception, spending nearly 14 percent of its GNP on education.

Different educational regulations underlie the work on school dropout in each country. In Finland, compulsory education applies from the year of the child's seventh birthday until the education has been completed, but no more than ten years. In Norway, all young people who have completed primary and secondary school have the right to free upper secondary education. But the right to education is conditioned and must be fully employed before they reach the age of 24. In Sweden, upper secondary education is voluntary in principle, but after the age of 20, young people cannot start studying in a normal upper secondary school. Instead, they are referred to the adult education system (Komvux).

Many educational programmes in the Nordic region include internships or apprenticeship placements. Apprenticeship training differs from other vocational programmes in that much of the education takes place at a workplace. This places demands on the pupil and the school, as a third party is involved. Shortage of apprenticeship places often presents a problem, making it difficult for young people on such programmes to complete their education. The idea is that the practical elements will give the pupils the skills and contacts they need for an easier transition to the labour market when the programme is completed. However, the lack of a personal network or discrimination from employers can prevent young people on these programmes being given apprenticeship placements.

5 *There are 148 folk high schools - independent adult education colleges - in Sweden. Each folk high school decides independently what courses it provides, and freely designs its teaching. This means that courses offered can vary greatly.*

6 *Nordic Council of Ministers, 2014.*

Local, regional and national initiatives are implemented to engage the business community in accepting apprenticeships, and some of these initiatives are presented in this report.

Pupils who fall behind in their school work and who have many unmotivated absences are in the risk zone for dropout. Most schools have support functions to prevent this. The pupil welfare service or a school psychologist can offer support discussions, and help pupils who have difficulties on a personal level. Tutoring sessions, extra teachers and special study groups can provide extra support to pupils who are falling behind in their school work. However, many pupils drop out of school before they are identified.

Studies and the labour market for young people in the Nordic region

For most young people, the transition from school to working life is relatively smooth. Young people are more likely than older people to drift in and out of work, and are now establishing themselves on the labour market later than was the case several decades ago. Labour market fluctuations affect the numbers of young people who choose to study – when jobs are scarce, young people are more inclined to study.

Low levels of education do not necessarily indicate shortcomings in the school system – this may also imply a strong labour market. In Iceland, the labour market has been strong for some time, and it has been easy for young people to find jobs. Iceland is also prominent in school completion statistics, with a lower proportion of young people completing upper secondary education.

Early school leavers

After compulsory education, virtually all young people in the Nordic region continue to upper secondary education, but not everyone completes it.⁷ The pressure on young people to continue studying after compulsory education is greater than in earlier generations. In practice, upper secondary education is no longer voluntary, and instead is almost necessary for the young person to build a strong link to the labour market. Some young people supplement their education later.

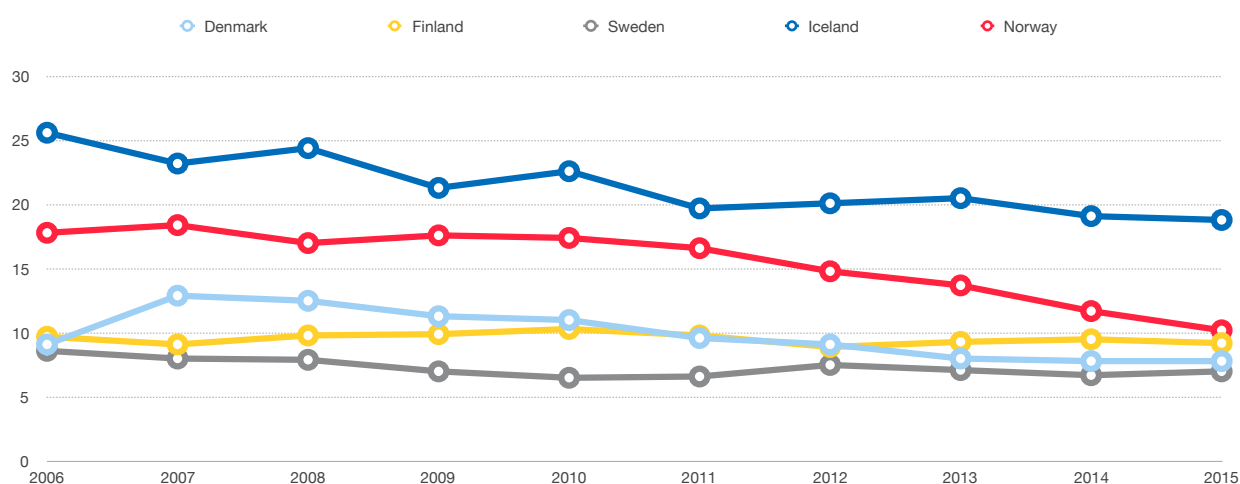
The EU strategy for growth contains a goal to reduce the number of young people without upper secondary education to under ten percent by 2020. The size of the group has fallen in all Nordic countries in the past decade, with the biggest decrease in Norway. The pattern in the Nordic countries reflects the general trend in the EU countries, with a falling proportion of young people without upper secondary education. The gender distribution is also similar, with a higher proportion of young men lacking an upper secondary education qualification.

7 *Nordic Council of Ministers, 2014.*

The diagram below shows the proportion of young people aged 18-24 who lack an upper secondary education qualification in each country. The European statistics organisation, Eurostat, calls this group early school leavers (ESL). Five to ten percent of young people in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are in this group (2015). In Iceland, the figure is higher, and nearly 20 percent of young people in this age group have not completed upper secondary education.

In Iceland, the proportion of young men who lack an upper secondary educational qualification (25 percent) is over twice that of young women (12 percent). In other countries, the difference between the genders is not so great, varying between one and four percentage points.

Young people aged 18-24 who lack an upper secondary educational qualification.



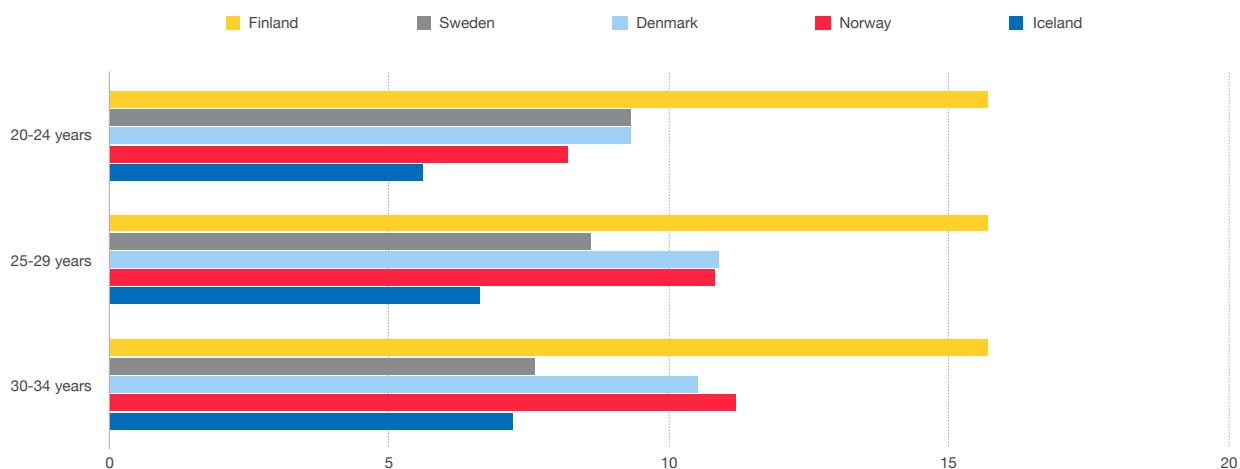
Source: Eurostat (2016), *Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status [edat_lfse_14]*

Young people not in education, employment or training – NEETs⁸

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has surveyed which young people are in the NEET group and what they are doing.⁹The compilation shows that many of the young people are in contact with public agencies, and are receiving support and/or participating in various initiatives. Nearly seven percent of the young people in the group have immigrated during the year, six percent are on parental leave, and eleven percent have a health disorder or disability. One-third of the group have no known activity. Some of them are working or studying abroad, and some are assumed to live at home, supported by their parents. Some attend special upper secondary schools or live in special accommodation for young people.

The diagram below shows the proportion of people aged 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34 who neither work nor study. It is worrying that the proportion of young people who neither work nor study is so big in all age groups. A Nordic comparison shows that the proportion is biggest in Finland and smallest in Iceland.

Young people aged 20-34 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).



Source: Eurostat (2016), *Share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training, by sex and age, 2015%.png*

8 The indicator for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group and sex that are not employed and not involved in education or training.

9 Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2013.

In 2015, the proportion of young people aged 20-24 who neither work nor study was estimated to be approximately 8-9 percent in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Corresponding figures were higher in Finland (16 percent) and lower in Iceland (6 percent). There are great regional differences, and the proportion of young people who neither work nor study can vary between 6 and 15 percent, depending on municipality.



Summary of good examples and key features

This report describes some of the projects and initiatives identified by The Nordic web resource on dropout. The examples of good practice are taken from the five Nordic countries and Greenland. All projects have been evaluated. The projects have been selected because they represent a broad spectrum of measures. Some projects are included because they stand out, for example because they work in an innovative way, with an unusual problem, or with a new target group.

Some of the projects have an explicit goal to increase the proportion of young people who complete upper secondary education, while for others, this is a result of other measures. These projects show the complexity regarding school dropout, and show that measures are sometimes needed in several areas if the objective of increasing the proportion of young people who complete upper secondary education is to be attained.

A brief presentation of the projects, highlighting some of their unique features, is given below.

Fastholdelseskaravanen (the Hold on Tight Caravan) worked to increase the proportion of young people who complete a vocational training programme in Denmark. A focus was placed on increasing the proportion of young people with a non-Danish background completing vocational programmes. The project was initiated when it became apparent that only four of ten young people with a non-Danish background beginning a vocational training programme completed it. Forty-nine schools and more than 86,000 young people were involved in the project. Raising awareness and training to overcome the problems caused by 'grey-zone language' have been sub-components in this major initiative.

In Norway, the *NAV-veileder i videregående skolene (NAV Tutors in Upper Secondary Schools)* project placed officials from the local NAV office in upper secondary schools in the municipality. The officials worked in the school and were part of the ordinary Pupils' Service team, but they also continued working in their ordinary agency. The aim of the project was to detect, at an earlier stage, pupils in the risk zone for dropout, and for the school, working together with the NAV office, to follow up students who dropped out. After the pilot project, the initiative is now being implemented throughout Norway.

In Greenland, many people live in rural areas, which creates special conditions for young people's education. Pilot projects involving counselling and individual follow-up were initiated by the Greenland Government to develop systematic strategies for reducing school dropout. The initiatives mainly involve providing young people with social support during their school years and in their own homes.

The *Hikikomori* project in Uppsala works with a very vulnerable target group, i.e. young people who isolate themselves at home. Some of the participants have not attended school for many years when they come to the *Hikikomori* project. The project has worked to remove bureaucratic barriers to simplify things for the young people who want to participate, so it is a 'low-threshold' initiative. *Hikikomori* is Japanese, and means 'those who withdraw'.

In the *Modellkommuneprojekt om Unge, alkohol og stoffer project* (Young People, Alcohol and Drugs), reduction in school dropout is a consequence of the school paying greater attention to pupils' wellbeing. Commissioned by the Danish Health Authority, six municipalities have worked together with selected upper secondary schools to tackle young people's use of alcohol and drugs and the negative consequences.

The Ny GIV - Oppfølgingsprosjektet (New GIV Follow-up Project) is a project within the Norwegian national initiative, Ny GIV (New GIV). The focus of the project is on a systematic follow-up of pupils with poor school performance, low motivation, and poor outlook for coping with schoolwork. Ny GIV is the largest ever initiative for school dropout at upper secondary school in Norway.

Plug in is the Swedish equivalent to *Ny GIV*, and is also the largest ever national initiative for reducing school dropout. Nearly fifty municipalities have participated in the project, by setting up project workshops. The web platform PlugInnovation has served as an information hub and resources bank, and several success factors have been identified from the activities in the many project workshops.

Approximately 15 percent of upper secondary pupils have cognitive difficulties that make it difficult for them to cope with schoolwork. In the Swedish project *Teknikstöd i skolan* (Assistive Technology in School), pupils requiring extra support are identified. In the project, these pupils have the chance to use technical aids, such as iPads, to help improve their school performance. An important part of the project has been to train teachers and other school staff in how the assistive technology can be used for best effect.

The Finnish *Ungdomsverkstäderna* (*Youth Workshops*) are more of an established support structure in society than a project or a temporary initiative. The ownership forms and content vary in the workshops, which are spread all over Finland. In the workshops, young people who have not found their place in schools or in the labour market can enjoy a supportive environment, and gain new experiences and the inspiration to return to education.

When Iceland was hit by the global financial crisis in 2008, unemployment grew rapidly. The first group to be hit was young people. The state then joined forces with the business community and the voluntary sector to offer alternative activities and initiatives to help young people into education or work. The project *Ungt fólk til athafna* (*Youth in Activity*) reached thousands of young people, with offers of educational places, internships or jobs.

Ten Nordic projects to combat school dropout

There are many reasons why young people drop out of school, and it is impossible to single out one best way of helping them back to education. Fortunately there is a wide range of promising activities successfully tackling the issue of dropout. Some are nationwide initiatives and some are small-scale pilot activities. Ten Nordic projects illustrating good practice, each with unique strengths and successes, are presented below.



Fastholdelseskaravanen (Hold on Tight Caravan), Denmark

The initiatives in the *Fastholdelseskaravanen* have focused on pupils with a non-Danish background. Thousands of young people, parents and school staff have been involved in the project. One result of the project is that teachers and head teachers have adapted educational programmes and methods to motivate more young people to complete a vocational training programme.

The evaluation of the *Fastholdelsekaravanen* shows that the success rate for the target group is higher in the selected vocational schools than the average for vocational schools in Denmark.¹⁰ The project has helped to increase motivation and study conditions for young people with a non-Danish background on vocational training programmes, and generated interest in the programmes. The young people also know more about the status of the educational programmes and the career opportunities they can lead to.

Fastholdelseskaravanen has attained its overall effect goals, in that 86,000 pupils, 9000 employees and 4000 parents have been involved in the initiative. The evaluation showed that the measures continued in many of the schools even when the financial support was withdrawn. More pupils have participated in the activities since the project ended than during the project period.

Other positive goals were reached, including professional training of teaching staff on handling diversity among the pupils. Methods and models for school-parent collaboration were developed, so that pupils with non-Danish background would feel welcome on vocational training programmes.

More about *Fastholdelseskaravanen*

The *Fastholdelseskaravanen* project implemented several measures in collaboration with *Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning*¹¹ (*Educational Guidance for Youth*) and nearly 50 vocational schools¹²

10 Ernst & Young (2012)

11 *Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning (UU)* operates mainly on the municipal level and is responsible for all young people aged 15-25 who are not in education or work. UU evaluates the young person's motivation and ability to get started with education, prepares an education plan together with the young person and their parents, and follow up to ensure that the young person meets the educational obligation. If it is not possible to contact the young person in writing or by telephone, UU is to personally find the young person.

12 Danish apprenticeship programmes are vocational educational programmes at upper secondary level (*erhvervsuddannelse, EUD*). The programmes are run in special vocational schools (*erhvervsskoler*).

and production schools¹³. The aim of the activities was to increase the proportion of young people, particularly those with a non-Danish background, completing a vocational educational programme. The project began as a collaboration between the then Ministry for Integration and the Ministry for Education. Activities in each school generally ran for a year.

Themes for the measures were counselling and support, networks with the young person in the centre, and education, didactics and methodology. Examples of the methods used were:

Local role models: The idea of using local role models was to inspire struggling pupils by putting them together with young people in similar circumstances who had managed to overcome their difficulties and complete school. The role models were local, and had themselves experienced the same difficulties that the young people in the project experienced in their everyday lives.

Family collaboration: The family plays an important role in the development of children and young people, and in their choice of educational programme. The idea is that, if parents and the school collaborate, they can provide better support to the young person in their choice of educational programme and during the period of education. The experiences in the *Fasholdelseskaravanen* project regarding family collaboration were positive, and showed that many young people complete school if there is already strong collaboration between the school and family.

Language in the grey zone: Language is critical to learning, and can form a barrier preventing the young person understanding on an educational programme. Many bilingual pupils, but also some pupils whose native language is Danish, lack the linguistic skills to learn from the teaching. These skills can also be called 'grey zone language'. These include more difficult functional words ('however', 'because', 'on the contrary'), words with figurative meanings ('listen up'), ironic expressions

and technical words (words that pupils with a Danish background can interpret and that help them understand technical terms, such as 'add', 'balance out'). Measures in this area included strengthening basic language skills and offering school staff skills development through the *Fasholdelseskaravanen* project on grey zone language.

13 *Production schools are for young people under 25 who need to discover what they want to work with or study in the future. The length of participation is individual, but is no longer than one year. Emphasis is placed on practical work, combined with theoretical school subjects as necessary.*

Facts about Fastholdelseskaravanen

Where: All regions in Denmark.

Actor responsible: The Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality together with selected vocational schools and local Youth Guidance Centres.

When: 2008-2012.

Objective: The objective was to increase motivation and conditions for young people to choose a vocational training programme, and to increase the proportion of young people with a non-Danish background who complete a vocational training programme.

Target group: Young people, especially those with a non-Danish background, who were studying on, or who were considering, a vocational training programme.

Budget: The project was funded by the Danish Government and the European Social Fund (ESF). The total budget for 2008-2012 was DKK 71 million, of which DKK 47.8 million came from the ESF.

Background: Many surveys show that young people with a non-Danish background face great challenges when starting and completing a vocational training programme. It is therefore important to work strategically and in a target-oriented way with young people who have started an educational programme.

Method: The Fastholdelseskaravanen project, for example, involved skills development of teachers, supplementary tuition for pupils, mentoring activities, developing parent collaboration and educational methods.

Evaluation: Final report – Avsluttende effektevaluering af Fastholdelseskaravanen (Final Effect Evaluation of the Hold on Tight Caravan) (2012), Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality.

Contact: The Danish Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality <http://www.uvm.dk/>

Forsøk med NAV-veileder i videregående skole (Trials with NAV Tutors in Upper Secondary Schools), Norway

Trials with NAV¹⁴ Tutors in Upper Secondary Schools is a pilot project where officials from local NAV offices were placed in upper secondary schools and worked as tutors. The aim was that the tutor would be a link between the school and the local NAV office to ensure faster response and better coordination for pupils who drop out of school or who are at risk of dropping out. A new model for collaboration between schools and public agencies is being developed.

Experiences from the project indicate several positive outcomes. More pupils seem to complete their studies, and it is estimated that young people who have dropped out may have a shorter route back to education. Collaboration between public agencies and schools has been strengthened. Both head teachers and NAV tutors report that collaboration between schools and the NAV office has improved. Managers within the NAV service report that offices now have a better understanding of how the school system functions. Some head teachers report that they have noticed a positive effect where NAV tutors support pupils who have problems outside school, and that this has a positive effect on the pupil's school performance.

Collaboration for better follow-up

Organised support around the pupil ensures that services and initiatives from the NAV office are coordinated with other support initiatives in the school Pupils' Service team.

In addition to school, the NAV tutor collaborates with other support services, such as the *Oppfølgingstjenesten (Follow-up Service)*¹⁵ and the Norwegian Child Welfare Services, which enables faster follow-up and measures for the pupil.

More on Trials with NAV Tutors in Upper Secondary Schools

Nearly 50 officials from local NAV service offices are now placed as tutors at upper secondary schools around the country. At the NAV office, the tutor participates in the Youth Team and, in the school, in the Pupils' Service team. The tutor is an integrated part of both the NAV office activities and the schools' Pupils' Service regarding the follow-up of pupils.

14 *NAV is a public agency with broad area of responsibility; for example, it is responsible for both social insurance and labour market activities. The work of NAV takes place at municipal, regional and national levels, and in collaboration with other actors and organisations, such as municipalities and county councils.*

15 *The Oppfølgingstjenesten (Follow-up Service) is a public agency with responsibility for following up young people aged 16-21 who neither work nor study, but who are entitled to upper secondary education.*

Facts about Trials with NAV Tutors in Upper Secondary Schools

Where: The trial has now become permanent in all counties.

Actor responsible: The pilot project was a collaboration between the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

When: The first trials were started in 2012. From spring 2015 until June 2018, the project is being run in all counties.

Objective: Work to prevent pupils dropping out of upper secondary education, and help young people into the labour market. The pilot project was also aimed at developing new forms for cross-sectoral collaboration, increasing the exchange of knowledge about the different actors' activities, and increasing knowledge about pupils' living conditions and social problems.

Target group: Pupils at upper secondary schools at risk of dropout.

Budget: The trial was funded through the budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration contributed an extra NOK 14.5 million to the NAV offices.

Background: The pilot project was part of Innsats overfor utsatte unge (Young People On the Edge) and Program for bedre gjennomføring (Programme to Increase Completion Rates at Upper Secondary Schools).

Evaluation: Schafft, A. & Mamelund, S.-E. (2016) Forsøk med NAV-veileder på videregående skole. En underveisevaluering. (NAV Tutors in Upper Secondary Schools. Mid-term evaluation). AFI Report 206:04.

Contact: Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration www.nav.no

The project is based on the following principles:

- 'Place and train' (support the pupils in the environment where the problems occur)
- Early intervention
- Preventive and outreach activities
- Low-threshold and accessible organisation/services

The model for cross-sectoral collaboration is based on: Practical awareness of the measures and services in the collaborating sectors, a joint arena for operative collaboration, and agreements at management level.



Pilot projects with counselling and individual follow-up, Greenland

These pilot projects encourage young people to complete upper secondary education. The project has led to greater adult contact, so problems are detected earlier and measures implemented. Pupils who live alone or in student accommodation are supported in building a structure for their everyday lives.

Three of the pilot projects and their outcomes are described below.

Psychological counselling: Experiences are that the project has helped to keep many pupils active in upper secondary education. The psychologist service is not organised directly as part of the school's activities – internal evaluations indicated that it was beneficial to maintain an important distinction between the pupil's school and private life. This arrangement also enables pupil counsellors to focus more on academic and study-related problems. The experience is that many pupils use the psychological counselling services.

Contact teachers and pupil coaching: Pupils contact the pupil coach rather than the student counsellor when they have personal problems. Pupils are more inclined to discuss their problems regarding absence, homesickness, and lack of motivation. Other problems that pupils raise in these discussions are traumas, low self-esteem, and poor results from compulsory school.

Housemothers: Housemothers become key figures in helping the youngest pupils who live far from home quickly establish a structure in their everyday lives. The housemother can, from an early stage, keep an eye on pupils who are unhappy and, if necessary, help them to treatment or follow-up. Meal planning has also brought results in the form of healthier lifestyles and more nutritious diets for some of the pupils. For many of the pupils who live away from home, the housemother becomes an important contact link between the family and the young person, and can act as a 'family member'.

Social support to reduce dropouts

Upper secondary schools and vocational schools are only found in a few places in Greenland, so many pupils in upper secondary education must move away from home and live in student halls. One of the causes of dropout is living away from home.

In the Proposal for Education Plan 2005-2020, funds were allocated to projects with a focus on reducing dropout in upper secondary education.¹⁶ Most of these projects revolve around different forms of counselling, generally with a focus on individual follow-up.

16 *There are two summaries of the projects that were allocated funding, dated 2010 and 2012. Both were prepared by a working group appointed by the Greenland Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church.*

Schemes with psychology counsellors were initiated when it was realised that there were high incidences of absence on the grounds of personal, social and mental-health problems. A basic idea is that problems can be tackled before they become too big for the pupil. Psychological consultation schemes have been piloted at five schools.

Contact teacher schemes have been set up to offer more regular contact with the pupils, offering greater support, adult contact, and counselling in everyday life for those pupils who need it. Six projects were given funding to work with this. The pupil and contact teacher have regular, individual discussions about educational progress, with focus on the pupil's situation and plans. The meetings focus on, for example, attendance, attitude to school work and welfare. The pupil coaches are also responsible for following up pupils with social weaknesses.

At some of the student hostels and colleges, trials have been started with housemothers. The purpose is to create better adult contact, establish social relationships in the town of study, and give greater structure to everyday life. Seven local pilot projects have been set up. In some places, these schemes are also called college counsellors or college coaches. The schemes focus on, for example, cooking, purchasing, cleaning and hygiene. Homework, social environment, joint dinners are examples of other activities. The housemother does not cook food, go shopping or do any washing for the pupils, but guides the pupils and helps them get a structure in their everyday lives.



Facts about the Greenlandic pilot projects

Where: Greenland, part of a national initiative.

Actors responsible: Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church.

When: 2005-2020

Objective: Reduce the amount of dropout, and promote long-term goals. Develop sustainable strategies for systematic reduction of dropout.

Target group: All upper secondary educational institutions in Greenland, and pupils and students at these institutions. Other target groups are Greenlandic municipalities, Piareesarfiit (municipal counselling and introduction centres), and De grønlandske hus (Greenlandic Houses) in Denmark¹⁷.

Background: Greenland generally has high rates of dropout from upper secondary education. An initiative for reducing dropout is a central part of the Greenlandic Parliament (Inatsisartut) long-term plan for education. Many of the pupils live away from home during upper secondary education, which is seen to be a significant cause of dropout from upper secondary educational programmes.

Budget: DKK 6.5 million per year.¹⁸

Method: Trials with various forms of counselling, individual follow-up and counselling for pupils who experience academic, social or mental health problems during upper secondary education.

Evaluation: Ministry Working Group (2010), Initiativet vedrørende mindskelse av frafald (Initiative Concerning Reduction of Dropout). Evaluering af projekter i finansåret 2008 (Evaluation of Projects in the 2008 Financial Year). Jessing, Carla Tønder (2011), Evaluering af vejledningsindsatsen i Grønland (Evaluation of Counselling Initiatives in Greenland). Evalueringsrapport til Grønlands Selvstyre (Evaluation Report for the Government of Greenland), Departementet for Uddannelse og Forskning (Ministry for Education and Research), June 2011.

Contact: Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church <http://naalakkersuisut.gl>

17 *Grønlandske hus (Greenlandic Houses) are contact and meeting places for Greenlanders and others interested in Greenland, set up in several large Danish cities.*

18 *Grant awarded 2012*

Hikikomori, Sweden

The *Hikikomori* project is aimed at young people who have become isolated in their homes over a long period. After the project, three-quarters of the participants had broken free of their isolation and many had improved relationships with public agencies. The evaluation indicates that the activity fills a vacuum in societal support.

Several evaluations show the same result. *Hikikomori* attains virtually all its project goals, and the activity is emphasised as being very important, not only for the participants, but also for their relatives. After participating in the project, 75 percent of the young people had to varying degrees broken free of their isolation, by planning for or starting educational programmes or work training, and living in their own homes. Many now have better relationships with public agencies.

The evaluation shows clearly that the activity helps young people who demonstrate a tendency to avoid contact and, despite great need for support from society, end up withdrawing.

Success factors

Methods of helping and meeting these young people are individualised, and the project welcomes participants in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. The project team work as a mini-team around each participant, with one person from the municipal social services and one from the county council's general psychiatry service. Although working together in *Hikikomori* the team members are well-established in their parent organisations. Working as a mini-team simplifies the work, both for the staff but also for the young person.

The participants can come to the project in many ways, but require no referral from a public agency or a special diagnosis. The young person or their parent simply contacts the project team and registers an interest, and they are then invited to a first meeting. The project is accessible for a larger group of young people, not just for those who are already in contact with the authorities. This was a conscious strategy in the project and an important element in reaching the young people who most need the project activities.

First steps to break free from isolation

The aim of the project is to help young people break free of their isolation at home and become more socially active, plan to support themselves, and possibly find their own accommodation. Other goals are for the relevant public authorities to learn more about the target group, and to strengthen collaboration between actors such as the social services and healthcare services.



The project clients are in the 18-30 age group, with priority given to younger people. The age limit has gradually shifted upwards, since it was discovered that there was a need to make the project accessible to more young people. The project can have 15 young people registered simultaneously. The project also has five transit places for those who have come a bit further but who still need support. *Hikikomori* is based in a peaceful, pleasant and tolerant environment.

Participation in *Hikikomori* is divided into three stages:

Stage 1. Create trust between participant and project worker, survey the participant's background, problems, and dreams for the future. Method: Various assessment questionnaires. Motivating discussions.

Stage 2. Supervisor discussions and social activities in and outside the project premises. Home visits as and when needed. Activities are scheduled and are published in advance on the project blog. Participation in activities is voluntary. Method: exposure, socialisation and motivating discussions.

Stage 3. Initiate preparations for studies, work, or work training. In addition to supervisor discussions and social activities, visits are made to public agencies and relevant organisations in society, such as the employment service and the Centre for Adult Education.

The project will be made permanent in January 2017.

Facts about Hikikomori

Where: Uppsala and Knivsta municipalities.

Actors responsible: The project is run jointly by Uppsala municipality – Healthcare and Development and the general psychiatry service in Uppsala County Council.

When: April 2010 -

Objective: The goal is that at least 50 percent of the participants will have plans for work training, studies or other activity.

Target group: Young women and men, 18 and above, living in Uppsala or Knivsta municipalities. Members of the target group have isolated themselves in their homes, do not participate in society, and lack the ability to lift themselves out of their exclusion.

Budget: SEK 10.2 million.

Background: The Hikikomori project was started to reach out to and help a group of young people who are otherwise excluded from the conventional support systems.

Method: The project makes an individual plan for each participant. This involves, for example, home visits, individual meetings, help with contacts with public agencies, group meetings and social activities.

Evaluation: Adolfsson, P. (2013) Utvärdering av projektet Hikikomori (Evaluation of the Hikikomori project). Uppsala University; Finn, B. Ingard, C. & Jöreskog, K. (2015) Utvärdering av projektet Hikikomori 2015 (Evaluation of the Hikikomori Project 2015). Uppsala Regional Council and Pay-off (2013), Samhällsekonomisk utvärdering Projekt Hikikomori (Socioeconomic Evaluation of the Hikikomori Project).

Contact: Samordningsförbundet Uppsala län (Financial Coordination Association in Uppsala County) finsam uppsala.se

Unge, alkohol og stoffer (Young People, Alcohol and Drugs), Denmark

Through the Young People, Alcohol and Drugs Project, schools and municipalities have learnt to collaborate to reduce the risk of addiction in young people. Support measures have increased pupil wellbeing and reduced the risk of failure in school. Teachers can focus on teaching, because they know what to do if a pupil develops alcohol- or drug-related problems.

Commissioned by the Danish Health Authority, six municipalities have worked together with selected upper secondary schools to tackle young people's use of alcohol and drugs and reduce the negative consequences. The activities have been based on a collaborative undertaking between schools and the municipality.

Results

The projects tested and developed models for collaboration between municipalities and schools. They have developed alcohol/drug policies and action plans, and arranged outreach and counselling activities. The projects also worked with establishing the different project activities to ensure continued and extended alcohol- and drug-related measures.

The following conclusions and positive results from the six projects were highlighted in the evaluation.

- School alcohol and drug policies comprise a tool for keeping pupils in education and reducing the risk of failure at school.
- The projects have created a mutual contact channel between schools and the municipality. It has become easier for teachers and other school staff to react to pupils' alcohol and drug consumption.
- The teacher knows where to refer a pupil with problems, allowing them to focus on teaching.
- A cross-sector collaboration within the municipality has created a broader focus on pupil wellbeing.
- Actors meeting pupils on other grounds, for example, study and careers advisors, who have not previously related to young peoples' alcohol and drug use, now have updated knowledge in the field.
- Through the action plans, schools that previously had a clear alcohol culture, for example through 'Friday pubs', have been given tools to change the culture and approach.

Wellbeing and follow-up

A dialogue-based approach, working on the assumption that the young people themselves are experts on their lives, has brought good results. Games, class dialogues, films, and plays have been used to generate dialogue with the pupils. A follow-up focus on pupil wellbeing, by both municipality and school, helps to motivate and support the pupils and help them complete their studies.

Products – inspiration, guidance and tools

The six projects have produced an extensive body of inspiration and method resources for municipalities and schools that want to start tackling the problems of drug and alcohol. Examples of such products include a guide to the signs of mental ill-health, a dialogue barometer, a website, and the Drugbox.dk web resource.

More about the Young People, Alcohol and Drugs project

Young people's consumption of alcohol is higher in Denmark than in many other EU countries, and the proportion of young people in Denmark who have tried cannabis has increased in recent years. The 16-20 age group is particularly vulnerable in terms of experimenting with drugs. When attempting to reach the target group with preventive measures, the municipality must meet the young people in their own environments. The Danish Health Authority initiative, Young People, Alcohol and Drugs, therefore focuses on a collaborative undertaking between municipality and educational coordinators on measures to prevent use of alcohol and drugs.

The aim was that the measures would strengthen the work of the municipalities on alcohol- and drug-prevention in young people. The projects would help to develop methods to promote a drug-prevention environment in schools and early counselling/guidance measures for young people showing signs of developing a problematic attitude to alcohol and drugs. The projects were to test whether drug and alcohol policies, action plans, outreach activities and early intervention at upper secondary schools could be improved through a collaborative undertaking between the municipal board and schools.

Facts about the Young People, Alcohol and Drugs Project

Where: The initiative involved six projects in the following Danish municipalities: Horsens, København, Odense, Skive, Svendborg, Holbæk, Odsherred and Kalundborg. A range of educational programmes were involved – academic and vocational upper secondary programmes, apprenticeship training programmes, and production schools.

Actor responsible: The Danish Health Authority defined the purpose of the initiative. Together with the upper secondary schools, the participating municipalities were responsible for implementation and model development.

When: 2011-2014

Objective: To develop an early outreach and counselling initiative to young people developing problematic use of alcohol and drugs.

Target group: The activities were divided up into two streams: a primary component aimed at all young people at the upper secondary schools, and a secondary component aimed at young people in the risk zone.

Budget: The Danish Health Authority funded the project with DKK 17 million.

Background: Alcohol and drug use among young people can exacerbate an already unstable life situation, reduce the ability to learn, and can be a contributory factor in young people struggling to complete upper secondary education. Municipalities and schools have a common interest in helping such young people before the problems escalate.

Evaluation: Sundhedsstyrelsen (2014), Unge, alkohol og stoffer. (Young People, Alcohol and Drugs project). Tvärgående evaluering av satspuljeprojekterne. (Transversal Evaluation of the Satspulje¹⁹ Projects).

Contact: The Danish Health Authority, sundhedsstyrelsen.dk

19 A specific Danish government fund that annually awards grants for social projects.





Ny GIV - Oppfølgingsprosjektet (New GIV - Follow-up Project), Norway

The countrywide Ny GIV- Follow-up Project, has shown how public agencies can work across boundaries to prevent young people from dropping out of school. Follow-up procedures have been improved, and more young people not in work or education are detected and given appropriate support.

There are indications that the work with young people outside education and employment has been strengthened during the project period, and that Ny GIV has helped to increase systematic understanding and improve collaboration relationships, both in the Follow-up Service and in NAV.

The project has developed better statistical and indicator systems to monitor the follow-up services over time. After the measures, figures from the county follow-up service are very good, and show that the service reaches increasing numbers of the young people who are the target group for the project. Since the start of the project, the number of 'unknown' young people in the target group has been reduced from around 8000-10,000 to 1500.

The final report gives an overall evaluation of the Follow-up Project. Collaborative relationships have been improved, the Follow-up Service has a better overview than previously, and more young people have participated in alternative education measures. The survey shows that there has been a shift in measures over time, so that more young people are now participating in measures with closer links to upper secondary education. This is in line with the intention of the Follow-up Project.

Another finding is that the Follow-up Project has helped to increase awareness about the target group. The project has shown the importance of adopting a holistic and coordinated approach in the work to reach more young people outside education and employment and to increase upper secondary completion rates. Another development is that upper secondary schools more often use the Follow-up Service when a pupil is removed from the school roll.

In the systematic work, a stronger collaboration has been built up between public agency areas at county level.

What is Oppfølgingsprosjektet, the Follow-up Project?

The Follow-up Project involves strengthening collaboration between the Follow-up Service, NAV, vocational training and schools, with the aim of developing a structured, coordinated and target-oriented inter-departmental system for following up young people outside education and employment. The Follow-up Project is a subproject of the national initiative in Norway, Ny GIV. The project is aimed at young people in the Follow-up Service target group, i.e. young people aged 15-21 who are not in education or work.

One of the goals of the Follow-up Project is to develop better systems for surveying the target group. County council reports show that, for many years, the Follow-up Service lacked an overview of around 10,000 of the estimated 20,000 young people in this target group each year. A main objective of the Follow-up Project is to set up fixed structures for following up young people before they drop out of school.

In the direct work with the target group, the project has focused on, for example:

- earlier follow-up and intervention for pupils who are in danger of dropping out from upper secondary school, through clarification meetings and follow-up plans
- collaboration on combining measures offered by NAV and the education service
- cross-sectoral measures for the young people who have been outside employment and education longest, involving schools, NAV, health services and educational-psychological services.

In conjunction with the Follow-up Project, the Ministry of Education and Research has also changed the regulations regarding the project mandate. Follow-up is to be more obligatory and the interventions more based on skills.



Facts about Ny GIV- Follow-up Project

Where: Norway

Actors responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research in collaboration with the county council Oppfølgingstjenesten Follow-up Service, upper secondary schools, vocational schools and NAV.

When: 2010-2013.

Objective: This part of the Ny-GIV project has many complex goals. The young people in question are to be followed up regularly, offered qualifying, practice-oriented measures, and no young person outside employment and education is to be unknown for the authorities. Follow-up plans will be prepared for all young people in the target group, and clarification meetings will be held with all pupils before they drop out completely. The Follow-up Project also aims to strengthen collaboration between the Follow-up Service, upper secondary schools, vocational schools, and NAV, and other relevant bodies, such as the social services, health services and child care services.

Target group: The primary target group is young people aged 15-21 who are outside employment and education. The secondary target group is young people at risk of dropping out of upper secondary education.

Background: Before the project, local authorities had no contact with and could not explain the status of 10,000 young people in a target group of around 20,000 young people aged 15-21 outside employment and education.

Method: Nationwide network collaboration between the Follow-up Services and other public agencies.

Evaluation: Sletten Aaboen, M., Bakken, A. & Lie Andersen, P. (2015), Oppfølgingsprosjektet i Ny GIV: Sluttrapport fra en kartleggingsstudie. (Follow-up Project in Ny GIV: Final Report from a Survey.) NOVA Rapport 1/15.

Contact: Ministry of Education and Research www.regjeringen.no

Plug In, Sweden

Plug In engaged municipalities all over Sweden in working actively to help young people to complete their upper secondary education studies. Seventy-five percent of the activities have been implemented in the municipalities. School attendance has increased, and the number of young people who drop out of school before completing upper secondary education has fallen. Plug In has identified five important success factors in preventing dropout.

Many of the project workshops²⁰ in the Plug In project have been successful in helping young people to complete upper secondary education. The workshops have supported those pupils who had already dropped out of school and helped them return to school or other activity. Over 7800 young people who had dropped out of upper secondary school, or who were in the risk zone, have participated in the project.

At the Oscarsgymnasiet upper secondary school in Oskarshamn municipality, dropout on the Introduction Programme fell from 8 to 1 percent. Attendance on the programme increased from 77 percent to 85 percent, and on the national programmes, attendance increased from 86 percent to 89 percent. Total dropout from all upper secondary schools in the county of Jamtland was approximately 13 percent. In June 2014, dropout at the participating upper secondary schools had fallen to between 2 and 5 percent.

Some of the participating regions have also worked with young people who have already dropped out of school. Activities have mainly focused on the municipal responsibility for activity²¹. In Gothenburg, the follow-up and survey frequency increased from 45 percent before the project to 95 percent in the final year of the project. Through Plug In, a city-level perspective on following up young people under the municipal activity responsibility, has started, including a method handbook for the entire city.

The project has identified several important dimensions in attaining success with young people and school dropout. The main feature is to use an individual-centred approach. The other dimensions are Check and Follow-up, Meeting, Flexibility and Collaboration.

More about Plug In

Plug In was Sweden's biggest ever project to focus on dropout from upper secondary school, and involved almost 80 project workshops in 47 municipalities. Plug In focused on identifying, developing and disseminating successful methods for reducing dropout amongst young people.

20 *In the Plug In project, the local initiatives were called project workshops.*

21 *The municipalities in Sweden are responsible for offering activities to young people who are not studying or working and have not completed upper secondary school. The goal is to primarily help them to complete their upper secondary studies.*

The activities varied greatly in content and design. The five most common types of intervention were mentorship/coaching, identification and mapping of risk groups, outreach activities, transition from compulsory to upper secondary education, and pupil welfare measures.

Youth coaches was an intervention tested in 17 municipalities. Their task was to contact young people in the target group, and help them return to school or start another activity. The youth coaches were found to be important in supporting communication between the young person, the school, and public agencies like the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and Sweden's Public Employment Agency. Other interventions focused more directly on the schools. Pupils were offered support such as homework help, motivating discussions, or help with structuring their everyday lives.

PlugInnovation

As part of the Plug In project, the web portal PlugInnovation was set up. The portal gathered research findings, methods, and experiences about how to tackle dropout from upper secondary schools. On PlugInnovation, the workshops could submit reports and share knowledge about their activities, making it available to everyone.

The main target group for PlugInnovation was those working in the method workshops in the municipalities. The idea was that PlugInnovation would serve as a resource bank, mainly for researchers and practitioners. In the longer term, the ambition was that knowledge dissemination would result in more pupils completing upper secondary education.

Plug In 2.0 – continuation of Plug In

The Plug In 2.0 project has taken over where Plug In left off. Plug In 2.0 will continue and develop the areas that Plug In identified as success factors, with the aim of increasing the number of pupils who complete upper secondary education. The project will disseminate knowledge about the dropout problem, and contribute to strategic lobbying at national and international levels.

Facts about Plug In

Where: Sweden, national project with 80 project workshops in 47 municipalities.

Actor responsible: Plug In was led by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, in collaboration with Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities, Region Jämtland, Region Association in Kalmar and southern Småland, Region Västerbotten and Region Östern. The project was part-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

When: 2012-2015.

Target group: Pupils in the risk zone for dropout, and young adults who have already dropped out of upper secondary education.

Objective: To reduce dropout from upper secondary school and to increase the number of young people successfully completing upper secondary school.

Budget: The total project budget was approximately SEK 130 million.

Background: There are many projects aimed at reducing school dropout, but what is lacking is research into what works and why. In Plug In new methods, based on research, were tested, and then followed up.

Method: The trials went on simultaneously in many municipalities around the country. The work in each municipality was reported to the web portal PlugInnovation, where initiatives can be compared and analysed.

Evaluation: Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions) (2016), Plug In: Sveriges största samverkansprojekt för att förhindra studieavbrott. (Plug In: Sweden's largest collaboration project to prevent dropout from upper secondary school). The effects of the project were evaluated by Ramböll and the process evaluated by European Minds.

Contact: Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions www.skl.se



Teknikstöd i skolan (Assistive Technology in Schools), Sweden

In the Teknikstöd i skolan project, pupils with cognitive difficulties have learnt to work with hi-tech tools to improve school results. Other important parts of the project were skills development for teachers and collaboration with relevant organisations outside school.

Relatively minor measures can increase pupil motivation and goal attainment in schools. One conclusion from the project evaluation is that hi-tech tools, together with successful implementation, gave very good results, and that relatively simple support measures need not be expensive. The use of assistive technology²² meant that many pupils experienced an improvement in their school results, and that they were better equipped to handle difficult situations in school. Absences decreased. A socioeconomic evaluation of the intervention showed that it is not only the individual who benefits from using assistive technology, society also benefits.

In the final report, it was proposed that occupational therapists, who are common in schools in other countries (e.g. UK), should also be present in Swedish schools.

Schools lack knowledge about cognitive difficulties and assistive technology. The Swedish Agency for Participation report on the project pointed out that much of the technology that can help pupils with cognitive difficulties is already in schools. It is not the technology that is lacking, but knowledge about how it can be used with cognitive difficulties. Part of the project involved disseminating information about technology and how teachers can work to help pupils with cognitive difficulties.

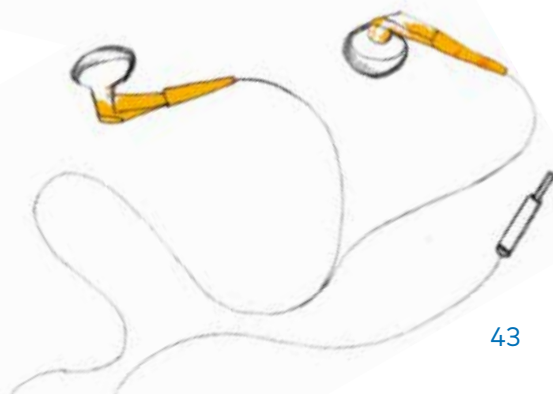
Many upper secondary school pupils have cognitive difficulties. In the project, a special assessment tool, BAS (Behov av Anpassningar i Skolmiljön, Need for Adaptations in the School Environment) was used to assess pupils' needs for support and adaptation in the school environment. The assessment of cognitive difficulties involved all pupils, and one conclusion was that many young people with cognitive difficulties lacked a diagnosis. The final evaluation pointed out that the instrument for assessing needs was useful for identifying the target group, and for identifying what type of assistive technology was needed and how it should be used.

²² Assistive technology (AT) is a device, piece of equipment or system that helps a person with a disability work around his challenges so he can learn, communicate or simply function better. AT ranges from simple adaptive tools (like highlighters and organizers) to high-tech tools (like text-to-speech software).

More about Teknikstöd i skolan

The aim of the project was that technology would give support to pupils with cognitive disabilities and help them attain goals within the set time. Another ambition of the trials was to increase skills about assistive technology among teachers and other school staff, and to develop a model for assessing pupils' needs for cognitive support. The project also aimed to develop collaboration with other relevant actors in each county.

The project chose to work with occupational therapists to help implement assistive technology in schools. The occupational therapists have supplemented pupil welfare services and coordinated the work with, for example, technical staff, teachers and pupils. Technology purchased for pupils mainly involved time support aids, like 'Time Timer' and 'Timstock', apps for tablets, iPads and smart phones, amplifiers, and computers. One important feature in the project was that the pupils themselves helped decide on the tools selected.



Facts about Teknikstöd i skolan

Where: Sweden, trials in Växjö, Kalmar and Halmstad.

Actor responsible: Swedish Agency for Participation.

When: 2012-2013

Objective: To investigate whether young people with cognitive disabilities can improve their school results by using assistive technology.

Target group: Pupils with cognitive difficulties who attend upper secondary education, adult education, special upper secondary schools, or special education for adults (sär vux)

Budget: SEK 20 million in total (SEK 3.5 million per trial).

Background: Approximately 15 percent of upper secondary pupils have cognitive difficulties that make it difficult for them to cope with schoolwork.

Method: The trials involved: testing assistive technology solutions for pupils with cognitive difficulties; training teachers and other school staff in using the assistive tools; developing methods for transferring knowledge assistive technology to internships and employers; developing a model for assessing needs, linked to the curriculum requirements for goals and consequences of cognitive disabilities; and developing educational resources that will be disseminated nationally.

Evaluation: Dahlin, E. & Lagerkrans, E. (2013), Teknikstöd i skolan - slutrapport. (Assistive Technology in Schools - Final Report). Nilsson Lundmark, E., Nilsson, I. och Wadeskog, A. (2013), Teknikstöd i skolan – Socioekonomisk analys av unga, skolmisslyckande och arbetsmarknaden. (Assistive Technology in Schools - Socioeconomic Analysis of Young People, School Failure and the Labour Market).

Contact: Swedish Agency for Participation, www.mfd.se

Youth Workshops, Finland

In the youth workshops, young people are prepared for studies or working life, they develop their social skills and gain in self-confidence. Most participants continue to work or studies. Equal relationships built on mutual respect, the workshops serving as a link between the young people and public agencies, and voluntary participation, are some of the success factors.

The youth workshop activities strengthen the young person's basic skills, promote a more positive view of the individual's opportunities to find work, and increase the feeling of independence and social competencies (life competency)²³. No less than 75 percent of the participants have gone on to jobs or education.²⁴

Success factors

The youth workshops generally work with socially marginalised groups rather than the general population, but the workshops do not fall under the official agencies that normally work with these young people.²⁵ Instead, they serve as a link between the different sectors. While this dual role is often highlighted as one of the strengths of the workshops, it also presents a challenge.

Participating in activities at the workshops is voluntary, which is said to be one of the success factors of the project. The voluntary aspect stimulates engagement in the activities, and the participants are expected to take an active role in their own education and development. For participants with negative experiences from schools and other contacts with public agencies, the voluntary nature and the lack of authority being exercised are supportive elements.

The relationships between staff and participants is characterised by mutual respect, and a working climate in which the young people are given a second chance to succeed with studies or work.

More about the youth workshops

Youth workshops are found in 270 municipalities over the whole country. In 2012, over 14,000 young people participated in workshop activities²⁶. The youth workshops collaborate with, for example, labour market agencies, education providers, private companies, and the social and health care sectors.

In 2013-2016, the youth workshops comprised part of the government initiative for young people, the Youth Guarantee.

23 *Komonen (2010).*

24 *Dunne, A. et.al. (2014).*

25 *Such as labour market, education, social services, and health services.*

26 *Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2016).*

The aim was that the activities in the workshops would help to reduce the size of the group of young people not in employment or education, and increase the social inclusion of young people in society.

Just as important are the social activities to boost the individual and help prepare them for studies or work. The staff in the youth workshops have various expertise. Some are very skilled in practical professions such as welding or carpentry, others have psychosocial expertise such as psychologists and nurses. The focus for young people under 25 is on helping them to complete upper secondary education or to provide guidance on further studies. The ambition of the youth workshops is to find meaningful approaches that support the participants' self-esteem, independence, and ability to take responsibility for their own lives. A common activity for the participants is to try out a trade that interests them. During this time, they are supported by a supervisor, and they receive financial support from the Employment and Economic Development Office, TE Office, or some other public agency.

Participants come to the youth workshops for example via the TE office, the social services, an educational institution, or youth services. The young people can also contact a workshop directly.

National and international cooperation

Valtakunnallinen työpajayhdistys ry, TPY (the National Workshop Association) is an umbrella organisation for workshops in Finland, and is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The ambition of the association is to conduct skills development within the workshops initiative, develop and disseminate examples of good practice, and serve as a lobby organisation and centre of expertise.

The National Workshop Association coordinates development projects and international contacts, including via membership in the International Production School Organisation (IPSO). The bilingual and Swedish-language workshops have their own collaboration and research network, the *ULA Kompetenscenter (ULA Competence Centre)*.



Facts about the Youth Workshops

Where: Finland, over the entire country.

Actor responsible: The youth workshops are a model with local variations, and the ownership form also varies. The workshops are gathered in networks with an associated centre of expertise. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for developing the content of the workshop activities.

When: The youth workshops are now permanent.

Objective: The youth workshops work primarily to improve young people's skills ahead of studies and working life, and to strengthen their social skills and self-confidence.

Target group: Young people under 29 who neither work nor study.

Budget: Workshop funding depends on the ownership form. All workshops receive state funding. In 2013-2015, the Finnish Government contributed EUR 19.5 million to the workshops and outreach activities. In 2016, the grant was EUR 11.5 million. Other funding bodies are the Finland Slot Machine Association, RAY, municipalities and the third sector.

Method: The workshops have prioritised working methods that lead to positive experiences, and use a supervisory method of working, coaching, or providing support. In the workshops, the young people themselves participate in decisions and planning that concern them. There is a strong sense of community and participation, both in strategies and working methods. The activities in the youth workshops are based on a holistic perspective for the participants; examples are restoring a normal daily rhythm or making plans.

Evaluation: The youth workshops have been evaluated several times (e.g. Kuure 2009; Leinonen & Pekkala 2004; Nyssölä 1999; Virtanen 1998)²⁷. *Delegationen för ungdomsärenden (NUORA) (Advisory Council for Youth Affairs)* is a consultative body under the Ministry of Education and Culture. A key task of the council is to annually evaluate *Barn- och ungdomspolitiska utvecklingsprogrammet (the Child and Youth Policy Development Programme)*, of which the youth workshops are a part. See also: Dunne, A. et.al. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union – Case studies*. European Commission: Brussels. pp.153-160. Pekkala, T. Ed, *Grunderna i arbetsträning och individuell träning – tjänster och metoder i verkstäder på 2000-talet*. and Komonen, K. (2010), *Arbetsverkstäder som metod inom ungdomsarbete I*: Hoikkala, T. & Sell, A. (red.) (2010), *Ungdomsarbete är nödvändigt: Teoretisk underbyggnad, metodernas begränsningar och möjligheter*. Nätverket för ungdomsforskning/ ungdomsforskningsällskapet.

Contact: ULA Competence Centre www.ula.fi, Ministry of Education and Culture <http://www.minedu.fi> and Finnish Youth Research Society <http://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi/sv>

27 Komonen, K. (2010).





Ungt fólk til athafna (Youth in Activity), Iceland

In the Ungt fólk til athafna project, the employment service worked together with the private sector and the third sector to help young people aged 16-29 return to studies or into the labour market. A special youth office had a drop-in service in a shopping centre. After the programme, around 40 percent of the participants moved on to studies or work.

A survey of the participants after the programme showed that 80 percent were satisfied with the activities. They felt that the experiences would help them in the labour market, and said that the activities had helped to boost their wellbeing. Many felt they had improved their ability to communicate with other people.²⁸

The young people who chose educational activities were most positive about the programme, and most optimistic about the future. The participants who started work after the programme said that they felt better, both physically and mentally, than those who were still unemployed.

More about Ungt fólk til athafna

Iceland was hit hard by the international financial crisis in 2008, and unemployment rose dramatically. Up until then, Iceland had had almost negligible unemployment, but now started to experience youth unemployment for the first time for many years. With no earlier experience of helping young unemployed people, several initiatives were started.

Ungt fólk til athafna was a programme in which young people who registered as unemployed would be offered a job, a place on an educational programme, or internship within three months.

28 Nordic Welfare Centre (2015).



The ambition was that the activities would shorten the distance to studies, and provide a stable link to the labour market. The young people could meet with special youth counsellors at a drop-in office in a shopping centre in Reykjavik or at the local employment office. After four months, all registered young unemployed had been offered a place on the programme.

All actors in society came together to help the young people. Labour market initiatives were offered in collaboration with the business community and civil society in the form of internships and summer jobs. Participants could also be offered a place on *Fjölsmiðjan*, a practical education and production centre for young people. At *Fjölsmiðjan*, young people can try various types of work tasks and professions. The aim is that the participants gain new experiences that will help them make informed and deliberate choices regarding studies and work.

The educational initiatives were offered in collaboration with the country's upper secondary schools, and many places on courses were funded by the programme. Emphasis was placed on designing educational programmes that were suitable for young people who had previously dropped out of school. The courses offered could have a practical, vocational or academic specialisation.

Expectations before the programme were that participation would boost the chances of the young person in the labour market, improve their handling of social situations, and increase their feeling of wellbeing. The proportion of young people who had dropped out of upper secondary education was relatively high, so the main focus in *Ungt fólk til athafna* was on helping young unemployed people back into education.

Facts about Ungt fólk til athafna

Where: Iceland, national project.

Actor responsible: Ungt fólk til athafna (Youth in Activity) was a project run under the auspices of the Icelandic Social- och velfærðsdepartementet (Ministry of Welfare), by the Vinnumálastofnun (Directorate of Labour), and was managed in collaboration with the education services, civil society and the labour market.

When: January 2010 – May 2011.

Objective: Young people who registered as jobseekers at the employment office were to be entered in the programme and, within three months, be offered a job, a place on an educational programme, or some other meaningful activity. The project was indirectly a measure to encourage more young people to complete upper secondary education. One objective of the project was to develop new methods to prevent dropout.

Target group: Young jobseekers aged 16-29 who received unemployment benefit. Young people without an upper secondary qualification were prioritised.

Budget: Approximately ISK 596 million in 2010, and ISK 550 million in 2011.

Background: An unexpected rise in youth unemployment due to the global financial crisis in 2008. Method: Young jobseekers consulted a special youth counsellor who would help them find a suitable activity. The programme comprised a broad spectrum of measures within the labour market, education, work training, and self-esteem. Participation was obligatory if the young person was to retain unemployment benefit.

Evaluation: The programme was evaluated by the Social Science Research Institute at Háskóli Íslands (University of Iceland). Helgadóttir, E. (2012), Ungt fólk til athafna: Atvinnuleit, virkniúræði, stjórnrot og vinnuviðhorf ungs fólks á atvinnuleysissskrá. Heilbrigðisvísindasvið Háskóla Ísland

Contact: Vinnumálastofnun (Directorate of Labour) www.vinnumalastofnun.is

Certain actors and measures explained

Folkhögskolor (Folk high schools)

There are 148 folk high schools – independent adult education colleges – in Sweden. Each folk high school decides independently what courses it offers, and is free to design its own teaching. Ordinary upper secondary school courses are taught, as well as preparatory upper secondary school courses.

NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration)

NAV is a public agency in Norway with a broad area of responsibility; for example, it is responsible for both social insurance and labour market activities. The work of NAV takes place at municipal, regional and national levels, and in collaboration with other actors and organisations, such as municipalities and county councils.

Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning (National Youth Guidance)

The Danish Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning (UU) operates mainly at municipal level (local youth guidance centres) and is responsible for all young people aged 15-25 who are not in education or work. UU evaluates the young person's motivation and ability to get started with education, prepares an education plan together with the young person and their parents, and follows up to ensure that the young person is fulfilling their educational obligation. If the young person cannot be contacted in writing or by telephone, UU is responsible for finding the young person.

Det kommunala aktivitetsansvaret (Municipal responsibility for activity)

Chapter 2 of the Swedish Education Act assigns municipalities an activation responsibility in relation to young people under 20, who have completed compulsory schooling but who are not attending upper secondary school. This means that the municipality is required to provide appropriate individual measures that are intended to motivate the young person to enter education. The municipalities are also required to maintain a register of the young people covered by this responsibility and to document their measures appropriately.

Oppfølgingstjenesten (Follow-up Service)

The Follow-up Service is run by county authorities in Norway for young people in the 16-21 age group who are not in education, training, or employment. The Follow-up Service is responsible for keeping records of all young people in the target group, offering them guidance, and ensuring that they are offered training, work or other skills-enhancing activities.

Produktionsskoler (Production Schools)

Danish and Icelandic production schools are for young people who need to discover what they want to work with or study in the future. The length of participation is individual, but is no longer than one year. Emphasis is placed on practical work, combined with theoretical school subjects as necessary.



The work of the Nordic Welfare Centre – young people, education and the labour market

The Nordic Welfare Centre is an institution under the Nordic Council of Ministers. The centre works on commissions from the Nordic Council of Ministers, and national agencies or ministries in the Nordic countries. The Nordic Welfare Centre serves as a forum and network for social actors in the Nordic region.

In addition to the **Nordic Web Resource on Dropout from Upper Secondary Education** (p. X), the centre has been involved in projects with a common theme of young people who neither work nor study. Most of the projects have been commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers, with the aim of sharing experiences between the Nordic countries and generate new knowledge. Some of these projects are described briefly below, with associated publications available for free download or by ordering from the websites of the Nordic Welfare Centre and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The project **Unga in i Norden – psykisk hälsa, arbete och utbildning** (*Young People in the Nordic Region - Mental Health, Employment and Education*) focused on young people aged 16-29 in the Nordic region. The aim was to inspire and show decision makers how welfare for young people in the Nordic region can be improved. The project highlighted the relationship between young people's mental health and their situation in school, and later transition to independence. The project highlighted initiatives and projects that successfully helped young people to take a step into society through either education or work.

The Young People in the Nordic Region project generated the following publications. *Når noen må ta regien* (*When someone has to take charge*) (2016), *Relationship between Young People and Welfare Services* (2016), *In Focus – Mental Health among Young People* (2016), *Creating Participation for Youth with Mental Health Problems* (2016), *Vi arbetar med unga i Norden: Institutioner, myndigheter och organisationer med fokus på psykiska hälsa, arbete och studier* (2015), *Skolelevers psykiska hälsa* (2015) and *Unga vuxna med nedsatt arbetsförmåga* (2015).

In collaboration with the Nordland Research Institute and students from Lightwork Studios, three short films were made about mental ill-health and exclusion among young people. The films are available in Norwegian and English. The titles are *Utslitt allerede* (*Worn out already*), *Hvorfor meg?* (*Why me?*) and *Jeg drunkner i depresjon* (*I'm drowning in depression*).

Expert conference on the theme of young person's mental health and early retirement. The conference was arranged by the Nordic Welfare Centre, commissioned by the Norwegian presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2012. The conference gathered 25 researchers and officials from the Nordic countries. The Nordic anthology *For That Which Grows* (2013) was produced in conjunction with the conference. The different chapters were written by authors who participated in the conference, and consider the theme from different angles.

The project **Inkludering for utsatte grupper på arbeidsmarkedet i de nordiske landene** (2010-2013) (*Inclusion of vulnerable groups on the labour market in the Nordic countries*) surveyed the labour market situation for young, old and people with disabilities in the Nordic countries. The survey comprised a situation analysis with a presentation of initiatives and policies in the area, for example in view of the global financial crisis that began in 2008. The project generated three reports: *Unge på kanten. Om inkludering av utsatte ungdommer* (*Young People On The Edge. On Inclusion of Vulnerable Young People*. (2012), highlighted the situation for young people; *Inkludering for alle? (Inclusion for All?)* (2013) described the situation for people with disabilities; and the publication, *Unga till inkludering* (*Inclusion of Young People*) (2011), described good examples of projects in the Nordic countries that work with helping young people back to education or into work.



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