



ENGLISH VERSION



THE SWEDISH NATIONAL  
BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS  
[www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se](http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se)

# SUMMARY



# FOKUS09

Methods against the exclusion of young people – examples from Europe

## Swedish youth policy in brief

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is a government authority. We work to ensure that young people (13 to 25 years of age) have access to influence and welfare.

We do this by producing and communicating knowledge on young people's living conditions. We also distribute funding to the civil society in the form of support for organisations, projects and international cooperation. All the support we distribute is given on behalf of the Swedish government. The EU programme Youth in Action is a tool for practical youth policy at local, regional, national and European levels. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is the national office for Youth in Action.

## Actors and Structures in charge of youth in Sweden

The Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality is responsible for the coordination of the Government's youth policy, issues affecting youth organisations and international cooperation in the youth field.

The Swedish youth policy approach is cross-sectoral. Several ministries are responsible for policy areas that concern young people, such as work, education, health, housing, culture, etc. Normally certain responsibilities will also be delegated to one or more government agencies within each policy area.

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*) is the government agency responsible for the follow up of the objectives set for the national youth policy by the Swedish Parliament. The Board produces and communicates knowledge about young people's living conditions and supports municipalities in the development and implementation of local youth policy.

The main duty of the Children's Ombudsman (*Barnombudsmannen*) is to promote the rights and interests of children and young people (up to the age of 18) as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Other public bodies that have relevance for youth policy are among others the Swedish Public Employment Service [www.arbetsformedlingen.se](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se), The Swedish National Agency for Education [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se), The Swedish National Institute of Public Health [www.fhi.se](http://www.fhi.se), The Swedish Arts Council [www.kulturradet.se](http://www.kulturradet.se) and The Swedish Consumer Agency [www.konsumentverket.se](http://www.konsumentverket.se).

### **Parliament commission in charge of youth issues**

In the parliamentary committees the members of the Parliament (*Riksdagen*) prepare all decisions. The composition in each committee reflects the one of the parliament as a whole. After a committee has presented its proposal the members of the parliament adopt a position on the proposal. Youth issues are prepared in different committees depending on the specific issue.

### **Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field**

Sweden has 20 county councils/regions (18 counties and two regions) with competences in fields relevant for youth. They have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation. The main task of the county councils/regions is health care. Some of the county councils/regions have, or have the last years had, specific projects for young people.

### **Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field**

Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. There is no hierarchical relation between the municipalities and the regional public authorities. The local authorities have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation.

Many decisions that concern young people are taken at municipal level. Youth policy goals established by the Parliament (*Riksdagen*) are requirements for the central government but only advisory for the municipalities. Youth policy in municipalities can, if the municipalities wish so, start from the national objectives but the way it is executed in practice is shaped on the basis of local conditions. The municipalities are responsible for: water and sewerage, schools, spatial planning and building, health and environmental protection, refuse collection and waste disposal, rescue services, social services and security. Voluntary activities are: recreation activities, culture, housing, energy, industrial facilities and employment.

# Preface

The National Board for Youth Affairs highlighted the conditions for young persons who live in some of Sweden's poorest areas in the report Fokus 08. In Fokus 09 we continue on the same theme, but this analysis also includes three other EU countries, Denmark, England and the Netherlands. We describe methods and policies for encouraging more young people to find work, educate themselves and to participate in the society. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is commissioned to follow up and highlight the development of the national youth policy, and Fokus 09 is the fifth thematic analysis within the monitoring system which started with the national youth policy bill *Makt att bestämma – rätt till välfärd, The Power to Decide – The Right to Welfare* passed by the Riksdag in 2004.

The work with *Fokus 09* was carried out by Tiina Ekman, (PhD) and Daniel Wohlgemuth (PhD). Study visits were planned in consultation with Jørgen Christensen, Børne- og Ungdomsforvaltningen in Copenhagen municipality, Pink Hilverdink, Nederlands Jeugdinstituut and Howard Williamson, the University of Glamorgan. Before and during the study visits, we contacted and interviewed a variety of actors in Copenhagen, London, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. We want to thank all those who in various ways contributed to this report.

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# Introduction

The government has commissioned the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs to identify measures deemed successful in combating the social exclusion of young people in a selection of EU countries. The emphasis of the *Fokus 09* report is on measures to do with young people's work, education and participation, and on the interplay between these areas. The countries we have looked at are Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom we have chosen to focus on the situation in England. All three countries are advanced welfare states, but they have nevertheless chosen to shape their education and labour market policies in different ways, and consequently also have different approaches to combat the exclusion of young people from work and education. The extent of youth unemployment varies in the three countries, and they have chosen different degrees of emphasis on young people's participation. Common to the three countries is that they have received, as has Sweden, large groups of non-European immigrants over the last 10 to 20 years, and that they have created special measures to reduce the exclusion of young people living in the most socially deprived areas.

## Selection of countries

The work began with an extensive review of existing studies that describe labour market, education and influence policy measures for young people in socially deprived urban areas in the EU countries. The review covered studies financed by the Council of Europe and the EU, other recent research and three databases, in order to identify measures and activities.

### Included in the review was:

- *EKCYP Good Practices database* which is a joint project between the Council of Europe and the EU. The database contains an overview of European programmes for young people in participation, influence, youth employment, education and training, and youth politics
- *EUKN (European Urban Knowledge Network database)* which compiles research into and programmes for urban development in 17 EU countries
- *Susta-info* which is a database for sustainable development with information about both research and programmes. It is financed by the EU and the UN.<sup>1</sup>

We have also looked at activities within the EU-financed research programme URBACT, in particular the thematic networks *Young Citizens' Project*, *Young people – from Exclusion to Inclusion* and *My Generation*.<sup>2</sup>

**Table I. Available databases, comparative studies and thematic compilations highlighting the situation of young people in education, work and participation**

	Labour market	Education	Participation	Integration
<b>Denmark</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YOYO</li> <li>• UP2YOUTH</li> <li>• IRIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• URBACT</li> <li>• EDUMIGROM</li> <li>• Eurydice</li> <li>• OECD Thematic Review on Migrant Education</li> <li>• IRIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EKCYP</li> <li>• YOYO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUKN</li> <li>• EU National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YOYO</li> <li>• UP2YOUTH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• URBACT</li> <li>• Eurydice</li> <li>• OECD Thematic Review on Migrant Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EKCYP</li> <li>• YOYO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUKN</li> <li>• EU National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YOYO (Northern Ireland)</li> <li>• UP2YOUTH</li> <li>• IRIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• URBACT</li> <li>• EDUMIGROM</li> <li>• Eurydice</li> <li>• IRIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EKCYP</li> <li>• YOYO (Northern Ireland)</li> <li>• URBACT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUKN</li> <li>• EU National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion</li> </ul>

Among other EU-financed research we have studied *YOYO*, *UP2YOUTH* and *EDUMIGROM*.

We have additionally looked at a number of thematic compilations produced within EU and OECD cooperation. The most interesting ones for our purposes have been *Eurydice*, and EU-based knowledge network on European education systems and European education policy, national reports on strategies for social protection and social integration produced as part of EU cooperation, and the OECD's thematic reports on the education situation of immigrants.<sup>3</sup> We have also used a bigger thematic study of measures to reduce the exclusion of young people, carried out at the request of the European Commission (IRIS).<sup>4</sup>

**Countries for closer study were chosen based on the inventory. The most important criteria were:**

- that the preliminary study had shown that there were a number of interesting and relevant projects in the country and that these were included in relevant comparative studies and thematic compilations
- that the country's urban development, including the extent of immigration, was similar to Sweden's
- that the country's forms for social welfare were not too different from the Swedish model
- that the country had a considerable experience of working with youth issues and an awareness of the specific situation of young people.

After the first review of all EU countries, those judged to be most relevant to the study were Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany. Following a second weighting based on the above criteria and particularly on the existence of interesting and relevant projects, we selected Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

## Measures against the exclusion of young people

Measures to counter the exclusion of young people take many different forms. There are different views among European politicians, researchers and practitioners both on what the main reasons for these problems are as well as how they are best tackled.<sup>5</sup> An important issue in this discussion is whether exclusion is primarily related to young people's circumstances and opportunities in society – what are known as structural factors – or if it is more likely to be individual failures in school or the labour market, for instance, which lead some young people astray. Another issue concerns whether socially deprived and segregated housing environments create particularly difficult conditions for growing up and therefore reduce young people's opportunities for establishing themselves in society.

A further important difference of opinion concerns whether the opportunities of all young people should be improved through general measures, or if it is better to apply selective measures for those already excluded or risking at risk of exclusion. In welfare systems of the Scandinavian model, the preference has historically been for general measures directed at all young people rather than selective measures. One of the justifications for this has been to avoid pointing out particular groups as the problematic ones. Another justification for applying mainly general, preventive measures is found in research which indicates that the prevention of young people's social and economic exclusion in the long run is economically beneficial for society (Nilsson & Wadeskog 2008).

Measures and regulatory frameworks for countering the exclusion of young people can be adopted and carried out at different levels in a society. Some are based on national undertakings and apply to all young people in a country. Others may have been introduced at the regional or municipal level and only apply to young people living within the administrative and geographical boundaries of these. A further geographical level is local area-based measures. e.g. directed at socially deprived areas.

One thing that differs between different European countries is the extent to which civil society participates in the projects directed at young people. In the UK, for example, foundations, charities and private companies run most of the activities which are actually in contact with young people. State and local authorities plan, procure and control quality, but rarely carry out or run the projects themselves. In Sweden, by comparison, the role of civil society is considerably smaller.

Over the past few years several European countries have seen relatively big changes to their policies for countering the exclusion of young people. Countries

which were previously seen as typical examples of one transitional model or another have adopted elements of other models and are no longer as clear-cut. For example, the United Kingdom used to be the archetypal liberal transition regime but has recently made fairly sizeable increases to welfare for children and young people, as well as efforts to give all young people more equal opportunities in the education system. Reforms have also been introduced for lifelong learning, which in this context amounts to a shift towards the universalistic model. Denmark has put more money into the activation of young unemployed people, which is seen by some researchers as a step towards the liberal model (Walther & Pohl 2005). Sweden, too, can be taken as an example of this tendency, with the independent schools reform and the freedom to choose schools representing a few steps away from the universalistic model.

Another difference between the countries which was fairly clear during the work on Fokus 09 is the extent to which education systems and labour market policy measures are shaped to meet the needs of the labour market or if, instead, it is the individual's right to make his or her own career choices which is the guiding principle. In this context, the Netherlands and Denmark appear to pay greater heed to labour market needs than the United Kingdom and Sweden do. The Netherlands and Denmark have long-established structures giving employers, professions and trades the possibility to participate in shaping the education system. Employers in Denmark and the Netherlands also have a financial responsibility through the obligation to pay wages during work placements and to apprentices. Efforts are underway in both the United Kingdom and Sweden to increase employers' engagement in and responsibility for the shaping of vocational training programmes and apprenticeship systems, but the structures are not nearly as well established. Greater emphasis has instead been placed on the individual's right to make independent choices in his or her career, and this is reflected in a wide selection of education and training options which caters more to the demands of the students than to the needs of the labour market.

## Three European welfare states

### Public and private spending on welfare

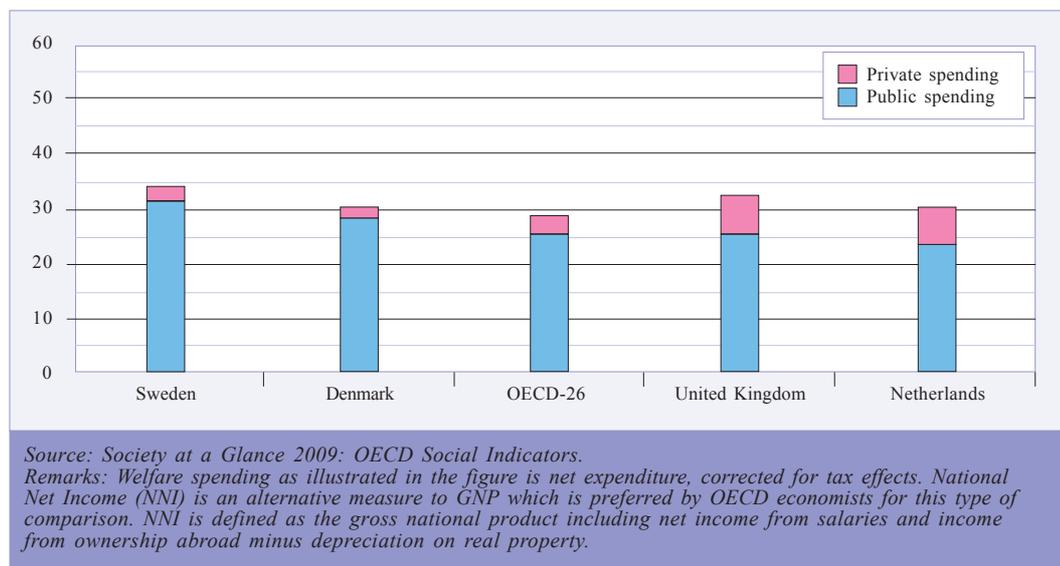
Each member state within the EU is responsible for its own social security system, but in the 1990s the Council of Ministers agreed on a long-term coordination of social policy and the social security systems. It is not, however, a question of harmonising member states' legislation. The social security systems are the result of national traditions which have existed for a long time and take each country's culture into account. Within the framework of coordination, each country retains the right to determine different types of benefits and to grant them. For that reason, both the costs of welfare spending and the conditions for the individual citizen's right to social security vary between the member states.

Figure 1 shows total welfare spending – i.e. both public and private – in the three countries and in Sweden, along with the average for 26 of the OECD's 30 member states.<sup>6</sup> Welfare spending here means financial support in the form of allowances, benefits and tax deductions as well as offering programmes and services.

Public welfare spending is defined by the OECD as public if the financial flow is controlled by a government agency at any level.<sup>7</sup> Among the OECD countries, public welfare spending is increasingly similar. In the early 1980s Sweden, Denmark, Germany and France had the highest levels of public welfare spending. Since the mid-1990s, however, spending in these countries has reached a plateau, while countries with the lowest levels of public welfare spending have continued to increase their spending. Today three OECD countries – France, Germany and Luxemburg – have a higher level of net public spending on welfare than Sweden (OECD 2009c).

In many countries, however, it is not necessarily the state that takes care of citizens' social safety net. There are considerable differences in the extent to which the social safety nets in different countries are a private concern. Examples of private welfare spending include private pensions schemes, employers' legal responsibility to pay part of sickness benefits or for employees' parental leave. About two thirds of all private welfare spending in the OECD is completely voluntary, while the remaining third is statutory (OECD 2007).

The Netherlands and the United Kingdom have the highest shares of private welfare spending within the OECD. In both countries spending exceeds 7 per cent of the net national income (NNI), a level which is only surpassed by the USA with 10 per cent. In both Sweden and Denmark the share of private welfare spending is lower than the OECD average.



**Figure 1. Welfare spending as a share of net national income (NNI), 2005. Per cent.**

Total welfare spending is the sum of public and private spending. This may be seen as a measure of the total resources that accrue to the citizens of a country in the form of social welfare. Figure 1 shows that among the countries we have chosen to compare, the total cost of welfare spending is highest in Sweden. The share in Sweden is at 34 per cent of NNI, followed by the United Kingdom (33 per cent), the Netherlands (31 per cent) and Denmark (31 per cent). Spending in all of them is higher than the OECD average, which is 29 per cent. It is clear that the differences in social welfare spending between the countries diminish if one also takes private welfare spending into account. Figure 1 also shows that the welfare systems in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom depend on private payments to a much greater extent than those in Sweden and Denmark.

### Exclusion among young people in the EU

We compare exclusion among young people in Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden using a selection of statistics. Although these have been obtained from Eurostat and the OECD, who both strive to achieve the highest possible degree of comparability in their statistics, there are some problems with the comparability of the statistical data which should be considered before interpreting the result. It is Statistics Sweden's assessment that when comparing youth unemployment figures, some caution is called for in interpreting the estimates (SCB/Statistics Sweden 2009a).

One problem is that employment rates look higher in countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands because apprentices (large groups of young people are in apprenticeships in these countries) are registered as

employed while students in training at education institutions (which dominate in Sweden) are not counted as part of the workforce (Olofsson and Wadensjö 2007).

Another problem is how the data is collected. In Sweden and Denmark, all types of households are included in the target population because the data is collected from individuals. If data is collected from private households instead, as is the case in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, young people living in communal households such as student halls will not be included (SCB/Statistics Sweden 2009a).

A third problem is that the existence of reliable population registries varies greatly between the countries. Sweden has RTB, a database registry of the total population, while the Netherlands and the United Kingdom instead primarily use postal addresses as a sampling frame (SCB/Statistics Sweden 2009a).

The Netherlands, unlike the other countries, has an addendum to its definition of unemployment which states that a person must also want to work in order to be counted as unemployed (SCB/Statistics Sweden 2009a). A possibly even bigger source of error is that the Dutch definition of unemployment requires a person to have spent at least twelve hours seeking work during the measurement period in order to be counted as a jobseeker, while in Sweden, for example, it is enough to have spent one hour seeking work. In Denmark, too, youth unemployment is likely to be underestimated as full-time students seeking work are not counted as unemployed there.<sup>8</sup> The cumulative effect of this is that both Denmark and the Netherlands underestimate, in relation to the other countries, the number of unemployed and the rate of unemployment due to their narrower definitions.

## Early school leavers

Young people who lack a secondary education are a vulnerable group in today's labour market. One of the common objectives of the EU member states is to reduce the number of young people who have no education beyond compulsory schooling. The goal is that by 2010 no more than 10 per cent of young people aged 18–24 will lack a secondary education (European Commission 2008).

In 2007, the share of that group with no more than compulsory education was 17 per cent among both young men and young women within the EU15<sup>9</sup>. In Sweden the share was 9 per cent, in Denmark and the Netherlands 12 per cent, and in the United Kingdom it was 17 per cent. It is Statistics Sweden's assessment that when comparing youth unemployment figures, some caution is called for in interpreting the estimates (SCB/Statistics Sweden 2009a).

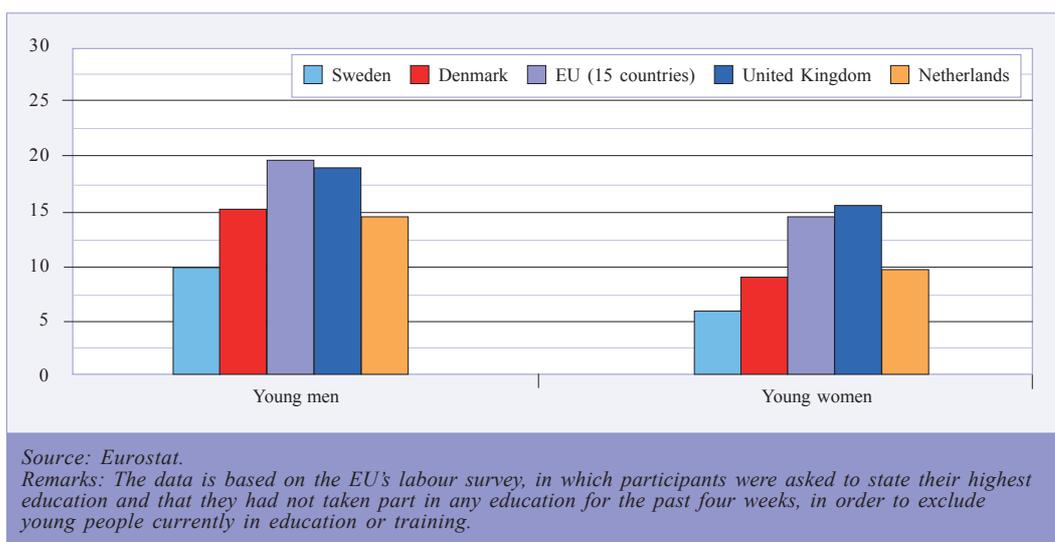
In some southern European countries, more than 30 per cent of students leave school straight after compulsory education, e.g. Spain, Malta and Portugal, while countries mainly in northern Europe have considerably lower shares of early school leavers. Seven member states – the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden – have shares of less than 10 per cent. In all member states except Bulgaria, the share of early school leavers is higher among young men than among young women (European Commission 2009).

## Transition from education to work

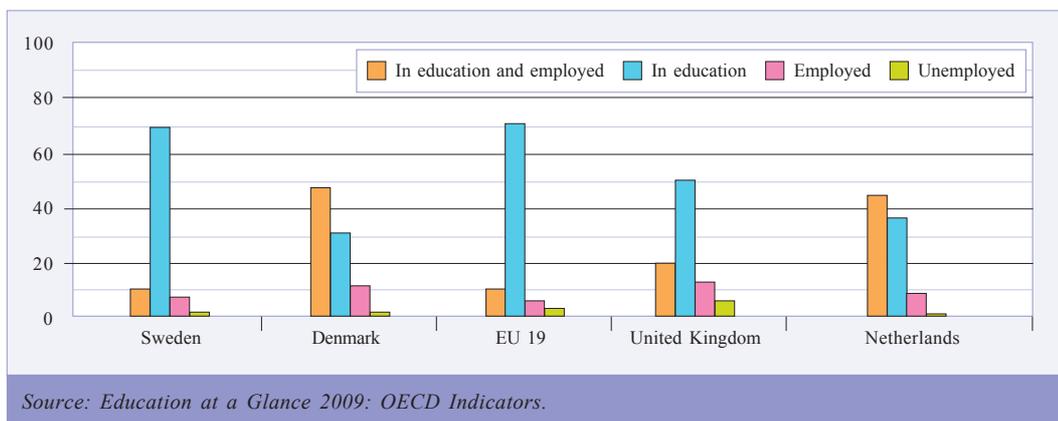
The transition from education to the labour market usually takes place between the ages of 18 and 24. The lion's share of young people up to the age of 19 is in education, and that share is slightly larger for young women. Young people without a secondary education are particularly vulnerable in today's labour market. In 2007 only 20 per cent of young Europeans with no more than compulsory education were in work within a year of leaving school. The correspondent figure for young people with a secondary education was 66 per cent (European Commission 2009).

In 2007 about 80 per cent of all young people of secondary school age within the EU19<sup>10</sup> were in education. The share in education was lowest in the United Kingdom, just over 70 per cent, if we compare the four countries in our study. Figure 3 also shows that more than half of all young people up to the age of 19 in Denmark and the Netherlands were employed at the same time as they were in education, which is due to the fact that they are in apprenticeships and are therefore registered as employed. The share of young people in the 15-19 age group who are in work without being in education at the same time is low throughout the EU – the EU average is 7 per cent. The highest share is in the United Kingdom (13 per cent), followed by Denmark (11 per cent), the Netherlands (9 per cent), and Sweden (8 per cent).

A large proportion of young people with a secondary education does not in itself constitute proof that a country has a well-functioning education system, since statistical data do not say anything about the quality of education or whether young peoples' education is



**Figure 2. Share of young women and men with compulsory education at most and no post-secondary training, 18–24 years of age, 2007. Per cent.**



**Figure 3. Share of young people in education, in work and in unemployment, 15–19 years of age, 2007. Per cent.**

adapted to the needs of the labour market. But statistics do give an indication of whether a country's education system has achieved the goal of providing all young people with such basic knowledge and skills as are required to make it into the labour market.

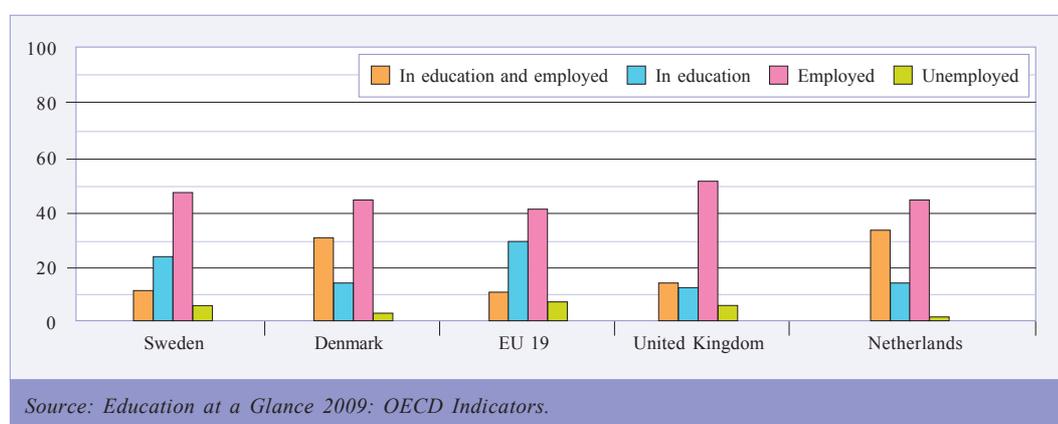
Within the EU19, about 40 per cent of young people aged 20-24 study and about the same share are in employment. Figure 4 additionally shows that most of the students in Denmark and the Netherlands are simultaneously in employment. In the Netherlands' case, this is explained by the fast-growing dual education model in higher education (*hogeschool*), in which full-time students are also employed by a company as part of their education.

In Denmark higher education is divided into three levels, *short higher education* which is usually a two-year vocational programme, *medium duration higher education* which might be teacher training programmes, and *long higher education* which is a 3 to 6-year academic programme. On the academic university

programmes it is common for the students to be working 10–15 hours a week at a company, in an organisation or in public administration, and they are allowed to count this work as part of their degree (Olshov 2006, SOU 2006:102).

Out of the 35 per cent of 20 to 24-year-olds who study in Sweden, one in three works alongside their studies in order to improve their financial situation and their future possibilities in the labour market. In Denmark and the Netherlands two thirds of all students have simultaneous employment.

The share that studies is lowest in the United Kingdom, where only 28 per cent of 20 to 24-year-olds are in education. The share in employment is highest in the United Kingdom, just over 50 per cent, followed by Sweden with 47 per cent and Denmark and the Netherlands with 44 per cent each.



**Figure 4. Share of young people in education, in work and in unemployment, 20–24 years of age, 2007. Per cent.**

## Youth unemployment

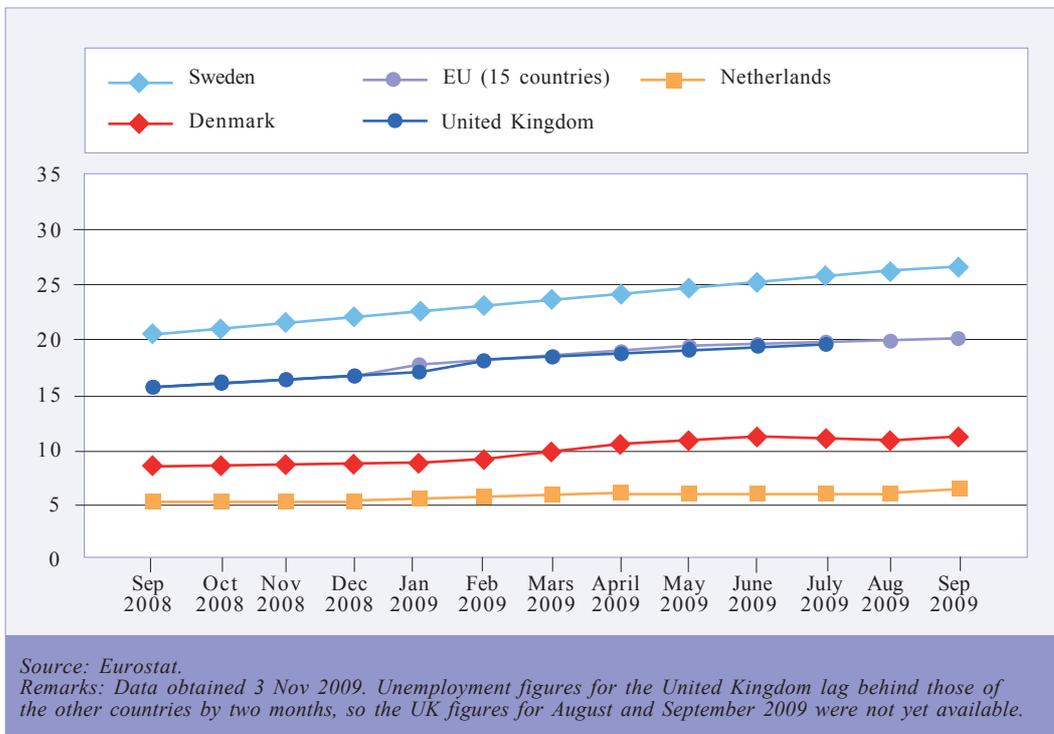
Within the EU15, about 20 per cent of young people in the 15-24 age group were unemployed in September 2009. This level is markedly higher than in the previous year, when the share in September was 15.8 per cent. Looking at developments in Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden it is apparent that the economic crisis has hit young people with varying severity in these four countries. While youth unemployment in the United Kingdom has followed a course which almost exactly matches the average for the EU15, the situation in the other three countries, as presented in Figure 5, deserves special commentary.

Youth unemployment in the Netherlands presents the lowest figure in the comparison, just under 7 per cent in September 2009 and with a moderate increase on the year before, when just over 5 per cent of young people in the Netherlands were unemployed. The situation for young people in Denmark was also better than the average for the EU15: 11 per cent were unemployed in September 2009 compared with 8 per cent in September 2008. By contrast, the labour market situation for young people in Sweden is gloomier. Even before the crisis broke out fully in the autumn of 2008, youth unemployment was 20 per cent, and by September 2009 the situation had deteriorated further, to 26 per cent. Developments in the United Kingdom match

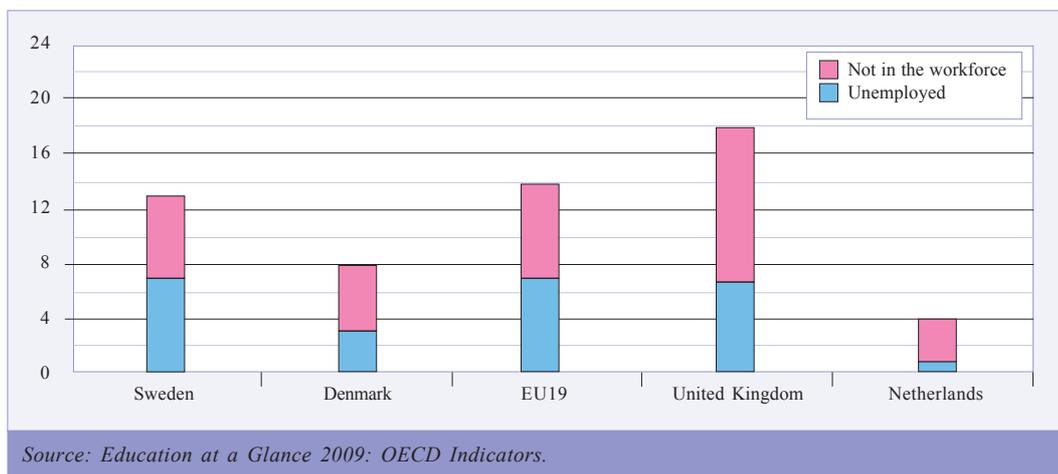
the average for the EU15, with an increase from 16 to 20 per cent during the period from September 2008 to September 2009 (Figure 5).

Youth unemployment in the Netherlands was just over twice as high as unemployment for adults aged 25-74, while in Sweden youth unemployment was five times as high as adult unemployment. For the United Kingdom it was almost four times as high, and for Denmark three times as high (SCB/Statistics Sweden 2009a).

As we have already noted above, these marked differences are due to a number of factors. To some extent they have to do with differences in how the statistics are produced, but the major factors are differences in how labour markets work (including labour law), demographics, education systems, types and levels of student aid, the makeup of the workforce, policy instruments to get employers to hire apprentices and receive trainees, and policy instruments to get full-time students to seek employment. For the last of these, the students' will to seek employment, Statistics Sweden has shown in a study that almost half of unemployed young people in Sweden are in full-time studies, either in secondary or higher education, while at the same time looking for extra work. They view themselves primarily as full-time students (Bermudez-Svankvist & Olsson 2009, SCB 2009a, SCB 2009b).



**Figure 5. Youth unemployment in the EU by month, 15 to 24-year-olds, 2008–2009. Per cent.**



**Figure 6. Young people who neither work nor study, 20–24 years of age, 2007. Per cent.**

### Young people who neither work nor study

An earlier study from The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, *Fokus 08*, looked at the proportion of young people aged 20–25 who, over a period of a year, neither work nor study. In 2006 this share was 14 per cent for Sweden as a whole and between 30 and 40 per cent in the most socially deprived urban areas (Ungdomsstyrelsen/the National Board for Youth Affairs 2008b). In the EU, young people who neither work nor study have been identified as a primary target group for efforts to counter long-term social and economic exclusion. An expression which is often used internationally to describe this group is NEET, *Not in Employment, Education or Training*. Figure 6 shows the share of 20 to 24-year-olds in the four countries who, during 2007, did not study and who can be regarded as unemployed or outside the workforce according to the ILO's definition.

To be outside of the workforce means not having a job and not actively looking for work. The share of young people who neither work nor study is highest in the United Kingdom, at 18 per cent. Sweden follows at 13 per cent, which is somewhat less than the OECD average of 15 per cent. Of the countries in this study, Denmark has the second lowest share of young people who neither work nor study, at 8 per cent, while the Netherlands has the lowest level at just under 4 per cent.

### Political participation

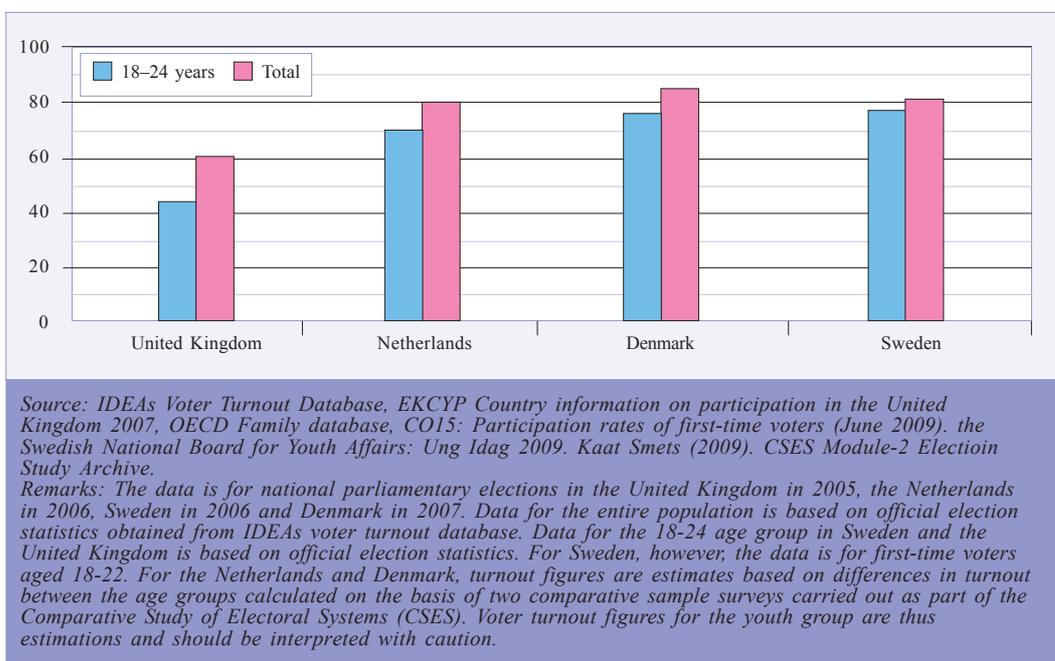
The European Commission White Paper on Youth states that young people's participation should not just be about consultation, but that decision-making should actually take their views into consideration. It emerges in the White Paper that the Commission wants to increase young people's political participation in a number of ways, e.g. through more youth councils at the local and regional levels, through national youth ombudsmen and through increased youth representation in the European Economic and Social Committee (European Commission 2001).

In the new strategy, announced in November 2009, the Commission wants to stimulate increased participation by young people in both civil society and representative democracy. The Commission also wants to support youth organisations and different projects that promote learning about participation, and make a particular effort to involve non-organised young people (Council of the European Union 2009). The Council of Europe resolution about youth policy also stipulates, beyond the right to influence over their everyday life situation, that the active participation of young people in democratic processes and structures shall be promoted (Council of Europe 2008).

One indicator of young people's political participation in society is the extent to which they participate in general elections. Figure 7 shows turnout in parliamentary elections between 2005 and 2007, among young people aged 18-24 and among the entire population, respectively. Since Denmark and the Netherlands do not report official election statistics for different age groups, only for total turnout, the data on young people in these countries is estimates which are based on replies to sample surveys carried out in these two countries.<sup>11</sup>

Voter turnout in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands is at a high level internationally, and Denmark's is the very highest at 86.6 per cent. The United Kingdom differs here, with a markedly lower voter turnout of 61.4 per cent. Voter turnout in the 18-24 age group follows the same general pattern, with similar levels in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, while in the United Kingdom it is at significantly lower level. At the latest general election in the United Kingdom, voter turnout for the 18-24 age group was 45 per cent, to be compared with 76 per cent for the same age group in Sweden – a difference of 31 percentage points. Also worth mentioning is that the difference in voter turnout between young people and the entire population is 16 percentage points in the United Kingdom, compared with 6 percentage points in Sweden.

A study focusing on the difference in voter turnout between younger and older citizens, and stretching all the way back to the 1960s, reveals that Sweden since the 1960s has had a fairly stable difference in voter turnout between younger and older voters, of around 6 percentage points. The Netherlands also shows a fairly stable turnout difference over the years of around 9 percentage points. In the United Kingdom, however, the turnout difference is bigger and also increased sharply since 2000. For Denmark the study lacks data for the period since 2000, which makes it somewhat harder to draw any conclusions. Of the ten countries included in the study, Germany and in particular Italy stand out by having small or nonexistent differences in voter turnout between younger and older voters (Smets 2009).



**Figure 7. Voter turnout at national parliamentary elections in four countries. The entire population and the 18-24 age group, 2005-2007. Per cent.**

# Three countries – three systems

## Denmark

### Population

The share of the Danish population with a foreign background was 9.5 per cent in January 2009. The category *with a foreign background* includes those born abroad as well as individuals born in Denmark but whose parents were born abroad. The largest ethnic group is people of Turkish background, followed by people of German background and people of Iraqi background (Ministeriet for Flygtninge Indvandrere og Integration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2009b).

Most Danes with a foreign background live in or around the major cities. In Copenhagen the share of the population with a foreign background is 14 per cent. Four of Copenhagen's districts are characterised as socially deprived due to the high proportion of unemployed people in the local population. These districts are Tingbjerg, Akacieparken, Mjølnerparken and Aldersrogade.

The majority of those with a non-western background – about 60 per cent – live in rented public housing.<sup>12</sup> The correspondent share among Danes is 14 per cent, and among those with a western background it is 15 per cent (Ministeriet for Flygtninge Indvandrere og Integration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2009b).

One of the most topical issues in Danish urban policymaking is the increasing tendency towards social and ethnic segregation in different residential areas. The government has therefore introduced an anti-segregation strategy which includes local labour market programmes and crime-prevention programmes to make deprived areas more attractive.<sup>13</sup>

### Youth policy

Denmark has no government authority with overall responsibility for youth issues. Instead youth policy is made separately in different sectors such as education, labour market and integration. Since the 1990s the education ministry has coordinated the Danish government's youth policy. Towards the end of the 1990s the Danish government appointed a cross-sector committee of representatives from most ministries and from the crime-prevention council to guarantee that youth policymaking has support across sector boundaries (Undervisningsministeriet/The Danish Ministry of Education 2000).

In 1997 a national youth policy action plan, *Ungdomspolitik for nutidens unge i fremtidens samfund* (Youth policy for today's young people in a future society) was adopted. It had been drawn up by the Danish education ministry and was an initiative for a coherent youth policy which would include all young people. The overall goal of the action plan read as follows: "*All young people shall have the possibility of a full and rewarding youth in which they qualify themselves for an independent existence, rich in perspectives and with an active participation in the development of society*" (Undervisningsministeriet/Ministry of Education 1997). The youth policy action plan had ten objectives.

The action plan was most recently followed up in 2000, with the document *Regeringens ungdomspolitik – status og perspektiver* (Undervisningsministeriet/Ministry of Education 2000). In this document, education was highlighted as a priority area of youth policy. One goal was that 95 per cent of all young people complete secondary education, another was that 50 per cent go on to higher education. A third goal of the youth policy action plan from 2000 was full employment among young people, with no more than 5 per cent youth unemployment. There were also objectives to do with young people's access to information technology and the possibility of gaining international experiences, e.g. by means of various exchange programmes (Undervisningsministeriet/Ministry of Education 2000).

Cross-sector youth policymaking has been inactive in recent years, but significant cooperation is going on between the education, labour market and integration sectors. A current example is the campaign entitled *Brug for alle unge* (All young people are needed) which strives to get more young people with a foreign background to continue studying after the end of compulsory education, as well as to get them to finish an education. The campaign was launched in 2002 following a youth hearing in Copenhagen with the goal of formulating visions and strategies directed at young people with a foreign background. The campaign will continue until the end of 2010 and is financed by the Danish state with the help of subsidies from the European Social Fund.

### Schools and education

Denmark has nine years' compulsory education, but it is common for pupils to do a tenth year if they are not yet eligible for upper secondary school or need more preparation. In those cases, upper secondary school studies begin at 17 years of age. Compulsory education normally ends when the pupils have reached 16 years of age. Just over 80 per cent of pupils go on to study at the upper secondary level.

In Denmark the term *bilingual pupils* has been used for many years to describe pupils whose mother tongue is not Danish and who do not learn Danish until they come into contact with the rest of society. In the 2007/2008 academic year, 10 per cent of all pupils in Danish compulsory education were of the bilingual category (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere og Integration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2009a).

There is no integrated upper secondary education in Denmark. Education at the upper secondary level can roughly be divided into three categories. First, there is a general upper secondary education programme which

prepares students for higher education and which ends with examinations that give eligibility to university colleges and universities. Second, there are business economics and technological schools which are also counted as preparatory for higher education. About 30 per cent of an average annual batch choose the first option, and 15 per cent the second. In addition to these options there is a third principal option – vocational training. These are typically 4 or 5-year programmes that include periods at school and periods in work at different workplaces. There are also shorter vocational training programmes with lower requirements for academic studies. About 40 per cent of an average annual batch choose vocational training. They have apprentices' contracts and are paid wages during their studies (Olofsson & Wadensjö 2007, The Danish Ministry of Education 2005).

Basic vocational training is independent and workplace-based according to the rotating education model, i.e. periods of study at vocational school alternate with periods at a workplace. The programme begins with a term of general studies, in order to make it more comparable to upper secondary programmes that prepare students for higher education. Compared with the other Nordic countries, however, Danish vocational training is less theoretical.

Students also have ample possibilities to choose for themselves the content and extent of school-based studies. The majority choose to limit basic education to the obligatory 20 weeks. Despite the rather limited extent of the initial academic courses, many students – in particular young people with a foreign background – have difficulties completing them (Olofsson & Wadensjö 2007). These difficulties are often rooted in the student's less than full command of the Danish language.

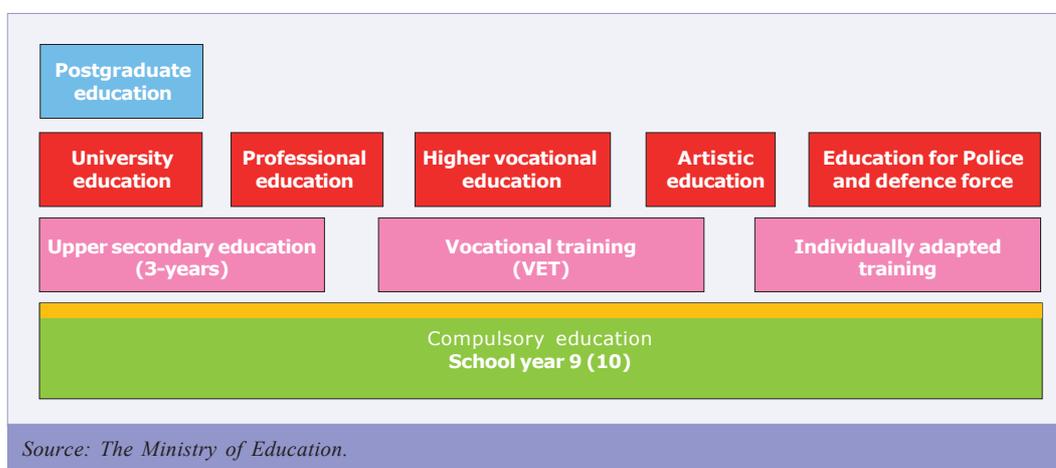


Figure 8. The Danish education system.

Improving these results requires, besides better language abilities in students with a foreign background, teachers who are capable of teaching multicultural groups of students. This is why teacher training programmes for vocational teachers in Denmark now include requirements for multicultural competence. There are also a number of voluntary courses for teachers at vocational schools aimed at strengthening teachers' pedagogic ability to teach students with a different ethnic background. One example is that Roskilde University, in collaboration with the education ministry, has developed a course for contact teachers in vocational schools (OECD 2009b).

Students with special needs due to low motivation or a functional disability can choose a special form of vocational training at what are known as production schools. These offer elements of academic subjects and are sited near workplaces. The length of the programmes varies, but never exceeds one year. The target group is young people under 25 who have had difficulties completing a secondary education. The share of students in production schools is between 5 and 10 per cent of the total number of students in upper secondary vocational training (Olofsson & Wadensjö 2007).

Another route for those who have difficulties managing a normal vocational programme is basic vocational training, *erhvervsgrunduddannelse*, or EGU. The programme is shorter than in normal vocational training, usually lasting two years. Two thirds of the programme is spent in a workplace. Just as in normal vocational training, the students have considerable say in determining the content of the programme. They are paid wages and are given a certificate upon completion of studies (Olofsson & Wadensjö 2007).

Young people with a foreign background more often choose vocational studies after compulsory education than ethnic Danish pupils do (OECD 2009b). In the 2006/2007 academic year, 40 per cent of first-generation immigrant girls and boys aged 16 to 19 were in upper secondary education, while 25 per cent were pursuing some other education (either at the compulsory level or at the post-secondary level) and 35 per cent were not in education at all. The corresponding shares among young people with a Danish background were 60 per cent in upper secondary education, 18 per cent in other education and 22 per cent not in any form of education. Among those who had been born in Denmark to foreign-born parents, about 55 per cent were in upper secondary education, 20 per cent in other education and 25 per cent not in any form of education (Ministeriet for Flygtninge Indvandrere og Integration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2009a).

A relatively large number go on to higher education after secondary education – the share among first-generation immigrant women and men aged 20 to 24 was approximately 20 per cent. The corresponding share among young women with a Danish background was 35 per cent while for young men with a Danish background it was 22 per cent. Among young people born in Denmark to foreign-born parents the share was 31 per cent for young women and 19 per cent for young men. It should be noted that a certain proportion of the first-generation immigrants have come to Denmark solely to study, but there is no data on how large a proportion they constitute (Ministeriet for Flygtninge Indvandrere og Intergration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2009a).

**Table 2. The share of 20 to 24-year-olds in Denmark in education, work and unemployment, by country of birth, 2007. Per cent**

	Born outside Denmark	Born in Denmark to immigrant parents	Born in Denmark to Danish-born parents
Compulsory education	0	0	0
Upper secondary education	3	4	2
Vocational training	10	13	15
Higher education	19	25	28
Employed	36	42	44
Unemployed	4	3	2
Outside the workforce and not in education	27	14	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Tal og fakta – Udlændinges tilknytning til arbejdsmarkedet og uddannelsessystemet, 2009. The Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration.*

Table 2 shows that the share of young people in the group aged 20-24 who are neither in work nor studies is considerably higher among young people with a foreign background than among young people with a Danish background.

Of young people born outside Denmark, 27 per cent of 20 to 24-year-olds are neither in work nor studies, compared with 8 per cent for those with a Danish background. The situation for 20 to 24-year-olds who were born in Denmark to foreign parents is also considerably more difficult than it is for young ethnic Danes: 14 per cent of the former group are neither in work nor studies.

### Preparedness for newly arrived pupils

Newly arrived pupils are usually put into reception classes where they learn Danish and are given an introduction to the Danish school system. Schools are also obliged by law to cooperate with parents, which includes meetings to discuss progress and often various social gatherings as well. Developing a dialogue with the parents of newly arrived pupils is a priority in Denmark.

One way of facilitating the dialogue with parents of a different ethnic background is for schools to have bilingual staff. The Danish education ministry has therefore recommended that municipalities employ bilingual teachers in schools where a majority of pupils have a foreign background. There was a campaign in 2007 to attract more young people with a foreign background to teacher training programmes. The results of the campaign have not been evaluated yet, but one teacher training college has reported that the share of new students with a different ethnic background has increased sharply, with about half of all students beginning their studies in 2008 having a foreign background (OECD 2009b).

The project entitled *Dette virker på vores skole* (This works at our school), carried out between 2007 and 2009, brought together successful experiences from teaching and integrating bilingual pupils in compulsory education. During 2009 the project was turned into a *Tosprogs-Taskforce* (Bilingual taskforce) whose purpose was to spread the examples of good practice to all compulsory education schools in Denmark. The project is collaboration between the education ministry and the integration ministry.

The *Tosprogs-Taskforce* is active both locally and nationally. At the local level, it collaborates with 16 selected schools in five municipalities across Denmark. Together with each one of these municipalities and schools, the working group draws up an action plan to improve bilingual pupils' school results. At the national level, the taskforce offers advice to all schools and

municipalities. These activities are described on <http://www.tosprogstaskforce.dk/>.

### Brug for alle unge

*Brug for alle unge* (All young people are needed) is a campaign to get more young people with a foreign background to continue studying after finishing compulsory education, but also to get them to complete their education. The campaign came about because the share of young people with a foreign background who leave school early is twice as large as the share of school leavers with a Danish background. This applies both to pupils who are first-generation immigrants and to those who were born in Denmark to immigrant parents. The problem is most serious in vocational training, where around 60 per cent of students with a foreign background leave early. Only a small number of students who have left one programme complete another vocational training programme later on.

The goal of the campaign is for young people with a foreign background and their parents to learn more about the possibilities offered by the Danish education system, and that these young people should be able to make use of the possibilities on the same conditions as other young people. Creative and innovative methods for getting more young people to complete a secondary education are needed to achieve this goal. The *Brug for alle unge* campaign has worked with role models, recruitment campaigns, homework cafés and other initiatives usually run by volunteers.

*Lektiecaféer* (Homework cafés) are one of the activities in *Brug for alle unge* in which volunteers supervise young people doing their homework in Danish, maths, English, etc. The activity is primarily directed at bilingual pupils who need extra help with their homework. The campaign supports more than 80 homework cafés all over the country. All homework helpers are unpaid volunteers. They do not have to be trained teachers, but many are students in higher education or retired teachers. Homework cafés are free and are often held in schools and libraries.

Another activity is the *rollemodeller* (role model) mini-project, with both young and adult role models. The young role models are in studies or have completed an education, and the adult role models are parents of young people who have chosen to continue with their studies. All role models are from foreign backgrounds and the idea is that their positive experiences will motivate and inspire other young people to study, while the parent role models will tell other parents how they can support their children's education choices and studies. The role models visit school, youth clubs, associations and education institutions all over the country.

During 2008 a mini-project entitled *Fastholdelseskaravanen* was launched (the name is difficult to translate but means something like "the holding-on caravan"), focused on getting young people to stay in education. It is also part of the *Brug for alle unge* campaign. If the goal that 95 per cent of an annual batch will complete secondary education is going to be achieved, it is important to find methods which will contribute to young people, and particularly young people with foreign backgrounds, completing their secondary-school studies to a much greater extent than what is the case today. The initiatives are primarily directed towards vocational training programmes and those who work with young people. Vocational training schools are offered help with teacher development, the establishment of homework support, mentorships, development of the dialogue with parents, applied pedagogy and much more.

*Fastholdelseskaravanen* is financed with funding from the European Social Fund among other sources.<sup>14</sup>

Any project initiated by *Brug for alle unge* which proves successful is then spread among municipalities and schools all over the country as an example of good practice. Among the results of this is that more municipalities have begun working with role models.

An evaluation of *Brug for alle unge* showed that most young people had noticed an immediate effect of homework cafés and role model projects, e.g. in increased motivation (Ministeriet for Flygtninge Indvandrere og Intergration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2009c). Many teachers confirmed this, saying they had noticed a positive trend both in increased cultural understanding and in increased motivation in school work. A number of pupils also stated that they had changed their behaviour following a visit by the role model project. Many young people thought it was particularly good that the young role models had similar backgrounds to the pupils. Many pupils stated that it had become easier to do homework thanks to the homework café, and many enjoyed being there so much that they had gone there even when they didn't have homework to do. The evaluation also shows that the share of pupils who continue studying after compulsory education has increased and that the average grades of pupils had improved in at least one in five of the studied schools that had a homework café (Ministeriet for Flygtninge Indvandrere og Intergration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2009c).<sup>15</sup>

More information: [http://www.brugforalleunge.dk/fileadmin/bruger\\_upload/pdf/BFAU\\_paa\\_engelsk.pdf](http://www.brugforalleunge.dk/fileadmin/bruger_upload/pdf/BFAU_paa_engelsk.pdf)

## Rules and regulations in the event of unemployment

Training is the main alternative for unemployed young people in Denmark. This strategy has led to the creation of many shorter, flexible versions of basic vocational training. Local job and training centres offer coordinated services from schools, employment agencies and social services to help unemployed young people get their situation in order. They are given an individual action plan and their situation is followed up two years after they have completed their training (Olofsson & Wadensjö 2007).

In 1995 a requirement was introduced to the effect that young people under 25 who had been unemployed for six months had to agree to take part in training or lose some of their maintenance support. The training programme would run for at least 18 months, and the benefit would amount to 50 per cent of the unemployment allowance. This requirement was made even more stringent in 2005, when it was decided that young people would lose their right to maintenance support entirely if they refused to take part in a training programme. Danish benefit systems for students and people needing maintenance support are otherwise very generous (Olofsson & Wadensjö 2007). Conditions in the Danish labour market are governed by *flexicurity*, which means guarantees for employees' security through generous unemployment benefits combined with flexible possibilities for the employer to hire and fire staff as needed.

The most recent development in Denmark was presented in the government's *Ungepakke* policy package in the autumn of 2009. This youth package is in two parts, one directed at young people in the 18-30 age group and the other at young people in the 15-17 age group. The measures directed at the older group are intended to reduce youth unemployment while the measures directed at the 15-17 age group are intended to get all young people either into education, work or participation in other stimulating activities.<sup>16</sup>

The youth package contains proposals for both education and the labour market. It has also given Danish municipalities a new area of responsibility, which is to make sure that all 15 to 17-year-olds are either in education or work. Municipalities can organise the efforts according to local needs, but the focus is on vulnerable young people. Among the proposals for education are the following:

- All 15 to 17-year-olds will receive an individual education plan which the municipality will be obliged to follow up. Besides school education, the plan can cover work, traineeships, studies abroad, volunteer work and talent development in e.g. sport, music or art.
- The child allowance will be converted into a youth benefit in connection with youth service for 15 to 17-year-olds. The municipality will be able halt youth benefit payments if the young person is not following his or her education plan. The child allowance is DKK 2 558 per quarter in 2009. The youth service will be on the same level.
- Young people will be able to get counselling around the clock. They will be able to reach a duty counsellor via the telephone, internet chat services, text messaging or other electronic means from early in the morning until late at night.
- Each individual's development will be closely monitored and the data collected in a youth database.
- A compulsory tenth year of schooling will be introduced for all pupils who want to start basic vocational training (erhvervsgrunduddannelse, EGU), which is a shorter training programme than normal vocational training.
- Job centres will be able to work with young people under the age of 18. Danish job centres have previously had a lower age limit of 18, but now alternatives to secondary school studies will be made available to 15 to 17-year-olds as well. It will be possible to offer them shorter competence development programmes or work placements connected with mentors.
- 18 to 19-year-olds with maintenance support will be offered support as soon as they register as jobseekers.
- Increased funding will be made available for unemployed people under the age of 30 – DKK 100 million have been earmarked for a new initiative, *Ny chance til unge*.
- Increased funding for work placements for young people in vocational training. The government will invest DKK 1 billion in work placements.

## The Netherlands

### Population

The Netherlands has 16.5 million inhabitants, of which 19 per cent have a foreign background. *Foreign background* means that the person was born abroad or has at least one parent who was born outside of the Netherlands. In the 13–25 age group, 24 per cent were of a foreign background in 2009.

Official population statistics in the Netherlands divide the inhabitants into three categories: native (both parents also born in the country), born abroad with a western background<sup>17</sup>, and born abroad with a non-western background.<sup>18</sup> Of young people with a foreign background, about 70 per cent have a non-western background. The biggest ethnic groups are from Turkey (the biggest group), Morocco, Surinam and the Antilles (CBS/Statistics Netherlands 2009, Ministerie van VROM/Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment 2009).

The Netherlands was one of the first countries in Europe to develop a specific urban policy. That was in 1994. To begin with, this policy covered the four biggest cities: the Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht. Today the urban policy covers 31 cities. Most of the responsibility lies with the participating cities.<sup>19</sup> Each city draws up its own goals in a long term development programme. Activities are financed using state funds and are followed up according to an agreement between the city and the government.

#### Current Dutch urban policy has the following themes:

- develop and increase security
- develop integration and citizenship
- develop residential areas
- strengthen the financial structures and invest in young people.

Between 2000 and 2007 the number of areas with large immigrant populations increased. Of the country's roughly 4000 post code areas, more than 5 per cent now have high concentrations of residents (i.e. at least 25 per cent) with a non-western background (CBS 2009, Ministerie van VROM/Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment 2009). Rotterdam council has set itself the objective of creating more mixed residential areas. This is to be achieved by obliging any new construction to be of the type currently under-represented in the area in question. Thus if an area is dominated by rented flats, new construction must be of occupant-owned flats, and vice versa. Additionally, since 2004 Rotterdam has a law to regulate who moves to the areas/streets that are most socially deprived. The law prevents individuals with a low income from moving to areas already characterised

by low-income residents. Despite these controls, residential segregation remains very evident in Rotterdam (Ouwehand & Bouma-Doff 2007).

## Youth policy

Youth policy is high on the political agenda in the Netherlands. Most of the responsibility is at the local and regional level, where measures can be adapted to local needs – but measures are nonetheless financed, to a great extent, with the help of state funding (Netherlands Youth Institute 2007).

Since 2007 the Netherlands has coordinated national measures for children and young people in a separate ministry, known as a virtual youth and family ministry (*Programmaministerie voor Jeugd en Gezin*) and based on cooperation between four different other ministries.<sup>20</sup> The youth and family ministry has an accountable minister, its own political management and budget, but no civil servants of its own. These instead come from the four cooperating ministries:

- Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport (the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport)
- Ministerie van Justitie (the Ministry of Justice)
- Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)
- Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment).

The youth and family minister is responsible for the areas under these four ministries that have to do with conditions for young people. The most important priority areas for Dutch youth policy are summarised in an action plan for the period 2000–2011, *Alle kansen voor alle kinderen* (Every opportunity for every child) (Netherlands Youth Institute 2007). The action plan is directed at children and young people aged 0–25 and based on five fundamental requirements for growing up under good conditions.

- Healthy upbringing: physical and mental well-being, healthy lifestyle, continuity in upbringing and care.
- Safe upbringing: security, unconditional love, respect, attention, boundaries, structure and regularity, a safe home free from violence, maltreatment and sexual abuse, and a safe outdoor environment.
- Contributing to society: social engagement, contributing ideas and taking part, active involvement in the local community, positive attitude and citizenship.

- Developing talents and having fun: being educated or trained, the opportunity to pursue hobbies such as sport, culture and leisure, and freedom to play.

- Being properly prepared for the future: obtaining a qualification, finding employment, the capacity to earn a living, access to a stimulating environment.

**Based on these five points, the government has formulated three strategies:**

- Support to families.
- Focus on prevention. Identifying and tackling problems as early as possible.
- Cooperation and shared responsibility between parents, staff, authorities and young people.

The government monitors the situation of young people with the help of a Youth Monitor. The Youth Monitor is available as a database on the internet (<http://jeugdmonitor.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/home/default.htm>), and annual reports are also published in book form. Key indicators are available for the areas population, education, health, welfare, crime and work. The collected data is for children and young people aged 0–25 and is divided by gender, age and ethnic background. Most of the indicators can also be broken down to municipal and regional levels.

Dutch youth policy at the national level is supplemented, when necessary, by special local measures directed at young people living in a certain city. One example of this is action programmes to reduce the vulnerability among young people in Rotterdam, which were drawn up locally. An example of a national effort to reduce the exclusion among different groups of young people is an initiative focusing on young people with a Moroccan background.

Municipal youth and family centres (*Centra voor Jeugd en Gezin*) in all the country's municipalities are a new feature of Dutch youth policy. Parents, young people and professionals can turn to these centres with questions about the development and health of children and young people. All centres are based on existing structures, which are now assembled in joint premises and have coordinated activities. The Dutch municipal cooperation organisation (*Verenigingen Nederlandse Gemeenten/VNG*) is responsible for these areas of activity and therefore has a coordinating role in the management of the municipal youth and family centres.

The responsibility for following up youth policy lies with a research and policy institute, *Nederlands Jeugdinstituut (NJI)*, which was founded at the same time as the national youth policy was launched in 2007.

The institute is a knowledge centre for youth policy which monitors developments and makes suggestions for improvements in the areas covered by Dutch youth policy.

### Schools and education

Schools in the Netherlands are subject to strong national control and are financed using state funds.

Municipalities' responsibilities are principally to do with supervision. Compulsory education comprises 12 years of full-time studies, between the ages of 5 and 17.

Pupils choose their specialisation from the age of 12, of which the following are often offered by schools:

- VWO (Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs) is a 6-year programme (age 12 to 18) which prepares pupils for studies at the university level
- HAVO (Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs) is a 5-year programme (age 12 to 17) which prepares pupils for further vocational studies at higher education colleges
- VMBO (Voorbereidend Middelbaar BeroepsOnderwijs) is a 4-year preparatory vocational programme (age 12 to 16).

Pupils can now also choose PRO (Practical Training), which is a 6-year programme (age 12 to 18) combining education with work placement (Ministerie van OCW/Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2009, Skolverket/The Swedish National Agency for Education 2007). The secondary-level preparatory vocational

programme VMBO runs for four years (age 12 to 16) and includes vocational elements as well as general subjects. 60 per cent of pupils opt for this form. After completing VMBO, pupils must attend at least a 2-year vocational programme (MBO, Middelbaar Beroeps Onderwijs) before they have completed their compulsory education.

VMBO contains both practical and theoretical elements, it can be held both in schools and at workplaces, and it can also include apprenticeship contracts. It is not governed by national curriculums or syllabuses but by the occupational qualification it prepares pupils for. Providers may be either public or private. Completion leads to a diploma/certificate (Startkwalificatie) which corresponds to diplomas from the HAVO and VWO preparatory programmes. Pupils who fail to complete their studies even following various support measures are offered a supplementary work placement intended to prepare them for employment (Ministerie van OCW/Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2009, Skolverket/The Swedish National Agency for Education 2007).

In the Netherlands there is clear distinction between higher professional education (HBO) and university education. The former is offered by *hogescholen* (higher education colleges), requires completed HAVO or VWO and comprises 240 credit points equivalent to 4 years of studies. The first year is preparatory and is offered in seven areas: education; economics; behavioural/social science; language and culture; technology; agriculture and environment; medical services/care. The requirements for previous studies are somewhat lower than those for university studies (Skolverket/The

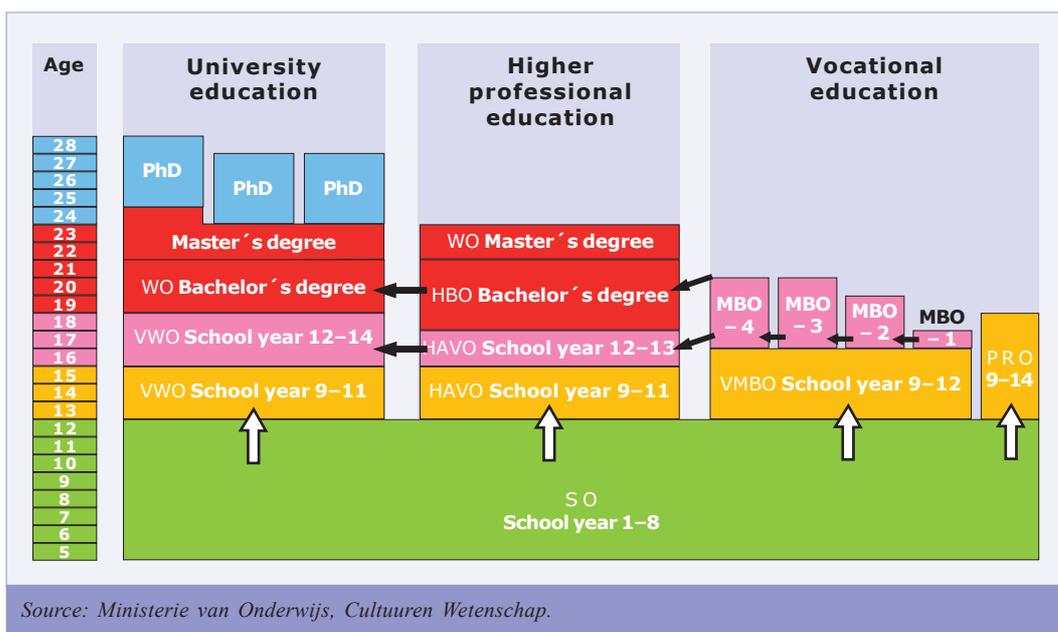


Figure 9. Education system in the Netherlands.

Swedish National Agency for Education 2007).

In higher education there is also the possibility, introduced 15 years ago, of combining studies and employment in what are known as dual education programmes. At the bachelor level there are more than 500 different courses with extensive practical application and theoretical studies, and most masters programmes combine work placements with studies. In university studies this is not as common – most of the 80 or so courses that combine studies with work placements are in the pedagogy subject area at masters level and are directed towards primary school teachers (Onstenk 2008).

### School results

Young people with a foreign background generally do less well at school than pupils with a Dutch background. While almost half of all 12-year-olds in the Netherlands choose a secondary school with a HAVO or VWO specialisation, only about 20 per cent of pupils with a Turkish or Moroccan background make the same choice. The vast majority, or 80 per cent, of pupils in these groups instead choose the specialisation that prepares them for vocational training (VMBO). Pupils with a foreign background are also over-represented among pupils who require extra years of schooling or who finish compulsory education without having qualified for the subsequent level of study (Dagevos & Gijsberts 2007).

However, those pupils with a foreign background who do choose a HAVO or VWO specialisation often do very well and go on to higher education to a greater extent than do pupils with a Dutch background. The share of students with a Turkish or Moroccan background in higher education has doubled since 1995. But their higher education studies typically take somewhat longer, and the share who do not do the final examination is also higher among these groups than among students with a Dutch background (Dagevos & Gijsberts 2007).

The share of young people with a non-western background who are in higher education is 12 per cent, compared with almost 17 per cent for young people with a Dutch background, according to data from the annual youth monitor.<sup>21</sup>

### Rules and regulations in the event of unemployment

A guideline introduced in 2004 states that unemployed young people should be offered either training or work within six months. As of 2007 it is a requirement that all young people up to the age of 18 continue their education or training until they have obtained a diploma or a professional certificate, a *Startkwalificatie*. Young people between the ages of 18 and 23 who lack

an upper secondary level diploma (from HAVO, VWO or MBO) must be offered a special study programme which combines studying with working (Ministerie van OCW/ Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2007).

Better language teaching and more attractive vocational training are among the initiatives intended to reduce the number of early school leavers, as is the idea of recruiting mentors among students in higher education. Other measures to reduce young people's exclusion include the extension of compulsory education to 18 years of age, more work placements and better follow-up of pupils who complete their preparatory vocational training, VMBO, and go on to the next level of vocational training, MBO.

The youth and family ministry, together with the ministry for housing, communities and integration, has drawn up a four-year action plan for the period 2008-2011, *Diversiteit in het Jeugdbeleid* (Diversity in youth policy). The plan aims to create better support for immigrant groups and to improve intercultural competence within the occupational categories that interact with these groups. The government has invested 10 million euro in measures directed at children and young people with foreign backgrounds and their parents.

At the local level, municipalities have already done much to improve conditions in schools, leisure and care. Their experiences and assessments are the basis of the action plan. Three academic workshops have been held to develop a practical and scientific approach to the specific problems of children and young people with foreign backgrounds.

### The labour market

In comparison with other EU countries, youth unemployment in the Netherlands is low – 7 per cent of 15 to 24-year-olds were unemployed in September 2009, compared to 26 per cent in Sweden, according to Eurostat. However, the situation for young people who have finished school is very different than for those who have left school early. For example, only 65 per cent of school leavers aged between 15 and 22 were in work, compared with 81 per cent of young people with diplomas or professional certificates (Netherlands Youth Institute 2007).

The share of young people aged 15 to 23 with foreign backgrounds who are in work has increased from 47 per cent in 2003 to 56 per cent in 2008. However, their degree of activity remains much lower than for young people with Dutch backgrounds, of which 81 per cent were in work in 2008 (CBS/Statistics Netherlands). Of people aged 15 to 64 who received some form of maintenance support in 2003, 28 per cent were from a foreign background. Among young people aged 20 to

25, the corresponding figure was 25 per cent (CBS/Statistics Netherlands). Functional disabilities were the most common cause for support among those with a Dutch background, while social benefits and work inability allowance were the most common types of benefits among those with a non-western background (CBS/Statistics Netherlands 2009, Ministerie van VROM/Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment 2009).

### Rotterdam – a local example

Dutch youth policy has national guidelines, but the responsibility for adapting measures to local needs lies at the local and regional level. We have therefore chosen to describe youth policy in Rotterdam in greater detail. The unit responsible for youth-related issues in Rotterdam, *Jeugd, Onderwijs en Samenleving* (JOS), was formed by the merging of the earlier units for education, social and labour market issues, and leisure.<sup>22</sup> They run a Youth Help Desk to which all young people between the ages of 17 and 23 can turn to obtain information about education, employment and income.

Rotterdam's child and youth policy is directed at individuals between the ages of 0 and 18, and has four priorities:

- prevent and combat youth unemployment
- deal with anti-social behaviour among young people
- provide support to parents
- encourage better diets and more exercise.

An action plan entitled *Opgroeien in Rotterdam: Steun en grenzen* (Growing up in Rotterdam: give support and set limits) focuses on the rights and obligations of children and young people. Young people aged 18-23 who are unable live independently are subject to special measures based on the principle that all young people under the age of 23 living in Rotterdam must either be in education, in work or be covered by youth care.<sup>23</sup>

A special action programme for young people at risk, *Ieder kind wint in Rotterdam* (Every child wins in Rotterdam), has been introduced in order for the most vulnerable children and young people to get the right support in time. The risk group is estimated to number between 5000 and 6000 children and young people with complex problems. Early identification of young people at risk of falling into drug abuse or criminality is combined with strengthened resources, e.g. family counselling, personal support for young people and help with housing and education.<sup>24</sup>

Rotterdam city is working to combat school segregation, to reduce the proportion of school leavers and to support and stimulate low achievers. With the programme entitled *Keten Onderwijs, Jeugd en Integratie* (The education, youth and integration chain), the city links up all activities and measures in the areas of education, youth, integration and participation. The intention is to create a stable development towards a better pedagogic climate and stronger social cohesion.

One of the goals in Rotterdam is to reduce the number of young people who are not in work or studies and who lack basic qualifications, i.e. an upper secondary diploma or a professional certificate. A concrete step towards that goal was the opening of *Jongerenloket*, a youth centre which receives excluded young people and offers all the support in one place. The education unit, labour market unit and the social services share responsibilities for the youth centre.

The most important instrument of school renewal in Rotterdam is the new Brede school (*Nieuwe Brede School*). Besides ordinary school activities, the Brede school runs extensive leisure activities that cover sport, theatre, music and language training, not just directed at the pupils but also at their parents. An important part of the Brede school's activities is to have a deepened dialogue with parents, and for this reason various activities are organised with the aim of increasing parents' involvement with the school. The motto is: it takes a whole village to bring up a child.

Rotterdam has additionally invested in schools' infrastructure and in new teaching materials, as well as providing extra support to schools in the most socially deprived areas. Measures are also being tested to try to stop the drift towards ever more segregated schools. This is being done by applying various measures on a voluntary basis – one is the goal that the composition of pupils in a school should match the composition of the local population. If one group is over-represented at a school, the management of the school can turn down applications from pupils of that particular group and give preference to pupils with a background under-represented at the school.

Another voluntary measure to counteract increasing segregation in schools is that families with a Dutch background choose to place their children in schools where there are few pupils with an ethnic Dutch background. They want their children to have access to the most modern schools with the best resources, and these schools are often located in the socially deprived housing estates, where schools receive extra funding. These schools also offer a wide selection of after-school activities, following the Brede school model, which also contributes to making segregated suburban schools more attractive to all families.

# The United Kingdom and England

Since a large part of the responsibility for implementing national policies for young people in the United Kingdom has been delegated to the national parliaments in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the four countries do not have a uniform policy for combating the exclusion of young people. We have therefore chosen to look more closely at England. In some cases, however, statistics for the entire United Kingdom will be quoted.

## Population

The United Kingdom has 61 million inhabitants, of which 51 million live in England. Of these, in turn, almost 8 million live in London (Data Management and Analysis Group 2009c). Just under a third of the population of the United Kingdom, 31 per cent, are under 25 years old, and 11 per cent are between 16 and 24 years old (Data Management Group and Analysis 2009b). Of the entire population, 11 per cent were born outside the United Kingdom. In London the share of the population born abroad is considerably higher, or 33 per cent. Individual areas have even higher shares of inhabitants born abroad. In Tower Hamlets, for example, the share of the population born abroad is 41 per cent (Data Management Group and Analysis 2009a).

Of all inhabitants born outside the United Kingdom, just over 600 000 were born in India and between 400 000 and 500 000 were born in Poland, Ireland and Pakistan, respectively (Office for National Statistics 2009a). The most common reason for moving to the United Kingdom is to work or look for work there (Office for National Statistics 2009b).

Socially deprived and poor housing estates exist in most parts of England, but there are fewer of them in the south than in other parts of the country. Many of the poorest areas are in the centres of urban areas such as Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Nottingham. In London many of the poorest areas are in the north-eastern part of inner London (Communities and Local Government 2009).

## Youth policy

In the United Kingdom the responsibility for carrying out youth policy measures has been delegated to the national parliaments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A large part of the measures to do with young people's education situation and entry into the labour market are carried out at the municipal, or council, level. However, the framework for these measures is often clearly regulated, frequently by means of legislation at the national level. Local self-governance in the area of youth policy is limited in England when

compared with Sweden. The centralised manner – by Swedish standards at least – of implementing policy has allowed for a series of far-reaching reforms intended to improve the situation of young people to be implemented in a similar way in all parts of England over the past decade.

*The Children Act 2004* is the framework legislation for England's youth policy.<sup>25</sup> The act reinforces the right to welfare of all children and young people, based on the principle that every child and young person up to 20 years of age has a right to health, a sense of security, a meaningful and stimulating life, to make contributions to society, and to achieve economic well-being. The responsibility for ensuring that the act is observed lies at the local level.

The five objectives imbue all aspects of policy relating to children and young people in England. *The Children Act 2004* also introduced requirements that local authorities cooperate with other stakeholders in order to fulfil the objectives. As of 2008, all local authorities are expected to offer integrated support services for young people.

Another act, *The Inspections and Education Act*, passed in 2006, includes an obligation for local authorities to offer varied education alternatives for young people, both as a part of and separate from ordinary education.

In *The Children's Plan* from 2007, the government formulates its vision for children, young people and families. The vision includes proposals for measures in the areas of young people's maintenance, young people's health, young people's legal situation as well as the requirement that schools broaden their activities by cooperating with other stakeholders.

Since 2007 it is the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has the overall responsibility for youth issues in England. The DCSF is also charged with coordinating and representing British youth policy internationally. The minister of state for children, young people and families is the minister responsible for the youth policy in England.

The DCSF collaborates with a number of other public bodies on youth policy. On issues to do with volunteer work it often collaborates with the *Office of the Third Sector* within the cabinet office. It also frequently collaborates closely with the *Department for Communities and Local Government*. On issues of alienation and social exclusion, it collaborates with the *Social Exclusion Task Force*, which reports directly to the cabinet office.

The *Social Exclusion Task Force* was formed in 2006, replacing the former *Social Exclusion Unit* which had been in existence since 1997. Its task is to work together with all departments to give the country's most vulnerable and marginalised inhabitants better living conditions, and for making this group's needs and interests a priority.

## Schools and education

Within the United Kingdom, the education systems of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland differ in some ways. This text will primarily describe the English system.

Two thirds of schools in England have public principals and are publicly financed through *Local Education Authorities* (LEA). About 7 per cent of schools are privately owned and are wholly privately financed. These schools must be registered and are subject to inspections, but do not have to follow the national curriculum and other regulations. The remaining schools are *voluntary schools* with churches, companies or other entities as owners but with public financing. Thus the majority of schools in England are publicly owned, which may be compared with the Netherlands where 70 per cent of schools are privately owned (Skolverket/ The Swedish National Agency for Education 2007).

In England the control, management and financing of education is divided between two levels, the central state level and the local level. At the central level it is the *Department for Children, Schools and Families*, DCSEF, which – following a reorganisation in 2007 – is responsible for education matters. Besides the department, there are a number of authorities and other central bodies with various specialised tasks at this level. Over the past decades, the autonomy of schools in relation to the controlling administrative level has been strengthened in various ways.

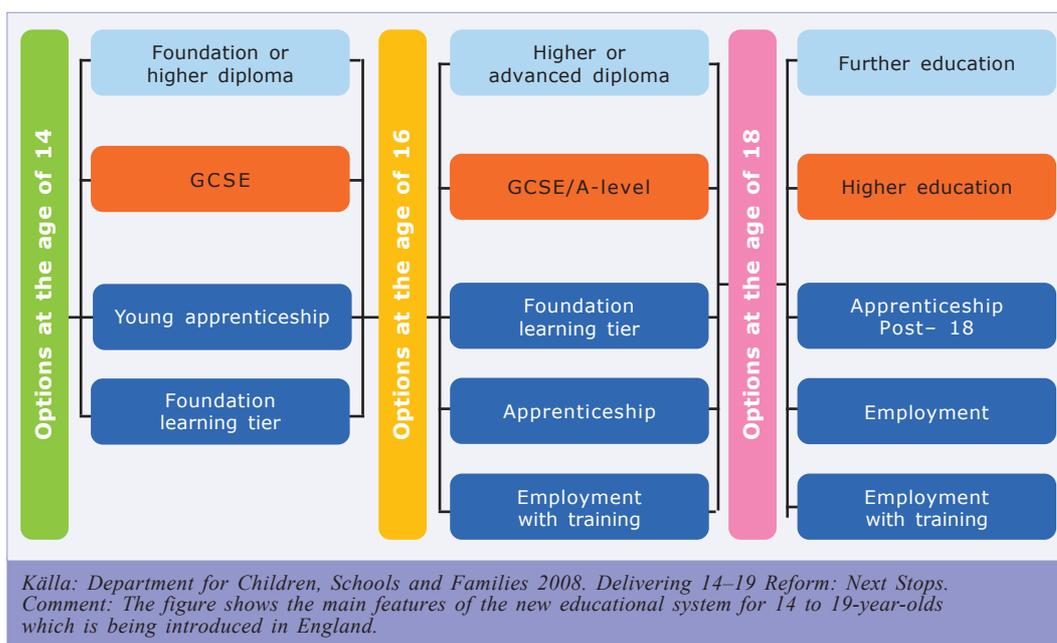
Local school authorities were reformed and reorganised under the *Local Government Act 2000*. The administration of the *Local Education Authorities* (LEA) were given responsibility for matters such as access to education, pre-school activities, follow-ups and super-

vision, special support measures and term dates – which is about the same range of responsibilities as Swedish municipalities have. Councils finance schools through their own tax revenues, supplemented by state subsidies.

The education system in England is currently in the process of being reformed, and one of the changes is the extension of compulsory education from 10 to 12 years, i.e. finishing at the age of 18 instead of 16.

*Academic courses* are the traditional route for those aged 16 to 17 who intend to go on to higher education. The recommendation is for them to study up to five subjects during the first year, followed by in-depth studies in three subjects. Schools may additionally decide to make certain subjects compulsory, e.g. study counselling, sport and religious studies. All courses and course modules are assessed and graded on a scale from A to E plus U for fail. The final goal is an exam known as an *Advanced or Advanced Subsidiary level General Certificate of Education* (A-level / AS-level GCE).

*Vocational courses* have traditionally been offered at colleges but are increasingly available at schools, and studies for the basic vocational exam can be begun as early as at 14 years of age. A modern form of apprenticeship was introduced already in 1995, intended to lead to a vocational exam equivalent to level 3 of the *National Vocational Qualifications*. This apprenticeship programme is intended for 16-year-olds or young people up to the age of 25. Most apprentices have the same status as employees, i.e. they earn wages. In 80 sectors the programme leads to exams, e.g. in industry, construction, business, banking, IT and retailing. A national framework is being prepared which will regulate the relationship between employer and apprentice. As part of the *New Deal* welfare to work



Figur 10 The Education System in England.

strategy, unemployed 18 to 24-year-olds may be offered education or training. Since 2004, all young people with five or more pass-grade A levels have the right to apprenticeships.

The English education system is currently undergoing an extensive process of reform (Figure 10). One of the changes is that compulsory education will be extended from 10 to 12 years, i.e. finishing at the age of 18 instead of 16. The goal of the reform is for all young people to be able to find an education programme that suits them. It is emphasised that varying needs and conditions must not be an obstacle to anyone. At the same time, the diversity in the range of educations offered is justified with the importance of students' involvement in their education. The system can also be described as flexible. The idea is that no doors should be closed when choosing an education programme. For example, the student who has chosen a vocational training or apprenticeship programme can use the education credits accumulated to switch to a more theoretical academic programme later on, or vice versa. To make it easier for young people and their parents to navigate in the complicated education system, each local school district is obliged to provide an internet-based platform known as a *14-19 prospectus*. This platform contains information about all available education programmes. It is designed to work as an electronic vocational counsellor, with young people stating what occupational career they are aiming for and immediately getting a response telling them which programme options and concrete school choices can get them there.

Young people are faced with their first education choices already at the age of 14. One of the available options is diplomas. This is a new programme option which contains a wide range of specialisations that combine practical and theoretical education elements. Another option at 14 is GCSEs, which is the traditional theoretical education programme. A third option is young apprenticeships<sup>26</sup>. Another new programme option offered to 14-year-olds is Foundation Learning. This option is intended to allow for individually tailored education programmes for young people aged between 14 and 19 who have special needs and difficulties in becoming qualified for further education. The Foundation learning programme also aims to make it easier for education providers to offer forms of teaching which may previously not have been approved as part of the curriculum or recognised as formal qualifications. Foundation Learning programmes frequently combine functional basic knowledge of core subjects with life knowledge and courses aimed at the student's personal interests. Foundation Learning programmes can also be an option for young people who don't enjoy school and want to combine work with a slower study pace.

At the age of 16, young people in the new system are faced with four options: they can stay at their old school or apply to a college to do A levels, or they can study for the new type of Diploma exam. As mentioned earlier, these exams exist for many different subject specialisations and are a mix of theoretical and practical studies. A third option is to choose an apprenticeship programme, which involves carrying out paid work in a workplace with elements of education. The fourth option is to begin working at the age of 16, in which case the employer has to agree to give the employee one day off per week for further education.

A new national school authority, the *Learning and Skills Council* (LSC), is responsible for ensuring that education is available to all young people of compulsory school age. They operate via a network of local LSCs to induce local employers to provide places for vocational training, which they subsidise. Together with local employers they also identify the labour market's needs in terms of professional skills and analyse how the existing education offering meets these needs.

Additionally, there is an accountable public body with public status, the *UK Commission for Employment and Skills* (UKCES), charged with establishing what labour requirements need to be identified and further developed. UKCES is managed by the business community and its main role is to convey the employers' view of vocational training to decision-makers at the national level. UKCES has in turn supported the development of sector-level bodies, *Sector Skills Councils*, which are led by employers and exist all over the United Kingdom. There are currently 25 licensed *Sector Skills Councils* which cover, in principle, all trades and businesses of economic importance. Alongside employers, unions and professional/trades organisations are also represented in these councils.

*Sector Skills Councils'* responsibilities include: minimising the risk of labour shortages by ensuring the correct skills in their sector, increasing productivity, increasing skills within the existing occupational sector, and increasing the training available within their sector. Examples of tasks include developing modern apprenticeship programmes and national exams and requirement specifications for the sector they represent. Ultimately it is the *Qualifications and Curriculum Authority* (QCA) which coordinates, maintains and controls the standards and examinations that the *awarding bodies* are responsible for.

## School results

In 2008, 80 per cent of all 16 to 18-year-olds in England were in some form of education. Of the 20 per cent that were not in education, 10 per cent were in work while 10 per cent were neither in work nor education (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008b).

The results of national tests done at the age of 16 varies between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. In the national tests at age 14, all average results for children with Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and African backgrounds were considerably lower than for children with a white English background. However, many pupils with a minority background managed to improve their school results considerably between the ages of 14 and 16 when compared with how they had done during previous years.

The pupil group with a white English background is extremely polarised, i.e. contains both high and low achievers, and test results are strongly influenced by various socio-economic factors such as the social class and economy of the parents, as well as whether the family lives in a socially deprived area. Factors such as these affect the results of pupils with any ethnic background, but most clearly so among those with a white English background. (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008c, Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009).

### The labour market

The picture of the labour market situation for young people in the United Kingdom is not a unified one. If one looks at the transition from education to work over the past 15 years it is clear that young people's entry into the labour market and their career prospects have improved since the mid-1990s. This is thanks to a combination of special labour market measures directed at young people, a general strengthening of the welfare system and favourable economic development. In 2007, 16 per cent of young people in the United Kingdom were long-term unemployed, which was 7 percentage points lower than in 1997 and 4 percentage points lower than the OECD average. Throughout the 1990s it also became increasingly easy for young people with low-paid jobs to get into better-paid work.

Other indicators, however, paint a more negative picture. Unemployment among young people, which dropped markedly during the second half of the 1990s, has risen again in recent years. In 2007 unemployment was 14 per cent, only to increase to 20 per cent in 2009. A dominant contributing factor behind this increase is an ever more difficult labour market situation for teenagers between 16 and 19 years of age.

Due to the ongoing financial crisis, however, unemployment has increased among all young people. The United Kingdom also has a large group which is neither in work nor education (Not in Employment, Education or Training, NEET). The most important labour market programme for young people in the United Kingdom in recent years has been the *New Deal for Young People*. This programme has been judged effective in getting young people into work, even if a

more durable foothold in the labour market has proven harder to achieve. There are now signs that the *New Deal for Young People* is no longer as effective as it was. One fifth of young people who got a job through the New Deal during 2007 stopped working within 13 weeks and returned to benefit dependency (OECD 2008).

### Rules and regulations in the event of unemployment

Young people aged 18 to 24 who have received an unemployment benefit for six months are obliged to become part of the labour market programme *New Deal for Young People*. It is also possible to participate in the various programme measures before the six months have passed, if the unemployed person and his or her personal employment adviser agree to this.

During the first 16 weeks of the *New Deal for Young People* the jobseeker meets with his or her personal adviser every week for intensive coaching sessions and job seeking. They try to establish what type of work the jobseeker would like, what the options for action are, and draw up an action plan. The jobseeker receives advice on the labour market situation and help in writing job applications and a CV. The employment service also pays certain expenses that the young person has in connection with job seeking.

If the first phase does not lead to employment, the jobseeker is offered, usually for a period of up to six months, one of four options: subsidised employment, full-time education or training, work in a charity, or work in the environmental protection area. If this does not lead to employment either, a final phase begins which can go on for up to 26 weeks and in which further measures, including intensive coaching, are applied to get the young person into work. The package of measures also includes the government paying wage costs for the first few months, so that the young person's initial learning period in the new job does not become a financial burden for the employer. If the young person requests it, the *New Deal for Young People* also includes the possibility of having a personal mentor who is available for support and counselling during both job seeking as well as after employment.

The main allowance paid to unemployed people in England is called the *Jobseeker's allowance*. It is paid to people from the age of 18 who are prepared to take a job immediately and who are actively looking for work. It is difficult for unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds to get an allowance unless they are a single parent, unable to work because they have children at home, registered as functionally disabled or are responsible for caring for a close family member with a functional disability. The unemployment benefit pays a maximum of £51/week for unemployed people aged 18 to 25.

# Similarities and differences

In all four countries, a very large part of efforts to reduce the exclusion of young people is carried out at the municipal level. A clear difference between the countries is the extent to which, and how directly, the central government can control these efforts. The United Kingdom is an example of a centrally controlled system in which the government often lays down the framework for local stakeholders' actions by means of legislation. The Netherlands is less centrally controlled when compared with the United Kingdom, but nevertheless has more extensive legislation in the youth area than Sweden does. The control system in Denmark is most similar to the Swedish system, with strong local autonomy limiting the central government's possibilities for controlling measures more directly.

The specific activities and methods for reducing young people's exclusion from education, work and participation show great similarities in the studied countries. For example, coaching and the use of mentors and role models are common methods of facilitating young people's guidance into employment and studies. All the countries prioritise finding ways to prevent pupils leaving school early, and tie allowances to young people's active job seeking or enrolment in some form of education or training.

There are nevertheless interesting differences between how the countries work to achieve such common goals. These differences include their methods for the early identification of young people at risk, how cooperation

between stakeholders supporting young people at risk is organised, the degree of flexibility in the education systems, and the connection between schools and the labour market.

## Education

Within the framework of the Lisbon process, the EU has defined clear and measureable goals and targets for how the countries are to promote a more equal participation in education. Targets to be reached by 2010 include the share of young people with a short education, at most compulsory schooling, not exceeding 10 per cent; the share of 15-year-olds who are unable to read fluently being reduced by at least 20 per cent; and the share of 22-year-olds who have completed upper secondary education being higher than 85 per cent.

According to the latest evaluation, developments among the member states are moving the right way for individuals with a short education. By contrast, developments for many people with an upper secondary education are weak, and the reading ability of 15-year-olds<sup>27</sup> has deteriorated instead of improving (Council of the European Union 2008).

Table 3 shows that none of the four countries achieved the three included targets for participation in education in 2006. It should also be noted that the differences between young women and young men are

**Table 3. Education situation in EU, 2006. Per cent**

	15-year-olds Low achievers in reading	18-24-year-olds Early school leavers	20-24-year-olds Upper secondary attainment
<b>EU-27</b>			
Total	24,1	15,3	77,8
Women	17,0	13,2	80,7
Men	30,4	17,5	74,8
<b>Denmark</b>			
Total	16,0	10,9	77,4
Women	11,4	9,1	81,5
Men	20,7	12,8	73,4
<b>Netherlands</b>			
Total	15,1	12,9	74,7
Women	11,6	10,7	79,6
Men	18,5	15,1	69,9
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
Total	19,0	13,0	78,8
Women	14,1	11,4	80,3
Men	24,0	14,6	77,3
<b>Sweden</b>			
Total	15,3	12,0	86,5
Women	9,6	10,7	88,6
Men	20,7	13,3	84,5

Source: Council of the European Union 2008.

considerable, in particular the share with weak reading abilities but also the share with short schooling and the share with a completed upper secondary education. Young men meet the target to a lesser extent than do young women, both within the EU-27 and within the four individual countries. Neither Denmark, the Netherlands nor the United Kingdom achieves the 85 per cent goal for the share of 22-year-olds who have completed upper secondary education. All four countries have a greater share than 10 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds with a short schooling. When it comes to measuring the share of 20 to 24-year-olds who have completed an upper secondary education, it is possible that the definition of what is a completed education varies between different countries. In Sweden, for example, only 68 per cent of young people who finish upper secondary school do so with grades sufficient to make them eligible for higher education, and about 76 per cent complete upper secondary schooling within five years and earn final grades or the equivalent (Skolinspektionen/The Swedish Schools Inspectorate 2009b).

There are thus certain differences in how well prepared young people in Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden are for the labour market's requirements in terms of formal qualifications. Even bigger differences emerge when one compares vocational training in these countries. Young people who leave the vocational upper secondary programmes in Sweden are not fully qualified for their future occupation, while those in the Netherlands and Denmark are. Vocational pupils in the Netherlands and Denmark are consequently often older when they complete their training than Swedish pupils who complete an upper secondary vocational programme. The United Kingdom has a rather diversified educational system for those over the age of 16. The British educational system includes a number of different routes to a completed vocational qualification.

Young people with a foreign background are in a more difficult situation than other young people in all three studied countries, as they are in Sweden. However, there are differences between the countries when it comes to what national and regional backgrounds immigrants have, which creates different conditions. Segregated housing causes segregated schooling, and all three countries have been inspired by and have developed the Swedish school model with integrated leisure activities to suit the special conditions which apply in each of them. The aim of integrating schools with after school activities remains the same, however: to reduce differences in academic achievement which are dependent on differences in the pupils' socio-economic backgrounds.

## Reducing the number of school leavers

Leaving school without final grades leads to increased difficulties for young people in getting into the labour market, and also increases the risk of getting stuck in low-paid jobs and low-security employment conditions. This problem has been highlighted throughout the EU. However, the measures used to counter exclusion caused by insufficient schooling are different in the studied countries.

In Denmark there is the possibility of attending a voluntary tenth school year for those pupils who have problems meeting the eligibility requirements for upper secondary studies. Over half of pupils use this possibility. In Denmark there are also shorter vocational training programmes for people who for some reason do not want to or are unable to complete a normal upper secondary programme. They have the possibility of attending a special form of vocational programme in what are known as production schools, which offer a short, usually one-year, vocational training programme with some elements of academic subjects, given in locations close to workplaces. A similar form of schooling is the EGU school, which is a slightly longer vocational programme with more teaching in the workplace.

In the Netherlands a priority in education policy is finding methods and means to dissuade school leavers, and this can be seen as the most important measure in combating the exclusion of young people. Among the means used to avert school leavers are extra investments in language teaching and on a more practically oriented and therefore more attractive education, as well as employing role models and mentors for younger pupils. The shortest vocational education previously ended when pupils were 16 years old, but as of 2007 compulsory education for pupils in vocational training has been extended until the age of 18.

In England, too, upper secondary education for all young people is an important issue. Today a relatively large number of young people in England leave school as soon as compulsory education ends, when they are 16. Two years after completing compulsory education, slightly less 50 per cent of young English people remain in education (European Commission 2009). In order to counter the tendency for people to end up in unqualified jobs on short contracts without job security, compulsory education in England is in the process of being extended until the age of 18. The goal is for all pupils aged 18-19 either to go on to some form of higher education or to enter the labour market with a qualification. In order to persuade more young people to stay in education, the English education system is currently being reformed to include more types of education programmes suited to different needs, wishes

and conditions. Diversity and variation in the forms of education can thus be said to be a clear strategy in England for attracting young people to higher level of education.

In socially deprived areas where local schools show bad results, the English policy is to replace or supplement existing schools with a totally new type of school (Academies), run by external providers with good educational qualifications. The idea is to break the pattern of low school achievements in deprived areas by opening schools that offer top-level education while also being innovative and having the capacity to work with pupils with different needs. Major efforts have also been made in England to improve achievement levels at those secondary schools that have the lowest results. Among the broad range of actions within the City Challenge programme is the spreading of good practice, which means that successful schools and their managements share their experience with schools that do less well.

In order to reduce the risk of young people leaving the education system during the transition from compulsory education to studies at the upper secondary level, the so-called *September Guarantee* has been introduced in England. This reform guarantees all 16 and 17-year-olds the right to a learning place, suited to their needs and wishes, at the beginning of term. Monitoring pupils' results in order to identify, at an early stage, those most likely to become leavers is another method much used in England. Pupils deemed likely to become leavers are offered special support (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008a).

In Sweden one of the big problems is that many pupils finish compulsory education without having fulfilled admission requirements to *gymnasium* (upper secondary education) and are therefore channelled into individual upper secondary programmes. Pupils who begin studies in individual programmes rarely attain basic eligibility – only one in six who begin upper secondary individual programmes manage to complete their studies (Skolverket 2008c).

Dropping out of *gymnasium* is another big problem – one in three pupils who begin *gymnasium* today do not attain higher education eligibility, and half of all *gymnasium* pupils do not pass all their courses (Skolinspektionen/The Swedish Schools Inspectorate 2009b, Skolverket 2008c). Statistics show that young people who leave *gymnasium* without final grades have a considerably harder time entering the labour market than do other young people (Skolverket 2008a).

*Skolinspektionen* (the Swedish Schools Inspectorate) has looked at what upper secondary schools do to prevent pupils from interrupting their studies and to ensure that all pupils achieve the goals of their

education programme. The study shows that almost no schools apply target-oriented measures to encourage all pupils to complete their education. Such measures as are applied are rarely coordinated and frequently more reactive than proactive. It is the Schools Inspectorate's judgement that the attitude of schools towards pupils who lose their motivation is an important factor for bad results. When a pupil feels that lessons are boring, schools try to change the student's attitude and not how lessons are taught, and miss the goal in the process (Skolinspektionen/The Swedish Schools Inspectorate 2009b). The current situation with many leavers is particularly problematic since there is a shortage of alternative forms of education in the Swedish education system for young people.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike Sweden, both Denmark and the Netherlands as well as England have alternative forms of education to offer pupils who for some reason are unable or unwilling to attend a normal secondary education programme. However, the new *gymnasium* reform is improving the situation in Sweden. It is difficult to assess how the work to identify pupils likely to leave school early is being carried out at individual schools in the different countries. It appears, however, that the efforts to follow up pupils likely to leave are more regulated and systematic in England than they are in Sweden.

### Dialogue with parents

In schools with a high share of pupils with a foreign background it is particularly important that the communication between the school and parents is good. Parents born in another country, who have no personal experience of the education system in the new country, sometimes have difficulties knowing what schools expect of their children and of themselves as parents. It is important for parents to support their children in their school work if the children are to achieve good results. Parents can do this by motivating their children and by becoming involved with the school, but also more practically by helping their children with homework and keeping in touch with teachers and other school staff.

In Denmark the development of a dialogue with the families of newly arrived pupils is a priority area. Schools are obliged by law to cooperate with parents, which includes meetings to discuss progress and often various social gatherings as well. One way of facilitating the dialogue with parents with a foreign background is for schools to have bilingual staff. The Danish education ministry has recommended that the country's municipalities employ bilingual teachers for schools in which a majority of the pupils have foreign backgrounds.

The project entitled *Dette virker på vores skole* (This works at our school) was carried out between 2007 and 2009 and brought together successful experiences from teaching and integrating bilingual pupils in compulsory education. During 2009 the project was turned into a *Tosprogs-Taskforce* (Bilingual taskforce) whose purpose was to spread the examples of good practice to all compulsory education schools in Denmark. The project is a collaboration between the education ministry and the integration ministry.

In Copenhagen, Rådmandsgades Skole launched a project entitled *Åben Skole* (Open school) during the autumn of 2009. The school has many families with foreign backgrounds, and many parents have little or no knowledge of the Danish education system. The school organises meetings at which parents can meet with others who are in the same situation and share experiences and form networks. The school is proactive in getting parents to participate in the project. There is no charge, and food is served at meetings, which are held roughly every two weeks. Bilingual teachers are there so that parents will be able to communicate both in their mother tongue and in Danish. In addition to teachers, a psychologist, a youth and education counsellor, a social worker and staff from school health care services all attend. Representatives from the library, leisure programmes, associations and other similar activities are also there. The school also offers special parent courses in such subjects as bringing up children and teenagers, how to help children with their homework, a healthy lifestyle, the internet, as well as courses about the school's various activities.

Dutch schools are also working to deepen the dialogue with parents. For this reason, schools in Rotterdam have trained and employed special parent counsellors whose task it is to create a more frequent and better dialogue between parents and schools. Parent counsellors have foreign backgrounds, are often women, and have done a parent counsellor training programme specifically devised for the purpose. This training includes how to talk to parents about difficult subjects, e.g. domestic violence, sexual assault and patriarchal family structures. Rotterdam's pedagogic resource centre has produced ready-to-use information materials on these subjects. So far, two hundred counsellors have been trained and employed.

The counsellors use many different methods in their work, including visiting parents at home and organising different activities at school, such as parent-teacher meetings, information get-togethers and various types of courses. The job description of parent counsellors also includes working, when necessary, with pupils' language development and with issues to do with the

pupil's social situation, including bullying. Another aspect of their work is to identify different education needs that parents might have, such as illiteracy or insufficient knowledge of the Dutch language or of Dutch society. There are more light-hearted aspects to the job as well, such as encouraging parents to participate in pupils' outings and field trips. All of this is done in consultation with teachers and other school staff.

In Fokus 08, school staff working in Swedish suburban areas described difficulties in maintaining a good dialogue with parents. This was due to language problems, a lack of knowledge about how Swedish schools work, and cultural differences among other factors. As an example, teachers and heads highlighted the difficulty of explaining criterion-referenced grades to parents with a limited experience of the Swedish education system.

To sum up, it appears that while there is considerable variation between individual schools in the studied countries in how well they communicate with parents with a foreign background, work on these issues is more systematic in Denmark and the Netherlands than in Sweden.

## Study support

For pupils who have problems keeping up with school-work during school hours, and whose parents are unable to give or organise support at home, the availability of individual homework help or study support outside of school hours can make a big difference.

All Danish municipalities are obliged to offer young people between the ages of 14 and 18 a selection of courses which meets their wishes and needs, outside of school hours and free of charge. The municipal organisation in charge of this task is known as *Ungdomsskolen* (youth school). At *Ungdomsskolen* young people can take courses in school subjects such as Danish, mathematics, English and German, but also courses which reflect their interest in e.g. music, creative activities, sport and computers. All teaching takes place after school hours and with qualified and competent teachers.

In Copenhagen there is an ongoing project known as *Lektiecaféer* (homework cafés) in which voluntary homework helpers support and supervise young people doing their homework in Danish, mathematics, English etc. The activity is primarily directed at bilingual pupils who need extra help with their homework. The *Brug for alle unge* campaign supports more than 80 homework cafés all over the country. All homework helpers are unpaid volunteers. They do not have to be trained teachers, but many are students in

higher education or retired teachers. Homework cafés are free and are often held in schools and libraries.

In the Netherlands more and more primary and secondary schools are being turned into what are known as Brede schools. The idea with Brede schools is to offer young people more than just the ordinary school subjects in the course of an extended school day, thereby reducing the big differences due to family background. This is done by means of extra teaching and activities in different areas. Special attention is paid to developing pupils' skills in different areas of learning.

Today about two thirds of all pupils in Rotterdam are in Brede schools. The purpose of the extended school day is to motivate pupils by means of extra activities and thereby counteract truancy and dropping out as well as encourage better school results. Schools also offer extra teaching in the afternoons for pupils who otherwise risk getting behind. Parents are also welcome to participate in afternoon and evening activities offered by schools. These might be information sessions about education in the Netherlands, information and communication technology, or language courses. In cooperating with parents and with community and cultural activities in the area, schools become social focus points contributing to increased social cohesion in the area and to safer neighbourhoods and communities.

In England the goal is for all schools to offer what are known as Extended Services by 2010. This means extending schools' area of responsibility and that they, together with other schools and the local authority, will offer a basic selection of activities including child care, support for parents with small children, easy access to specialists such as psychologists and speech therapists, plus a range of leisure activities after school hours which also includes study support for those who so wish.

Study support is defined as learning activities which take place outside of school hours and in which participation is voluntary. Such activities do not always have to focus on learning school subjects, however – they can also be aimed at strengthening young people's skills, self-confidence and well-being (Janes 2007). A special campaign was carried out within the framework of the London Challenge to improve school results in deprived areas. During the summer holidays of 2008, 27 000 pupils attended courses in hairdressing, music production, psychology and job seeking, among other things.

Various forms of study support exist in Sweden too. Many lower and upper secondary schools have some kind of organised support for doing homework in the afternoons or during the school day. On an experimen-

tal basis, some municipalities have run voluntary summer schools over the past few years, allowing pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 to study Swedish, mathematics and English during their summer holidays, and to do final tests in order to improve their grades.

*Skolverket* (the Swedish National Agency for Education) has followed up these activities, both by monitoring the development of pupils' results and by interviewing pupils, teachers and heads. The interviewed pupils were very pleased with the summer school. They emphasised that it was good to study one or two subjects intensively in small groups, and that teachers had more time to explain and to adapt teaching to individual pupils' needs. They appreciated the possibility of catching up and improving their prospects, as well as being ahead for once at the beginning of the autumn term. Just under half of the pupils in year 9 improved their grades in at least one subject.

Teachers felt that summer school changed pupils' self-image and that this meant that they began to be able to learn things they had previously thought they were incapable of learning. It was also clear that teachers were relieved by the possibility of giving pupils the time they needed (*Skolverket/the Swedish National Agency for Education 2008b*). A further example of study support is the after school homework help offered by an extensive network of volunteers all over the country.

In summary, different forms of study support are offered in all four countries. In the Netherlands and England it is becoming increasingly common for schools to offer activities outside of school hours – in Brede schools in the Netherlands and in Extended Schools in England. These schools offer various forms of study support and leisure activities outside of school hours. In Denmark study support is managed by a special organisation, *Ungdomsskolen*. In Sweden study support is a statutory right, but there is no national strategy for how to provide it. The responsibility for providing study support to individual pupils lies with the school head, and many good methods are in use in different parts of the country, descriptions of which are included in *Fokus 07 – an analysis of the health and vulnerability of young people* and *Fokus 08 – the living conditions of young people in socially deprived neighbourhoods in Sweden* (*Ungdomsstyrelsen/The National Board for Youth Affairs 2007a, Ungdomsstyrelsen/The National Board for Youth Affairs 2008b*). Additionally, there is an extensive network of volunteers around the country who provide help with homework in schools, libraries and other suitable places.

## Vocational and study guidance

Good vocational and study guidance is important to all pupils, but particularly to those whose family and social network do not have sufficient knowledge about the education system and about how the labour market works.

*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning* in Copenhagen offers vocational and study guidance to young people in school as well as to those outside of the labour market and the education system. All guidance counsellors in Copenhagen have been trained to work with bilingual young people. A visiting guidance team (OPS) takes on young people whose needs cannot be met by normal guidance, and their target group is marginalised young people who have difficulties choosing, beginning or completing an education programme. These are often young people who have problems with criminality (or who are at risk of being drawn into criminality) and substance abuse, and who have a weak social network. The visiting team offers these young people a holistic study guidance approach which takes the participant's occupational and social situation into account. Guidance includes individual counselling and training as well as help with personal problems.

In England each local council is responsible for running an activity known as Connexions. Connexions exist at schools and in other places where young people spend time, and offer vocational and study guidance as well as other advice that young people may need. They have a broader field of work than Swedish vocational and study guidance advisers, and provide advice and support taking young people's whole life situation into account. Connexions are also responsible for monitoring young people's situation in and outside school and identifying those at risk of some form of exclusion at an early stage.

Connexions run a national website, *Connexions Direct*, for young people between the ages of 13 and 19. Here young people can get vocational and study guidance as well as advice about their economy, relationships, health, housing, rights, leisure and travel.

Another English website that offers vocational and study guidance is *14-19 Prospectus*, where local school authorities must present the local/regional education offering.

Here young people can use interactive means to find out which educational routes lead to various occupations they are interested in. The site also contains information about which schools or education providers in the immediate area are offering the programmes in question during the coming term.

In Sweden *Myndigheten för skolutveckling* (the Agency for School Development) was charged, during 2007 and 2008, with promoting the development of quality vocational and study guidance and the transition from

compulsory education to upper secondary education. Many of the participating schools expressed a need for clear national objectives for vocational and study guidance, to be followed up and evaluated at the municipal and school or programme levels, respectively (Skolverket /the Swedish National Agency for Education 2009b). In 2009 the National Agency for Education therefore drew up general guidelines and notes about vocational and study guidance. The general guidelines cover, among other things, collaboration with representatives of working life and society in general. According to the general guidelines it is important, for example, that pupils are given the opportunity of meeting adults in working life and that they are given various tasks in working life, and that schools invite representatives of working life who can share important knowledge and experience with pupils to prepare them for future choices in education and working life (Skolverket/the Swedish National Agency for Education 2009a).

## Apprenticeship programmes

In England there are currently more than 190 different apprenticeships in 80 different sectors. An apprentice receives wages from the employer, and an apprenticeship involves working, but it also involves workplace-based training and may sometimes be combined with some training in a school environment. The total supply of apprenticeships is presented on a special website via which it is also possible to search for available apprenticeships and make direct applications for them ([www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)).

The English system has special apprenticeships for the 16-18 age group and normal apprenticeships for those over 18. An apprenticeship may take between one and five years to complete, but the most common duration is one to two years. Apprenticeships vary greatly in their degree of difficulty, and this is reflected in the type of formal certificate a completed apprenticeship leads to.

In England a process is underway to create structures for employers to participate more in designing and carrying out vocational training. These forms for cooperation are not as established as they are in Denmark or the Netherlands, however. England was recently criticised by the OECD for having an unstable structure for cooperation with the employers and professions of the labour market, which is to say that structures and conditions for cooperation have been changed too frequently (Hoeckel et al. 2009).

In the Netherlands there are two main ways of getting a vocational qualification. One is to do a school-based vocational programme, a *Leerweg (BOL)*, which is a normal training programme with periods of work placement. The other way is to do an apprenticeship (*BBL*). Apprenticeships include at least 24 hours of

studies a week with an approved training company or an approved educational institution (a regional training centre) where the pupil carries out work under the observation of a supervisor. During the remaining one or two days of the week, the pupil attends school to learn theory. Depending on their situation, pupils receive either wages or study aid while they participate in vocational training.

In Sweden, too, the lack of alternatives for young people who need something other than traditional teaching has been increasingly highlighted. Upper secondary apprenticeships have been offered on an experimental basis since the autumn of 2008, and will be part of reformed *gymnasium* education. In this new version of upper secondary education at least half of an apprenticeship will be done in a workplace, and pupils will study fewer core subjects than in a normal *gymnasium* education. Pupils can either be employed by a company during the programme or do it without being employed (Skolverket/The Swedish National Agency for Education 2008a).

### Alternatives to normal vocational upper secondary education

In the Netherlands there is an abundance of different combinations of education and work, most of which lead to a professional certificate, besides the traditional education routes. Many education providers in Rotterdam offer alternative routes to a professional certificate for young people who do not want to or are unable to attend a normal vocational upper secondary school.

One example of an independent education provider is Futuro, which annually receives between 200 and 250 young jobseekers aged 16 to 23 who, following initial testing, are offered a suitable apprenticeship. Programmes at Futuro begin with an individual study plan being drawn up for each participant. Then everyone is assigned a personal coach. A typical plan would be for the pupil to attend an 18-month programme with four days of apprenticeship and one day of school education per week. The school element is held in groups of no more than 12 to 15 pupils each. The goal is for participants to finish their programme with a professional certificate (MBO).

EGU and Production schools are two Danish forms of education directed at young people who are neither in education nor work. Production schools offer one-year programmes with mainly school-based teaching with the emphasis on practical application. EGUs are two-year basic vocational training programmes held mainly at a workplace. Both types of programmes are intended to provide young people with personal and social skills as well as professional ones.

In Sweden independent adult education colleges (*folkhögskolor*) are one of few alternatives to a normal

upper secondary education, but are only available to young people who have turned 18. The pedagogy and methods used at *folkhögskolor* have proven successful for young people and adults with a problematic education background. Evaluations show that *folkhögskolor* are effective at educating these groups and that further investments in *folkhögskolor* would be an efficient use of public funds. The study notes that before *folkhögskolor* can take on a bigger role, a review is required of the regulatory framework regarding municipalities' responsibilities for education as well as conditions for financing studies and family support. Today a fifth – 20 per cent – of students at *folkhögskolor* are young people aged 18 to 20. Currently colleges that take on the responsibility of educating these young people are not fully compensated by municipalities, and students are not always compensated for their extra travel or food costs (Olofsson 2009).

## Young people who neither work nor study

### Follow-up of young people outside of both work and education

It is important that young people who neither work nor study are identified at an early stage. This situation can occur either because a pupil leaves an ongoing education programme or because young people who have finished school do not then go on to employment or further education. Reducing the number of young people who neither work nor study is high on the agenda of all the studied countries and indeed throughout the EU.

In Denmark the government's *Ungepakke* package was presented in the autumn of 2009, with proposals for both education and the labour market. Danish municipalities are now responsible for ensuring that all 15 to 17-year-olds are either in education or work. The municipalities are free to organise these efforts as local needs dictate, but must concentrate on vulnerable young people. The development of each individual must be closely monitored and the information collected in a youth database. Danish job centres (*jobbcentrum*) have previously had a lower age limit of 18, but now other alternatives to secondary school studies will be made available to 15 to 17-year-olds as well. It will be possible to offer them shorter skills developing programmes or work placements with support by mentors. 18 to 19-year-olds with maintenance support will be offered support as soon as they register as jobseekers.

In the Netherlands there is a guideline, introduced in 2004, which states that unemployed young people should be offered either training or work within six months. As of 2007 it is a requirement that all young

people up to the age of 18 continue their education or training until they have obtained a diploma or a professional certificate. Those between the ages of 18 and 23 who lack an upper secondary level diploma (from HAVO, VWO or MBO) must be offered a special study programme which combines studying with working (Ministerie van OCW/ Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2007).

One of the goals in Rotterdam is to reduce the number of young people who are not in work or studies and who lack basic qualifications, i.e. an upper secondary diploma or a professional certificate. A concrete step towards that goal was the opening of *Jongerenloket*, a youth centre which receives excluded young people and offers all the support in one place. The education unit, labour market unit and the social services share responsibilities for the youth centre.

In England a number of different stakeholders collaborate in identifying and offering support to young people who neither work nor study. Reducing the number of NEETs, i.e. young people who are not in education, employment or training, is a priority issue, and the government has created a clear framework for local councils' work on this issue. A central stakeholder is Connexions, a comprehensive advice and support service for all young people aged 13 to 19 as well as for functionally disabled young people up to the age of 24, which is available in all of the country's local councils.

Connexions has a special responsibility in supporting young people at risk of exclusion. Connexions offers advice and support on everything from social relations, finance and housing issues to guidance on education and employment choices – for which parents are also a target group. One of the central principles for Connexions is to be as accessible as possible, which means working in schools and other places where young people spend time. It is not unusual for there to be a centrally located "One Stop Shop" to which young people can turn whenever it suits them, without having made a previous appointment.

Local councils in England are obliged by law systematically to identify and monitor young people who neither work nor study. One of the instruments for this is the Client Caseload Information System (CCIS), a database administered by Connexions. This database plays a central role for cooperation between sectors/agencies directed at young people in local councils. Its function is to allow all involved stakeholders, including schools, to identify young people in need of support and to see what actions have already been taken and what stakeholders were involved in them. CCIS is particularly important for the task of identifying young people who are neither in education nor work. It contains information about young people's special needs, how they meet their targets, what they plan to do after completing compulsory education, as well as

information about which other sectors/agencies are or have been in contact with the young person in question.

In Sweden the responsibility for monitoring young people under 20 who lack an upper secondary education has mainly been about the obligation to know. Municipalities must keep themselves informed about young people's employment and, in the first instance, offer *gymnasium* places. This obligation has only applied to young people up to the age of 20. A big problem for municipalities is to reach those young people who are neither in education nor work. The National Agency for Education evaluated municipal monitoring in 2006, and its study showed that only a third of the young people covered by the monitoring obligation had been contacted during the previous year. Many municipalities have difficulties contacting the young people covered by the monitoring obligation. In order to establish and maintain contact with this category of young people, it is important that municipalities draw up routines for doing so and that they are willing to try unconventional methods, according to the National Agency for Education (Skolverket/ The Swedish National Agency for Education 2006).

Over the last few years, Malmö city council has developed a register of young people who are covered by the monitoring obligation. However, the city's audit office has noted that few young people in this category reply to the letters sent out them offering support. Of the more than 1 400 young people who had received such a letter over the previous year, 30 per cent replied. Only 10 per cent wished to be contacted again (Malmö stad 2009).

In Göteborg, municipal monitoring responsibilities are shared between the education committee and the district committees. According to the city's auditors, cooperation between the education and district committees could be improved. To a large extent, cooperation means mapping young people's employment. Mapping begins at the education administration and leads to a list where young people have been divided into different categories according to current employment. In those cases where the education administration is unsuccessful in its mapping, responsibility passes to the district committees. The district administrations' continued mapping is based on the list produced by the education administration. One problem is that there is no systematic follow-up of the measures offered to young people. This in turn means that the appropriateness and effectiveness of the measures cannot be assessed.<sup>29</sup>

In summary, the application of the municipal monitoring obligation in Sweden is unsatisfactory. Some municipalities are more systematic than others in their follow-up of young people, but the

identification of those in need of support is largely incomplete. In England and Denmark, efforts to identify young people who neither work nor study are more systematic, and both countries use databases for this purpose. In England all young people making education choices when they are around 16 years old have to state what they plan to do next term. This information is stored in the database and the responses are followed up at the beginning of the next term. In England young people who neither work nor study are offered individually tailored training or education programmes, and young people are in contact with a personal adviser both during and after the programme, when they take their first steps towards employment or higher education.

## The labour market

The labour market situation is very different in the four countries. Sweden has the highest level of youth unemployment, while the United Kingdom's level matches the EU average and the Netherlands and Denmark have remarkably low levels of unemployment among young people. Measures applied in the four countries to facilitate young people's establishment in the labour market show both similarities and differences.

Sweden's *jobbgaranti för ungdomar* (job guarantee for young people) is directed at young people who have turned 16 but not yet 25 and who have been unemployed and registered as jobseekers with the employment service for at least three consecutive months. The aim of the job guarantee for young people is to offer them, at an early stage, specific labour market policy measures so that they get a job or begin – or return to – education as quickly as possible, which does not qualify them for activity support or development benefit. Initially – typically for three months – the activities in the job guarantee for young people must comprise in-depth assessment, education and employment counselling, and job seeking activities with coaching. Following this initial period, activities may be combined with work placement and training.

In *Fokus 08* we looked at the problem of the job guarantee only starting to apply after three months' unemployment. For one thing, that is a very long time for many young people to do without concrete measures such as work placements and training. For another, it might mean that a young person has to interrupt a municipal job activity in order for the state job guarantee to begin to apply. We further pointed out the problematic handling of young people with short-term temporary jobs or who become ill. If an unemployed person gets a short-term temporary job or becomes ill and therefore comes out of unemployment

during the first 90 days, the registration period is interrupted and a new 90-day period begins when the person is once again available on the labour market (Ungdomsstyrelsen/The National Board for Youth Affairs 2008b).

The Danish policy of *flexicurity* has become a model of European labour market policy. In simplified terms, it is about flexible labour legislation, an adaptable unemployment insurance system and an active labour market policy. It is easy to dismiss employees, but the dismissed individual has access to generous labour market insurance. Flexicurity is often regarded as having a positive effect on employers' readiness to employ young people. However, the youth policy that was introduced in Denmark in 1995 means that young people who become unemployed no longer have the right to unconditional maintenance support. The rules, which were further sharpened in 2005, specify that unemployed young people under the age of 25 have to choose between participating in a programme with an allowance of up to 50 per cent of daily wages, finding a job, or receiving a reduced level of cash benefits. The policy thereby ties maintenance support to active participation and gives clear incentives for young people to work instead of being unemployed.

The lower level of youth unemployment in Denmark cannot be explained only by the new youth policy and flexicurity. It is also significant that there are strong links between education and the labour market, for vocational as well as academic education programmes. In Denmark a majority of vocational programmes contain apprenticeship elements. Apprenticeship contracts are regulated by collective agreements, and apprentices are paid wages during the training period. On academic university programmes it is common for students to work 10-15 hours per week in a company, an organisation or in public administration, and that they are allowed to include this as a part of their degree.

Labour market policy for young people in the Netherlands is also based on activation. A new law, *Wet investeren in jongeren* (Invest in youth), came into force on 1 October 2009. Under the new law municipalities must, within two months, offer an unemployed young person up to the age of 27 either a job or training, or a combination of the two. The training offered can be either for a higher qualification within the individual's earlier field or in a new field, and can be done either as an institution-based or a workplace-based programme. Starting on 1 July 2010, the right to maintenance support will be tied to the individual's cooperation with the municipality and acceptance of the offer of work or studies.

England has a policy similar to the Swedish job guarantee, under which young people aged 18 to 24 who have received unemployment benefit for six months are obliged to be part of the *New Deal for Young*

*People* labour market programme in order to continue receiving the benefit. During the first 16 weeks of the programme, the jobseeker meets with his or her personal adviser every week for intensive coaching sessions and job seeking. They try to establish what type of work the jobseeker would like, what the options for action are, and draw up an action plan. The jobseeker receives advice on the labour market situation and help in writing job applications and a CV.

If the first phase does not lead to employment, the jobseeker is offered, usually for a period of up to six months, one of four options: subsidised employment, full-time education or training, work in a charity, or work in the environmental protection area. If this does not lead to employment either, a final phase begins which can go on for up to 26 weeks and in which further measures, including intensive coaching, are applied to get the young person into work. The package of measures also includes the government paying wage costs for the first few months, so that the young person's initial learning period in the new job does not become a financial burden for the employer. If the young person requests it, there is also the possibility of having a personal mentor who is available for support and counselling during both job seeking as well as after employment.

### **A large selection of work placements**

Despite the success of efforts in vocational training in Denmark and the Netherlands, young people with foreign backgrounds have found it more difficult than others to find work placements and apprenticeships in these countries as well. In both countries, however, smaller-scale projects are underway to make it easier for young people with foreign backgrounds to find places. The work placement network in Copenhagen is involved in trying to get more young apprentices with foreign backgrounds a work placement in the construction and installation industry, where they will be able to complete their training as craftsmen. Apprentices with foreign backgrounds have had difficulties finding work placements since the construction and installation industry employs few workers with immigrant backgrounds. That is why the work placement network was started. The project, which will run for four years, is a cooperation project with Københavns Tekniske Skole as coordinator and in which Jobcenter Copenhagen informs young placement seekers about the work placement network. The project is mainly financed by the integration ministry together with municipalities and private parties. The work placement network has set up a website, [praktikpladsnetvaerket.dk](http://praktikpladsnetvaerket.dk), which is intended as an active tool for young people. Apprentices can seek work placements on it, and it is intended to work as a place to

meet and exchange experiences.

In the Netherlands all young people who have finished school and who have been unemployed for at least three months have the right to a work placement. Work placements are also generally part of all measures for young unemployed people which include some form of education or training. There are many types of work placements, from those in which the trainee only does observation to those in which the young person participates in work under more or less the same conditions as employees. In terms of time, a work placement can vary between half-days once a week, a whole week, or a longer period, e.g. a year. Young people taking part in a training programme which includes a work placement are supervised both during their training and the work placement. Usually they are paid wages for the work they do, the size of which vary between different work placements.

There are many different ways for a young person in the Netherlands to find a work placement. Most schools have their own work placement bank. There are also different websites where young people themselves can look for a work placement, e.g. [www.stageplaza.nl](http://www.stageplaza.nl), [www.stagehulp.nl](http://www.stagehulp.nl) or [www.stage.pagina.nl](http://www.stage.pagina.nl). Young people on vocational programmes need a work placement with an approved study element. A special website, [www.stagemarkt.nl](http://www.stagemarkt.nl), lists over 185 000 companies offering approved work placements for vocational training.

In Sweden apprenticeships and work placements are in very short supply. The Employment Service often has great difficulty finding work placements for young people as part of the job guarantee. Both apprenticeship trials and the workplace-based parts of upper secondary vocational programmes struggle to find work placements for young people in training.

### **All the support in one place**

Different measures are needed to support vulnerable young people, but they have to be coordinated to have the best effect. In England today a sweeping reform is underway to get all sectors involved with young people locally to cooperate and work in an integrated manner. This integrated working method is statutory and regulated at the national level. It applies at the strategic level as well as in the actual meeting with the young person, in which a single official is meant to be able to serve as a contact interface for several different sectors. Perhaps the clearest expression of the cross-sectoral working method is in the targeted efforts of the Integrated Youth Support Services to identify and help young people who are at risk of leaving school or who are neither in education nor employment.

In the Netherlands the city of Rotterdam has started a youth service centre, *Jongerenloket*, which is a collaboration between the employment service and two

units within the city administration – the unit for youth issues, education and society and the unit for social services and the labour market. This centre coordinates and carries out all municipal measures to meet the requirements of national legislation regarding young people's right to a suitable education, a work placement or a job offer. In total there are five *Jongerenloket* in Rotterdam, one of which is a special help facility for young people with particular difficulties in entering the labour market. Staff at *Jongerenloket* work in different teams – for example, there are specialist teams for young people with functional disabilities, for young single mothers and for young people with a criminal background who have recently been released from an institution.

In Sweden some municipalities have succeeded in helping young people who are far from employment, and who in many cases are not even registered as unemployed, through what are known as Navigator centres. An evaluation of the efforts of such centres between 2004 and 2007 showed that they were effective in breaking young people's exclusion from the labour market. The activities of Navigator centres were based on providing an access point where young people would more easily be able to get coordinated help in the form of coaching, guidance and other individual support as needed (Ungdomsstyrelsen/The National Board for Youth Affairs 2008a).

### Efforts to reduce youth unemployment in an ongoing recession

The British government launched a crisis package against youth unemployment in the summer of 2009. One billion pounds will be placed in a jobs fund with the aim of creating 150 000 new jobs for young people. Companies and local authorities can apply for grants of up to £6500 to create a post for a young person. An additional 20 000 work placements and 50 000 apprenticeships are also included in the package.

This initiative is to be supplemented by the *Backing Young Britain* campaign, a challenge to businesses that they contribute to meeting the goal of all young people being in employment, education or work placements. Critics say that this risks becoming a reprise of 1980s youth programmes, which served up cheap labour. A minimum wage has therefore been made a condition for the grant, in order to prevent wages being set too low. As part of the British autumn budget, a future *Young Persons Guarantee* was also announced under which all 18 to 24-year-olds who have been jobseekers receiving the *Jobseeker's Allowance* for twelve months would be guaranteed employment, education or a work placement with a maintained allowance.

The Dutch government has earmarked 250 million euro for combating youth unemployment between 2009 and 2011 in a plan known as *Actieplan jeugdwerkloosheid 2009*. These measures are being supplemented by new legislation, *Wet investeren in jongeren* (Invest in young people), which makes it an obligation for municipalities to offer all young people up to the age of 27 either employment or education. The measures in the plan are intended to stop pupils leaving school early and to guarantee, by means of cooperation with the parties on the labour market and municipalities, that all young people have access to a suitable work placement.

In Sweden the government has applied targeted measures to combat youth unemployment. Payroll tax for employees under 25 years of age were halved in 2007. Several other measures directed at unemployed young people were presented with the autumn budget. Independent adult education colleges will receive funding for 1000 new full-time equivalents in which young people will be offered a three month programme of tailor-made courses in preparation for returning to their studies. This measure is expected to make it easier for young people to begin or return to regular education and eventually improve their chances in the labour market.

The government has also proposed that young people who have turned 20 be given the possibility of participating in the job guarantee on a part-time basis, in combination with studies in municipal adult education. Combining studies in Swedish for immigrants (sfi) with activities within the job guarantee would also be possible under this proposal. Another proposal is to make it possible for business start-up support to be extended to young people within the job guarantee, beginning in January 2010.

Young people who have been absent from the labour market due to illness, or who have functional disabilities and a reduced work capacity, would be able to do work-related rehabilitation programmes under the government's budget proposal. For young people who have been on sick leave for more than six months, there is the earlier New Start Job measure with support which means that the employer's labour costs are lowered by 40 per cent for a period of one year. In its proposal the government singles out the particular importance of giving young people who have been on long-term sick leave access to the services and specialist competence of the Employment Service.

The Swedish government has also presented *Lyft*, a new measure from January 2010 in environmental policy, forestry, the cultural heritage, care and education. *Lyft* will be offered as part of the job guarantee for young people. The measure involves setting aside about four hours per week for job seeking together with a personal coach.

## Coordination between training, the labour market and participation

The European Commission has presented guidelines for member states' efforts to make it easier for young people to participate in education, get a job and become involved with society in general. The connection between education and the labour market is central to this, and therefore member states are urged to reduce the imbalance between young people's education choices and the demands of the labour market. This can be done e.g. by developing vocational and study guidance further, and by developing methods that promote work placements with a strong link to training (European Commission 2007). This study's analysis of four European countries' measures and working methods in the field of education shows a very noticeable push for better congruity between vocational upper secondary programmes and labour market demand.

Everything indicates that good coordination between training and the labour market greatly facilitates young people's entry into working life. This is particularly significant for young people whose families are not established in the labour market, which is often the case for young people who live in socially deprived urban areas. These young people therefore need extra support in making their education and occupation choices. A single measure is often not enough – instead young people living in a socially deprived situation may need several help efforts such as good vocational and study guidance, readily accessible information, and personal counselling using role models, coaches or mentors.

Increasing young people's participation in socially deprived areas is an important step towards making them feel more involved. Their everyday existence is often characterised by social isolation from mainstream society, widespread unemployment among adults, negative media images, the spreading of rumours, and by a school environment with many newcomers and young people with complex social and emotional problems. The feeling of being a part of society and of being able to do something about your own situation is very important in strengthening a young person's belief in their future. If they don't believe in their own future they will lack the most important motivational force for creating a good life for themselves.

In our study of methods for reducing young people's exclusion in socially deprived areas in Denmark, England and the Netherlands we have not come across many programmes aimed directly at strengthening young people's participation in society in general. What we have seen are examples of structures and projects aimed at increasing their influence locally, or in the programmes that young people participate in. One such example of a structure for increasing local participation is English local councils' obligation to let young people have a say in the activities that affect them. There are also examples of activities aimed at strengthening young people's self-determination. Talent House in Rotterdam is a leisure centre where young people from a socially deprived housing estate are responsible for the content of the activities. One method for increasing young people's influence over their housing area is known as Young Advisors and exists in a number of socially deprived housing estates in England: young people are given special training and then become part of a group which serves as a link between the area's young people and local decision-makers.

We have thus encountered some activities aimed at promoting young people's influence locally – in their own area and in the activities they do. A more complex question, however, is how coordination between work, training and participation looks in the studied countries. We have not found any local programme in a socially deprived area which clearly addresses coordination between training, work and participation. At the national level, however, there are examples of general measures aimed at coordination between training and participation. One is the school subject Citizenship, which was introduced in 2002 in the English curriculum for 11 to 16-year-olds. This subject covers, among other things, knowledge of the political system and of different ways of expressing one's opinion.

There are differences between the countries in how much place the issue of youth participation takes in the general political debate. It is our impression that the issue of young people's participation is, on the whole, higher on the political agenda in England than it is in Denmark or the Netherlands. This may in part be explained by the fact that local influence is generally high on the English political agenda. Another explanation could be the alarmingly low voter turnout among young people in England and the big difference in participation between younger and older citizens – both things which are receiving increasing attention.

Although we did not come across activities based on the coordination between work, training and participation, there is in fact ample research evidence for a link between socio-economic factors and political interest and participation. It is therefore reasonable that youth policy priorities are concentrated on education/training and the labour market. Young people with at least a secondary education are considerably better equipped to follow the political debate and take part compared with young people who have left school. The ability to earn one's own living and lead an independent life also promotes active citizenship. But there is also research which suggests that having the possibility to affect one's own situation, through workplace democracy, tenants' influence and similar means, can also become a motivational force which helps an individual of less favourable circumstances get ahead in other areas of his or her life as well and improve his or her personal situation in various ways.

According to the new framework for European cooperation in youth affairs, the EU's common goal for young people's participation is that their participation in representative democracy and civil society should be supported at all levels, in volunteer work and in society as a whole (Council of the European Union 2009). Despite the limited research into the participation and social involvement of young people from our countries' socially deprived suburbs, we can safely say that it is in these areas that the need is greatest for measures which promote young people's inclusion and participation in society.

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# Notes

<sup>1</sup> These databases are available at: [http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/jsp/goodpractices/gp\\_library.jsp](http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/jsp/goodpractices/gp_library.jsp), <http://www.eukn.org/eukn/themes/index.html> and <http://magenta.collexis.net/susta-info/en/search.aspx#>.

<sup>2</sup> More information on URBACT is available at <http://urbact.eu/>.

<sup>3</sup> More information on the EU countries' strategic work on social protection and integration is available at [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/spsi/strategy\\_reports\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm) and on the OECD's reports at [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org).

<sup>4</sup> Thematic Study on Policy Measures Concerning Disadvantaged Youth (2005).

<sup>5</sup> In an extensive study on exclusion among socially disadvantaged young people in EU countries, carried out for the European Commission, Andreas Walther and Axel Pohl highlight three important dimensions: structural v. individualised actions/efforts; preventive v. compensatory actions/efforts; and the sector in which the action/effort is applied (activation towards lifelong learning) (Walther & Pohl 2005).

<sup>6</sup> The measure of welfare spending illustrated in Figure 1 is net expenditure. In order to get a truer picture of the size of the resources used for social ends in each country it is important to consider how tax systems are devised. For example, countries differ in the extent to which the state taxes financial allowances and benefits, and to the extent it pays for public services through charges. The columns in Figure 1 show the extent of welfare spending in each country as a share of net national income (NNI), which is an alternative measure to GDP.

<sup>7</sup> One example of the difference between public and private welfare spending is that sickness benefits financed by means of compulsory, statutory deposits of capital from employers or wage earners into social insurance funds are regarded as public while sickness benefits paid directly from employer to wage earner are regarded as private.

<sup>8</sup> From a presentation by State Secretary Eva Uddén Sonnegård at Statistics Sweden's Welfare Day, 11 November 2009.

<sup>9</sup> The EU15 comprises France, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Sweden and Austria.

<sup>10</sup> The EU19 comprises the EU15 countries (France, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Sweden and Austria) plus the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

<sup>11</sup> The sample surveys from the comparative study of electoral systems (CSES Module 2 – 2001–2006) include sample surveys carried out in the Netherlands and Denmark. In these surveys the difference in voter turnout between 18 to 24-year-olds and the entire sample has been calculated. Official statistical data on total voter turnout in each country has then been reduced with the difference arrived at in the sample surveys.

<sup>12</sup> A person is regarded as being Danish if at least one of the parents is a Danish citizen who was born in Denmark. It does not matter if the person him- or herself is a Danish citizen or was born in Denmark. Western countries comprise the EU member states, Iceland, Norway, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino, Switzerland and the Vatican City. All other countries are regarded as non-western.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.eukn.org/eukn/themes/Urban\\_Policy/Danish-Urban-Policy\\_1004.html](http://www.eukn.org/eukn/themes/Urban_Policy/Danish-Urban-Policy_1004.html).

<sup>14</sup> The Brug for alle unge website ([www.brugforalleunge.dk](http://www.brugforalleunge.dk)), Fastholdelse-skaravanen and the website of the Integration Ministry ([www.nyidanmark.dk](http://www.nyidanmark.dk)), Taskforce på Ehrvervsskolerne.

<sup>15</sup> However, an earlier evaluation highlighted the difficulties in getting those pupils who most need homework help to use and come to homework cafés (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Invandrere og Integration/Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs 2006).

<sup>16</sup> More information about the Danish government's youth package is available at the Education ministry's website <http://www.uvm.dk/> and the Employment ministry's website <http://www.bm.dk/>.

<sup>17</sup> Western backgrounds comprise European backgrounds (with the exception of Turkey) and backgrounds in North America, Oceania, Indonesia and Japan (CBS/Statistics Netherlands).

<sup>18</sup> Non-western backgrounds comprise backgrounds in Turkey, Africa, South America and Asia with the exception of Indonesia and Japan (CBS/Statistics Netherlands).

<sup>19</sup> Read more about Dutch urban policy at <http://www.eukn.org/netherlands/urban/index.html>.

<sup>20</sup> More information is available at [www.jeugdengazin.nl/english](http://www.jeugdengazin.nl/english).

<sup>21</sup> More information about the youth monitor and the most recent statistics are available on [på http://jeugdmonitor.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/home/default.htm](http://jeugdmonitor.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/home/default.htm).

<sup>22</sup> The description of Rotterdam's youth policy is based mostly on information from the city's special website for youth issues, <http://www.jos.rotterdam.nl/>, but also from the city's general website, <http://www.rotterdam.nl>.

<sup>23</sup> More information about the action plan is available on <http://www.nicis.nl/kenniscentrum/binaries/nicis/bulk/publicaties/2007/7/rotterdam—kadernotitie-jeugdbeleid.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> More information about Rotterdam's efforts for young people at risk is available on <http://www.nicis.nl/kenniscentrum/binaries/nicis/bulk/publicaties/2007/7/factsheet-actieprogramma-risicojeugd.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> The entire text of the act may be read at [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga\\_20040031\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040031_en_1).

<sup>26</sup> Young Apprenticeship programmes are directed at young people between the ages of 14 and 16. The national authority for higher education, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), compensates employers who take on young apprentices with up to £6 000 per apprenticeship. For the student, a Young Apprenticeship programme involves spending up to two days a week in a workplace, with the rest of the week spent in a school environment in order to study the compulsory core subjects. The Young Apprenticeship programme gives students qualifications within the national vocational qualifications (NVQ) system, which gives them a platform for moving on to a normal apprenticeship at the age of 16, if they so wish.

<sup>27</sup> The data about deteriorating reading ability is based on the OECDs PISA study which looks at the extent to which each country's education system contributes to preparing 15-year-olds for the future. By means of different tests, pupils' abilities in three knowledge areas – mathematics, natural sciences and reading comprehension – were studied.

<sup>28</sup> For young people who have turned 18 there is, however, the possibility of supplementing an incomplete secondary or upper secondary education at an independent adult education college (folkhögskola). A recent study shows that independent adult education colleges have achieved good results with young people who had difficulties in ordinary upper secondary education (Olofsson 2009). For young people who have turned 20 there is also the possibility of studying at adult secondary education colleges (komvux) to gain gymnasium eligibility.

<sup>29</sup> The city of Göteborg's website [www.goteborg.se](http://www.goteborg.se), municipal monitoring responsibilities for young people aged 16 to 19.

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# THE SWEDISH NATIONAL BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS

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The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is a government authority. We work to ensure that young people have access to influence and welfare. We do this by producing and communicating knowledge on young people's living conditions. We also distribute funding to the civil society in the form of support for organisations, projects and international cooperation. All the support we distribute is given on behalf of the Swedish government.



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