



OECD Local Economic and Employment
Development (LEED) Papers

Integrating local services for individuals in vulnerable situations



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This paper explores integration at the local level of services such as employment, social, and education to support the social and labour market integration of groups in vulnerable situations. The paper begins with analyses of the consequences of ongoing labour market transitions for youth and families in vulnerable situations and how they differ across regions (section 2). It then analyses different forms of local service integration, their possible benefits, and the particular roles subnational governments can play in service integration reforms (section 3). The paper also presents examples of integration in practice across OECD countries – ranging from national public employment service-led reforms to more locally driven reforms (section 4). Lastly, it analyses the barriers to local service integration and proposes future work to strengthen it (section 5).

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Keywords: Public Employment Services, local labour markets, local governments, public spending, social policies, integrated services, vulnerable groups, youth

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Executive summary

Governments at all levels have responsibilities for the economic, social and labour market inclusion of individuals in vulnerable situations. Youth and families in vulnerable situations are among the groups that face a complexity of challenges that cut across different public services (e.g. employment, social, health, education, and housing). These groups – as well as others such as low-skilled/low-wage workers, migrants, and persons with disabilities – suffered disproportionately from the COVID-19 pandemic. They are also vulnerable to ongoing labour market transitions such as increasingly rapid digitalisation and automation as well as the green transition. In a context of increasing labour and skills shortages, tightening public budgets and persistent inequalities, in many OECD countries, the imperative for governments at all levels to reach out to those struggling the most has increased. Local service integration is a promising way to support the social and labour market integration of groups in vulnerable situations.

In recent years, governments in OECD countries have integrated services for individuals experiencing vulnerable situations to i) provide more effective support that is holistic and person-centred, and ii) to be more efficient in public spending. Integrated service delivery is when multiple services across different areas, government levels and providers are delivered in a combined way. By providing access to multiple services (e.g. in one place or/and in a more coordinated manner), service integration may improve the service experience and quality for individuals or families with complex needs. In the context of stretched public finances, integrated service delivery may also help governments to do more with the same or smaller budgets. Service integration comes in many forms from co-ordination and co-operation to almost complete integration. Often it involves different models of multi-disciplinary teams and “one-stop-shops” that promise to improve outcomes for individuals, families, and society. Moreover, service integration takes place at all government levels, but it is particularly relevant at the local level where services are delivered to citizens on a day-to-day basis.

Regional and local variations in how vulnerable families, youth and other groups are affected in their labour markets call for a greater understanding of local service provision and integration. In 2021, 22.6% of families were at risk of poverty or social exclusion on average in the EU, and on average 14.5% of 15-29 years old were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the OECD. However, these national numbers mask significant regional variations within countries. In 2020, several EU and OECD countries experienced regional differences in at-risk-of-poverty and NEET rates around or even above 20 percentage points. Moreover, while sub-regional data on communities or neighbourhoods within regions are limited, where data do exist, they point to often stark differences. These regional and local variations strengthen the case for locally adjusted and place-based initiatives to overcome challenges with vulnerability.

Subnational governments often play a central role in service integration reforms. Although there are differences across countries in the allocation of competences across governments, local governments tend to have strong relations with their communities and the actors involved in service provision, as well as with those in need of support. Local governments also often have a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that characterise their local labour market. In the 1990s and early 2000s, national public

employment services drove reforms to integrate employment and social benefits and policies. More recently, however, OECD countries have experimented with more locally driven and locally adapted changes.

Local governments support local service integration reforms and policies for youth and families in vulnerable situations in several ways. Among existing examples are national one-stop-shops implemented by local actors (e.g. in Canada, Finland and Poland), pilot projects that are used to test temporary models in local settings (e.g. in Denmark, Italy and the United Kingdom) and locally driven service integration policies that work on top of or in addition to existing national structures (e.g. in France, Sweden and the United Kingdom). In addition, there are examples where national service integration ambitions have been the main driver of the decentralisation of responsibilities to lower levels of government (e.g. in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom).

One challenge in implementing service integration reforms is the potential mismatch between the level of government that spends funds and the level that accrues the benefits of more efficient and effective service integration. A significant share of local budgets may be spent on individuals in vulnerable situations, especially in countries where local governments are responsible for public spending on employment, social, housing, and health services, among others. On the one hand, this puts pressure on local governments to drive service integration reforms to get people into work and thus reduce costs related to these services. On the other hand, employment services and income benefits are often managed at a higher level of government. This increases the risk that the gains from spending on support services (e.g. in the form of reduced spending on employment services and benefits and increased income from taxation if individuals get into work) only partly accrue to subnational governments. When integrating services, the financial incentives across levels of government need to be addressed to reflect the imbalances between investments and financial benefits.

In practice, there are several barriers to service integration that may hold back many countries from implementing extensive reforms both at the national and local levels. Among the central challenges are complex governance structures and financing models that may create disincentives, as well as incompatible regulations and data systems/IT infrastructure across the various actors. Other challenges relate to the professional and cultural differences across different service areas (e.g. between employment coaches and social workers), which can hinder co-operation on the ground. In addition, especially in countries where many different public and non-public stakeholders are involved in service delivery, diverging interests across stakeholders can hinder service integration reforms. Moreover, the evidence on the long-term outcomes of service integration is still limited.

While the drive for local service integration is still in an early phase in many places, knowledge on effective forms of integration and strategies to overcome potential barriers is emerging. Integrated service delivery can be implemented in various forms, but certain forms have shown greater success in existing studies and research. These typically involve a coordinating case manager or an individualised action plan, a human-centred design with the involvement of clients in decision making, and comprehensive information sharing among case workers. In terms of the process, success elements include stakeholder commitment and trust throughout the process, a governance structure agreed with and binding for all stakeholders, sufficient funding resources and models to pool financing, and coherent skills development in all organisations involved (e.g. through joint training).

A wider evidence base on local service integration is needed to identify pathways to successful integration reforms, including through mutual learning among countries. Experiences from previous integration processes have shown the importance of place-based approaches to support individuals furthest away from the labour market. Due to the significant variation in institutional setups across countries and at subnational level, more detailed knowledge is still needed on the different roles local governments can play. This concerns both their role in integrated service delivery and their role in the design of programmes set at a higher level of government to improve service delivery on the ground. Future work

could investigate the different roles that subnational governments can play and the different vertical co-ordination measures that may support or impede place-based integration policies in these fields. Moreover, more could be done to understand the factors accounting for success and failure when integrating services locally. Lastly, a better understanding of how services are perceived and experienced by the clients is also needed to make sure that service integration creates better experiences and delivery of high-quality services for individuals and families.

1 Introduction

Improving the ability of individuals in vulnerable situations to be employed has many social, fiscal, and economic benefits. Successful support and engagement of vulnerable groups in employment is crucial not only for their own personal well-being and economic prospects but also for overall economic growth and social cohesion. Increased labour force participation of individuals in vulnerable situations may result in long-term savings on public budgets through lower expenditure on unemployment and social benefits and higher revenues from the taxation of labour and increased consumption. Long-term savings on other forms of public spending such as housing or health services can also occur. In the context of increasing labour shortages, bringing more vulnerable groups into the labour market can also help ease inflationary pressures and drive inclusion.

Comprehensive public welfare systems help prevent and reduce the negative effects of ongoing labour market changes for people but are often not adapted to the needs of individuals in vulnerable situations. Developed over decades, public welfare systems tend to focus on support measures for the majority of individuals. These systems, however, are not always easy to access or navigate for individuals struggling with multiple and complex challenges that cut across service areas and levels of government. This may result in these individuals missing out on services that they are eligible for and losing the connection to labour markets and society more generally.

Leveraging on the full potential of individuals in vulnerable situations is particularly important given labour shortages in many countries. Today, countries across the OECD are experimenting with innovative ways to deliver more coherent, co-ordinated, and integrated services. The objective is to support social and employment possibilities for individuals that struggle with multiple challenges that cut across welfare areas such as social, employment, health, education, and housing. National governments often drive large-scale integration reforms. However, more recent examples of pilot projects (e.g. in Denmark and Italy) and locally driven policies (e.g. in Sweden and the UK) emphasise the central role that subnational governments and local stakeholders can play in providing more holistic support for individuals in vulnerable situations. Subnational governments tend to have a good understanding of local needs and have strong relations with local actors involved in the delivery of different services, including the social economy.

Despite the potential benefits of integration reforms, many countries are still struggling to implement these integration models. In many countries, integration initiatives remain fragmented and mainly focused on the integration of unemployment and other income replacement benefits (e.g. disability benefits) with employment services. Many pilots and programmes are not yet incorporated into mainstream services, because of a lack of funding or broad political support, among other reasons. Moreover, it is not always a straightforward process to move from national strategies to local integration of front-line services for citizens. Challenges can, for example, be a lack of engagement of local stakeholders in the initial design of national strategies and policies, and a lack of understanding of how regional and local labour market variations influence the implementation of policies on the ground. Moreover, there is a lack of evidence-based knowledge on the effectiveness and efficiency of different integration models and on how to adjust integration models to meet local needs.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the potential of local service integration of employment services with other related services such as employment, social, health and housing policies to

support the social and labour market integration of groups in vulnerable situations. The paper builds on and complements previous, as well as more recent, OECD work in this field¹ with a specific focus on the role of subnational governments in designing and implementing service integration reforms (Froy and Giguère, 2010^[4]; OECD, 2015^[5]). In the next section, the consequences of ongoing shifts in labour markets for vulnerable youth and families are analysed, looking at how these effects differ across regions and have implications for local governments (section 2). Next, different forms of service integration, the possible benefits of integration and the roles local and regional governments can play in service integration reforms are analysed (section 3). The paper then presents a wide range of examples of how service integration has been achieved in practice across OECD countries – ranging from national PES-led (Public Employment Services) reforms to more locally-driven reforms focusing on youth or families in vulnerable situations (section 4). Lastly, the paper analyses the different barriers to service integration and provides suggestions on future work to strengthen the use of service integration as a means to support individuals in vulnerable situations (section 5).

¹ The paper builds on previous OECD work on service integration, including “*Breaking Out of Policy Silos: Doing more with less*” (Froy and Giguère, 2010^[4]) and “*Integrating Social Service for Vulnerable Groups – Bridging sectors for better service delivery*” (OECD, 2015^[5]). The paper also compliments more recent OECD work in this field focusing on integrated approaches to service delivery for young care leavers, people with disabilities and ex-prisoners (OECD, forthcoming 2023^[119]), integrated service delivery to address gender-based violence (OECD, 2023^[104]) and best practices on the integration of social inclusion services (OECD, forthcoming 2023^[118]).

2 Changing labour markets and individuals in vulnerable situations

Labour markets across the globe are changing rapidly but the short- and long-term effects differ across places and people. Some groups in society are more at risk of ending up in long-term unemployment, economic inactivity, and poverty than others. In this section, the consequences of ongoing shifts and developments in labour markets for individuals in vulnerable situations are analysed with a focus on youth and families, as well as the regional differences in the vulnerability of youth and families.

A context of uneven post-pandemic recovery and labour shortages

OECD economies and labour markets have bounced back strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic, with labour shortages increasingly reported in many places and sectors. In the fourth quarter of 2022, unemployment in the OECD was on average 4.9%. In many countries, the unemployment rates were at the lowest level in the past two decades. Combined with strong inflationary pressure, the rapid tightening of labour markets could impede countries' ability to grow in the future.

Not all individuals and places benefitted from the rapid recovery and the strong demand for labour. The economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic is felt unevenly across places and people, and for some groups the long-term effects of the pandemic may be substantial (OECD, 2021^[6]). Individuals in vulnerable situations, including low-skilled and low-wage workers, migrants, and youth (Box 2.1), have been more vulnerable to short-term job losses and economic vulnerability as they tend to be highly represented in the sectors most at risk of job losses and more likely to be on temporary contracts (Berube and Bateman, 2020^[7]) (OECD, 2014^[8]; OECD, 2019^[9]).

Box 2.1. Who are the people living in vulnerable situations?

People living in vulnerable situations may be defined as individuals living in poverty or who are confronted with life situations that increase the likelihood of living in poverty. Very often, this is linked to individuals or households having – or at risk of having – a weak attachment to the labour market. Evidence from across OECD countries shows that these groups tend to include low-skilled or low-wage workers, workers in precarious forms of work, long-term unemployed or economically inactive, homeless, migrants, persons struggling with severe mental or physical health issues, youth, single parents, and jobless families. Importantly, far from all individuals that fall within these groups are, per se, vulnerable and it is usually a combination of factors that increase the risk of having weaker labour market attachment and living in poverty. In addition, vulnerability may be attached either to the individual or to the family unit and vulnerability often has an intergenerational dimension as the social and economic opportunities of children are affected by the socio-economic status of their parents.

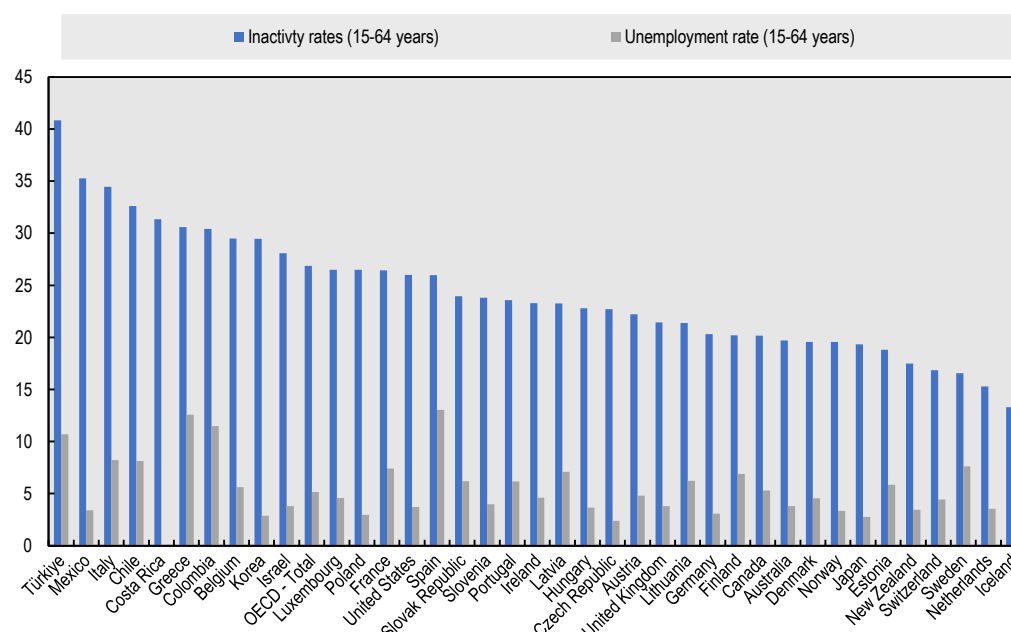
Source: Richardson (2009^[10]), *Extreme Poverty and Vulnerability in OECD Countries: A Scoping Review*, Paper presented at the Working Party on Social Policy, OECD Publishing, Paris. OECD (2020^[11]), *OECD Employment Outlook 2020: Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1686c758-en>. OECD (2021^[12]), *OECD Employment Outlook 2021: Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis and Recovery*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5a700c4b-en>. Rauscher (2014^[13]), *From Parents to Children: The Intergenerational Transmission of Advantage*, *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews*, Vol. 43/1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306113514539n>.

The situation for individuals in vulnerable situations may be further challenged by ongoing labour market changes. Global megatrends such as increasingly rapid digitalisation and automation, evolving supply chain dynamics, the green transition and rising inequalities are constantly transforming the organisation of work, the type of jobs available and the skills required to perform them. While the changes to skills requirements have the potential to affect all workers, automation and digitalisation are skill-biased technologies that favour high-skilled workers at the expense of middle- and low-skilled workers (OECD, 2018^[14]). The same is true for the green transition, which to a large extent thus far has been a skills-biased change (OECD, 2023^[15]). The COVID-19 pandemic has both amplified and exposed many of these changes and pre-existing structural weaknesses in our labour markets (OECD, 2020^[16]; OECD, 2021^[12]).

An uneven post-pandemic recovery combined with global labour market changes may compound shifts from unemployment to long-term unemployment to economic inactivity. Individuals experiencing multiple difficulties finding work may be discouraged from continuing their search. In the longer term they may end up in the group of economically inactive who are not in employment, nor looking for work. Previous research has shown that youth, the low-skilled and women are more likely to be economically inactive – the same groups most at risk from COVID-19-related job losses (Barr, Magrini and Meghnagi, 2019^[17]). The “underused labour potential” is significant in most OECD countries as shown by the difference between unemployment and economic inactivity rates (Figure 2.1). Tapping into this pool of unemployed and inactive is increasingly important in a context of tightening labour markets.

Figure 2.1. The underused labour potential is significant across OECD countries

Unemployment and inactivity rates across OECD countries, 2022



Note: Unemployment data was unavailable for Chile and Costa Rica.

Source: OECD Short-term Labour Market Statistics (database), <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=35562>

Labour market challenges for youth living in vulnerable situations

In many OECD countries, the rate of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) is on average back at pre-pandemic levels, but the challenge remains significant in many places. For young people, who tend to be over-represented in the industries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. wholesale and resale and accommodation and food services) and more likely to work on temporary contracts, the crisis resulted in increasing unemployment rates in nearly all OECD countries (OECD, 2021^[18]; OECD, 2021^[12]). In addition, many OECD countries saw an increase in youth not in employment, education, or training during the pandemic. While overall unemployment and employment rates in most countries are back to pre-crisis levels, for some countries and places the NEET share is still above pre-pandemic levels. Some NEETs are closer to the labour market than others (e.g. in the UK alone, around 40% of young people recorded as NEET are currently registered as unemployed, but the remaining 60% are economically inactive (Richmond and Regan, 2022^[19])).

Youth vulnerability is also observed in the increase in mental health challenges among young people. Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety have increased significantly among young people during the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021^[20]). In several countries, the share of individuals aged 18-29 years reporting that their mental health or that of their household has been affected by the crises was above 30-40% (OECD, 2021^[20]). Importantly, the relationship between mental health and unemployment is bi-directional, meaning that mental health is a critical influence on employability, finding and remaining in a job, while unemployment can have long-term negative impacts on individual's mental health (OECD, 2015^[21]; Wilson and Finch, 2021^[22]).

For youth who experience disconnection from education and work during their transition to adulthood, the challenges are multiple, but employment prospects remain. The global economy has a high and increasing demand for an educated labour force, and jobs that require at least some postsecondary education are projected to increase substantially in the coming years (OECD, 2021^[12]). In

this sense, the employment prospects for youth are encouraging if they get the support needed to gain the necessary postsecondary skills while also overcoming social, economic, and family-related challenges.

Labour market challenges for families living in vulnerable situations

Another group that is vulnerable to ongoing labour market changes is families with vulnerabilities. Family vulnerability is a multifaceted concept that relates to a range of challenges in the family unit, such as low education and skills levels, unemployment, health and disability problems, insecure housing and problems with parenting practices and family violence (OECD, 2015^[5]). Such households may be especially vulnerable to ongoing labour market changes such as the digital and green transition, which tend to favour high-skilled workers. They are also particularly vulnerable in the current economic situation where high inflationary pressures are putting downward pressure on real wages in many countries. While fiscal support to minimize the impact of rising food and energy prices on households and businesses are being provided in many OECD countries (e.g. in the form of price caps and price and income subsidies), this has not been sufficient to keep up with inflation (OECD, 2022^[23]).

In 2020, the share of persons living in households at risk of persistent poverty was above 10% in around a third of EU countries, reaching more than 20% in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Spain and Türkiye². The number of jobless households (i.e. households where all members are either unemployed or inactive) is also significant in many EU countries. In 2020, the average share of households where all adults were jobless was 12.3% across EU countries, ranging from a minimum of 7.6% in the Czech Republic to a maximum of 17.2% in Belgium. In many countries, these national averages cover significant regional disparities. In all countries, the main share of households with all adults jobless are households without dependent children. However, in 2020, the share of children living in households with all adults jobless was above 5% in almost all EU countries³. This also shows the intergenerational dimension of family vulnerability, where the vulnerability and disadvantage of one generation risk being passed on to the following generations (d'Addio, 2007^[24]; Cause and Johansson, 2010^[25]).

The regional and local dimensions of changing labour markets and vulnerability

The challenges with individuals living in vulnerable situations are not equally spread across regions and local areas in OECD countries. Often, significant challenges with high unemployment, economic inactivity rates, low skills levels and poverty are concentrated in specific areas and, therefore, national levels can hide very different regional and local patterns.

There are many reasons for regional variations in vulnerability. In the context of changing labour markets, differences in industry structures and workforce skills are important factors leading to regional differences e.g. in unemployment, inactivity and poverty rates. Ongoing labour market transitions such as the green and digital transition are creating, destroying, and changing jobs, but not necessarily in the same places or for the same set of skills. Across the OECD on average, between 1 and 7% of the workforce experience involuntary displacements annually and most displacements are the result of structural, rather than cyclical factors. Due to differences in regional industry structures, this means that displacement is often geographically concentrated (Quintini and Venn, 2013^[26]; OECD, 2018^[27]). Mass layoffs are more common in regions that are undergoing structural changes, as measured by declines in the manufacturing share (Silva et al., 2019^[28]), and mass layoffs have long-term local employment effects (OECD, 2023^[29]).

² Eurostat (2023^[1]), Income and living conditions database, European Commission, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>

³ Eurostat (Eurostat, 2023^[113]), EU Labour Force Survey, European Commission, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs>

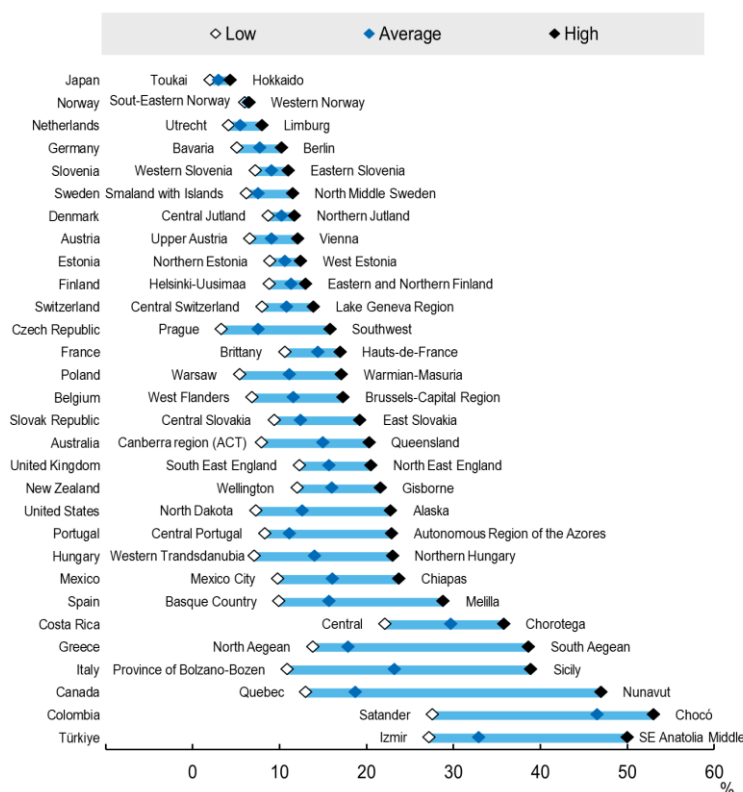
Regional differences also exist in the share of jobs at risk from automation, which again influences the degree of job changes and losses. Within countries, the share of jobs at high risk of automation can reach 10 percentage points (a region in the Slovak Republic) or be as low as one percentage point (a region in Norway) (OECD, 2020^[16]). When combined with the jobs at risk of significant change, those regions already struggling with other labour market challenges such as low skill levels, low productivity and high unemployment tend to have a higher share of jobs at risk (OECD, 2018^[14]). Overall, urban areas and in particular capital regions tend to have a highly educated population, not least because they tend to attract young people, students, and highly educated workers, due to education and employment opportunities as well as the amenities available (OECD, 2020^[16]). Moreover, regions with a higher educated population tend to have higher employment rates.

Proximity to bigger cities or metropolitan areas as well as differences in institutional capabilities influences regions' abilities to address ongoing labour market changes. Over the last 50 years, most OECD countries experienced an increase in the share of the population living in cities and this trend is expected to continue in the coming years (OECD, 2022^[30]). In addition, future job growth is expected to be more geographically concentrated especially in the larger urban areas. In Europe alone, 48 megacities and superstar hubs are predicted to capture 50% of job growth (Smit et al., 2020^[31]). Research has shown that proximity to bigger cities or metropolitan areas is associated with lower unemployment rates and economic growth (OECD, 2022^[30]). In addition, differences in institutional set-ups and government capabilities may have an impact on regions' abilities to address ongoing changes and turn these into possibilities for future growth. In turn, this leaves some places and regions with more people in vulnerable situations, for example due to low-paid work, unemployment, or even inactivity.

For youth in vulnerable situations, the regional and local dimension is stark when considering differences in youth NEET rates across regions within countries. Especially in countries struggling with relatively higher average levels of NEET, there is significant cross-regional variation. Countries like Canada, Italy, and Greece experience both high average rates and large variation across regions, while countries like Japan, Norway and the Netherlands experience low average rates and low regional variation (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. Regional variation in NEET rates is high in over half of OECD countries

Regional share of the 18-24 year old population not in education and unemployed or inactive (NEET) across OECD countries, 2019 or latest available data (TL2 regions)



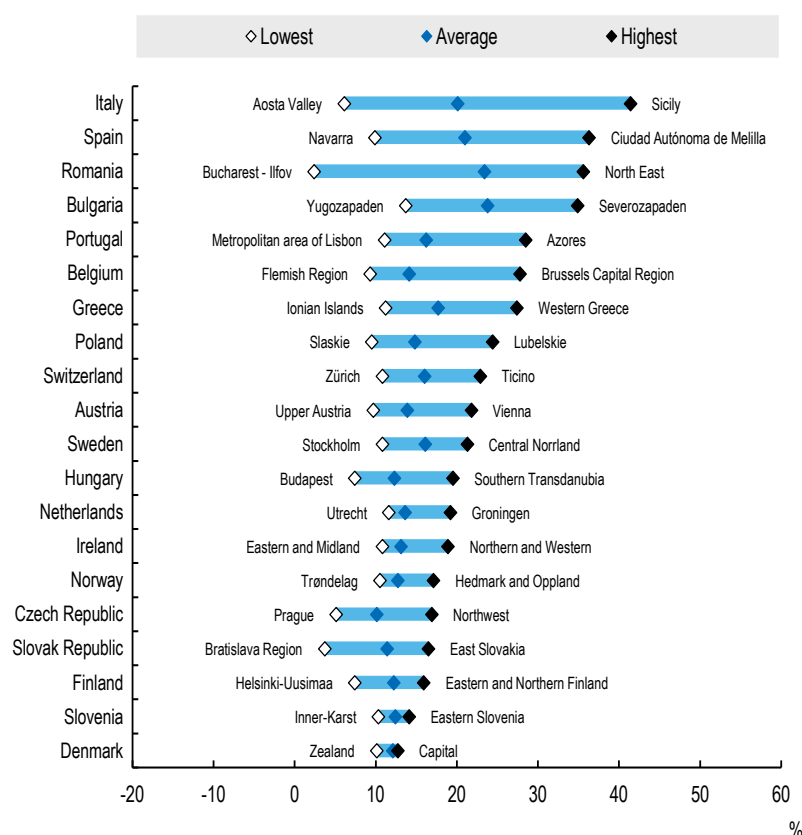
Note: Data for Mexico and Japan are from 2018. Data was not available for Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, and Luxembourg.
Source: OECD Regional Education (database) [Regional Education \(oecd.org\)](https://data.oecd.org/regional-education/)

Family vulnerability is also characterised by regional differences within OECD countries. Family vulnerability often is associated with financial and job insecurity resulting in a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. Regional poverty levels differ with more than seven percentage points in almost all of the EU and/or OECD countries with available data (Figure 2.3). In countries such as Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal and Romania, the difference is around or above 20 percentage points.

While sub-regional data on labour markets and vulnerability is limited, existing sources also indicate that differences between communities or neighbourhoods *within* regions can be stark. In Canada for example, the share of jobs at risk of automation is broadly similar across provinces. However, differences within provinces such as British Colombia, Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta are substantial. This can be partly explained by the coexistence of economic regions clustered around large metropolitan areas in these provinces (OECD, 2020^[16]). In the United States, recent data shows great differences in poverty levels between different neighbourhoods in larger cities. In some cities, neighbourhoods with higher rates of poverty tend to be clustered, while in others it forms a patchwork taking root in one community but not its neighbours (Benzow and Fikri, 2020^[32]). Even in a smaller country like Denmark, data shows significant differences within regions e.g. in terms of NEET rates. Overall, the number of NEET is highest in and around the larger cities in the country. However, the largest share of NEET is found in more rural municipalities (Bolvig et al., 2019^[33]).

Figure 2.3. The risk of poverty differs significantly across regions in many countries

Regional at-risk-of-poverty rates, 2020 or latest data available (NUTS2 regions), selected EU and OECD countries



Note: Shows the percentage of the population living in households where the equivalised disposable income was below 60% of the equivalised median household income.

Source: Eurostat, At-risk-of-poverty rates by NUTS regions.

The regional and local variations have crucial implications for the design and implementation of policies to support individuals living in vulnerable situations, including youth and families. Policies benefit by considering regional and local variations when developing strategies and reforms, as well as when seeking to adapt these to local-specific challenges. This relates to which sub-groups to support, what types of programmes to focus on, and which types of actors and providers to include in the process. Given their closeness to citizens and local economies, subnational governments tend to have a better understanding of local labour market considerations, and how these influence the labour market prospects of individuals living in vulnerable situations. These are insights that could be fed into local and national policy-making processes to help make service integration reforms fit for local purposes.

3

Supporting individuals in vulnerable situations through integrated local service delivery

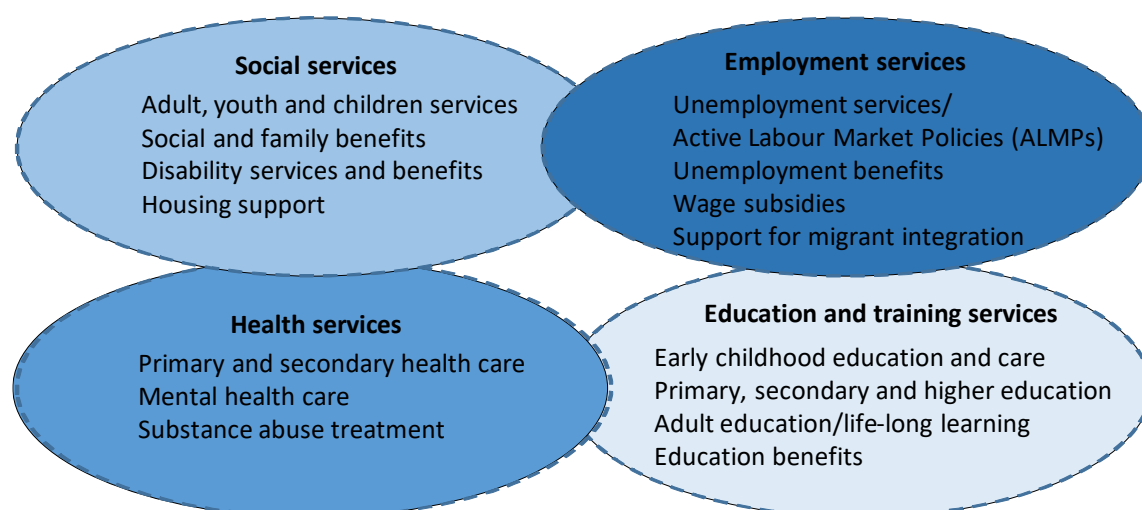
In most welfare systems, service provision has traditionally been organised in silos, especially for individuals in vulnerable situations with multiple support needs. Typically, there is no or only little co-ordination with other service areas. Systems of separated service provision usually function well for individuals with relatively simple support needs, for example support for the short-term unemployed. Such systems, however, often fail to provide effective support to individuals in vulnerable situations facing multiple barriers (OECD, 2021^[6]). For these groups, there is a need to look to new models of service delivery based on co-operation and service integration. In this section, the multiple needs of individuals in vulnerable situations and the different dimensions and forms of service integration are analysed. Moreover, the possible benefits from integration for individuals, families and society more generally are discussed. In addition, the role of local actors in service integration is analysed, highlighting how integration can be driven by both national and local actors and how integration sometimes can be the driver of decentralisation processes. Lastly, different disincentives to local service integration are discussed.

The multiple needs of individuals in vulnerable situations

Youth in vulnerable situations often struggle with a range of challenges that require different forms of support to transition into the labour market. Among the challenges that vulnerable youth may face are difficulties with learning, a lack of educational qualifications, and mental or physical health problems. These may contribute to unemployment or economic inactivity, homelessness, or even crime or substance addiction. To tackle each of these different challenges, a young individual requires support and services from multiple service areas and public authorities, including possibly the school or university, the social service office, the public employment office, and different health services. A lack of co-ordination among the services and the support provided to youth in vulnerable situations risks reducing both the effectiveness of interventions and the faith of youth in the public system who may then stop asking for help altogether.

Family vulnerability adds another layer to the complexity of public service delivery which further increases the need for integrated services (Figure 3.1). Beyond the organisation of service areas in separate “systems”, public support measures also tend to be organised according to the individual rather than the family as a unit. This can be, for example, the women in need of active labour market support, the man in need of mental health services or the young person in need of support in the school-to-work transition. Often these services come in a standard format that does not consider the fact that the individual is part of a (larger) family or household. Therefore, families in vulnerable situations are struggling not only with the co-ordination of multiple services for each individual within the family, but also of the multiple services received across family members. The result of uncoordinated services can be overwhelming and often practically unmanageable for the family as a whole, such as overlaps in appointments with case managers or service providers and conflicting requirements for each service.

Figure 3.1. The multiple needs of and services for individuals in vulnerable situations



Note: The figure shows a non-exhaustive list of the possible services that may be delivered to individuals in vulnerable situations depending on their needs. Active labour market policies covers a range of measures (e.g. job-search counselling, training or employment incentives) with the objective to give more people access to the labour force and good jobs through enhancing motivation and incentives to seek employment, improving job readiness and help in finding suitable employment, and expanding employment opportunities (OECD, 2022^[34]).

Source: Author's elaboration based on Taylor (2009^[35]), *Good Practices in Providing Integrated Employment and Social Services in Central and Eastern Europe Research conducted within the Promotion of Youth Employment and Management of Migration UN Joint Programme in Serbia* and OECD (2015^[5]), *Integrating Social Services for Vulnerable Groups: Bridging Sectors for Better Service Delivery*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

The many dimensions and forms of integrated service delivery

Integrated services, i.e. when services across different areas, government levels and providers are delivered in a combined way, holds promise in terms of improving outcomes for individuals in vulnerable situations with multiples needs. By providing access to multiple services (e.g. in one place or/and in a more coordinated, holistic, and person-centred manner), service integration may improve the service experience and quality for individuals or families with complex needs, and in this way improve the short- and long-term outcomes of support measures for these groups.

Service integration is a complex concept that covers several dimensions. These include the policy areas of integration, the target groups of integrated services, the distinction between vertical and horizontal integration, and the kinds of actors or service providers involved in integration:

- **Areas:** Service integration is possible for a range of public service areas including health, social, employment, childcare, education, housing, substance abuse, and local development policies.
- **Target groups:** Generally, service integration is said to benefit the groups in society that tend to struggle with complex challenges and need a range of support measures. This may include parts of socio-demographic groups such as low-skilled, long-term unemployed and economically inactive, persons with disabilities, migrants, youth, elderly, and families.
- **Vertical vs. horizontal integration:** Services may be integrated vertically, integrating the hierarchy of governance and finance within one or multiple service areas. They may also be integrated horizontally, bringing together previously separated services, professions, and organisations across different areas at one government level.
- **Types of service providers:** Integration may involve only public authorities/actors or also involve private actors and actors from the social economy (e.g. social enterprises, NGOs, etc.) that to some extent are involved in service provision. As many OECD countries have mixed systems of welfare provision where a range of public, private, and not-for-profit actors are involved in service delivery, it is often relevant to think of service integration as something that goes beyond public authorities.

As proposed by Munday (2007^[36]), there are many different approaches to and degrees of service integration. These different approaches may be seen as a “ladder of integration”, where the choice of method depends on the specific needs, circumstances, and possibilities. Munday includes eight steps in his ladder of integration ranging from almost complete separation/fragmentation over multidisciplinary teams and multi-service agencies to integration of government ministries and policies. The “ladder” does not imply an ascending hierarchy of methods for service integration, ranging from the worst to the best, but serves as a visual aid to order thinking around service integration (Munday, 2007^[36]).

Extensive collaboration and co-operation measures can advance the support of individuals a very long way, but often it is not sufficient to overcome challenges with duplications and transaction costs. As shown in the following sections, there are many examples of extensive co-operation and collaboration service models that provide services for groups with multiple needs. For some individuals, regular joint case management meetings to coordinate services across providers without actually integrating the services offered can be sufficient. At the same time, having services “under the same roof” does not necessarily guarantee effective referrals to the right services. In countries where responsibility for service delivery is shared across levels of government and integration reforms are lacking, co-ordination and co-operation models can be valuable tools for subnational governments to improve service delivery locally (see section 4). In co-ordination and co-operation models, organisations or service providers however remain structurally and financially separate, increasing the risk of duplication and transaction costs as well as reducing the positive effects on the client experience. Therefore, when reviewing examples of services integration across countries, it is important to understand to which extent the service experience for individuals is improved and made more holistic.

Possible benefits of integrated service delivery

Service integration is first and foremost about creating a better service experience and delivering a higher quality service for individuals and families. By enabling public authorities to handle sectoral policies in a more coherent and holistic way, the expectation is that the access to and quality of services will improve thus leading to better outcomes for clients.

For individual service users, the integration of services may:

- **Improve access to services/take-up rates and the individual “service experience”:** In non-integrated systems, individuals may have to interact with multiple caseworkers from multiple authorities situated in different parts of the city or region and follow different procedures. Often, they have to provide the same information multiple times and the assigned support may be overlapping or uncoordinated in time and place. This complexity may at best result in a bad “service experience” and at worst impede individuals from seeking help at all. Integrated service delivery is expected to overcome these challenges and lead to more accessible services and a more holistic and individual-centred “service experience”.
- **Improve the quality of service delivery and individual well-being:** Models of integrated service delivery often allow professionals to take a more coherent and holistic approach to the individual service user and thus is expected to result in more tailor-made services that address the multiple underlying issues of vulnerable individuals simultaneously (Lara Montero et al., 2016^[37]). Moreover, by improving the service quality and better matching services to needs, integrated service delivery is expected to improve individual well-being and reduce poverty by moving individuals from social assistance and into employment. In addition, it has been argued that one of the main points of co-location (as a form of integration) “is its catalytic role in innovation” in public service delivery (Memon and Kinder, 2017^[38]).

For *families*, the integration of services may:

- **Address multi-generational problems:** Family vulnerability is often associated with a transmission of disadvantage to next generations. By targeting the entire family rather than just the individual, service integration for families has the potential to prevent or significantly reduce such transmission of vulnerability from one generation to the next and the development of other types of vulnerabilities later in the lifecycle. This tends to be the case when service integration is combined with an “early years” approach that focuses on tackling or preventing child difficulties before they develop (OECD, 2009^[39]).
- **Address child poverty:** Integrated services for families can help overcome challenges with child poverty and children living in jobless households. Through more integrated and person-centred services adults in families in vulnerable situations may increase their chances of moving from inactivity or unemployment into the labour market, thus reducing the risk of extreme poverty and increasing the financial certainty for the entire family. In this way, service integration for families may help combat and prevent long-term financial hardship for families and children.

Integrated service delivery also presents a way for governments to better utilise the same tight budgets for any vulnerable group. By addressing the multiple underlying issues of individuals in vulnerable situations simultaneously and thus improving the quality rather than the quantity of services while at the same time reducing duplication and transaction costs, integrated service delivery is perceived as a possible way to reduce public spending both in the short and long term. In many ways it presents a move away from the traditional focus on quantity and “cost per service” (e.g. reducing the unit price of a specific active labour market programme) and towards a clearer focus on quality and reducing the overall amount of services by enhancing individuals’ capabilities and chances of getting into work.

More specifically, for *society*, the integration of services may:

- **Improve effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery:** Integrated services has the potential to reduce the short-term cost burden of delivering support and care. This can be, e.g. by providing multiple services in one place, pooling fragmented resources, eliminating duplication in services and visits and exploiting synergies between related or complementary services, improving information and knowledge sharing between service units and reducing transaction cost (telephone calls, working hours etc. that are spent on information sharing between case workers) (OECD, 2015^[5]). As an example, ideally the establishment of one-stop-shops should not mean an increase in staff but, rather, bring together services that are already available in a fragmented manner, helping to identify duplications and possibly reduce overall staff. Moreover, it may improve the ability of public systems to identify individuals in vulnerable situations at an earlier stage and thus intervene before problems grow too big and costly. One of the work conditions found to be influential on the job satisfaction and turnover intentions of public employees is the intrinsic non-monetary characteristics of their work, including good social relationships with co-workers and the social usefulness of the job (Borzaga and Tortia, 2006^[40]). Integration may increase job satisfaction among caseworkers by allowing them to better help and meet the needs of their clients.
- **Result in long-term budget savings and increase in productivity and GDP growth:** By improving the chances of individuals in vulnerable situations obtaining paid work, integrated service delivery may result in significant long-term savings on public budgets through lower expenditure on unemployment and social benefits and higher income from taxes, consumption etc. Long-term savings on other forms of public spending such as housing or health services may also occur.

In addition to the above listed benefits, for professionals working within public service delivery, service integration may result in increased capacity for local innovation. Integrated service delivery can be perceived as an innovative way of working that differs from traditional bureaucratic structures and approaches by end users. By bringing together professionals from various educational backgrounds and with various policy perspectives, integration may create more opportunities for professionals to think

innovatively and test new approaches to service delivery (McQuaid, 2010^[41]). At the same time, innovation also appears to be a central factor for the success of integrated service reforms and programmes. If professionals working with individuals in vulnerable situations have enough time and space to test new ways of working inter-professionally and by taking into account local contexts, this can support the long-term impact of the practice (Lara Montero et al., 2016^[37]). However, as discussed further in section 5, inter-professional co-operation can be difficult and therefore integration processes should also leave room for professionals to express discontent and disagreement, as this can also be a way for practitioners and organisations to learn and move integration and innovation forward.

The role of local actors in integrated service delivery

Today, regional and local governments across OECD countries tend to play an important role in the administration, implementation and provision of a range of public services. There is considerable variance in the organisation, finance, and management of different welfare services for various groups of individuals in vulnerable situations across OECD countries. However, subnational governments often play a role, e.g. in the implementation and delivery of employment, education, childcare, health, social, and housing policies. In some countries, the actual design of policies has also been delegated to lower levels of government (Heidenreich and Rice, 2016^[43]; OECD, 2019^[44]; OECD, 2019^[45]; OECD, 2023^[4]). During the last decades, there has been a host of decentralisation reforms in a number of countries often with the aim to replace centralised, rule-driven administration with decentralised and place-based management (Pollitt, 2005^[46]; OECD/UCLG, 2019^[47]; OECD, 2023^[4]). The decentralisation of responsibilities combined with the often close links between subnational governments and local stakeholders involved in service delivery makes regional and local governments central actors in processes of both vertical and horizontal service integration (see next section).

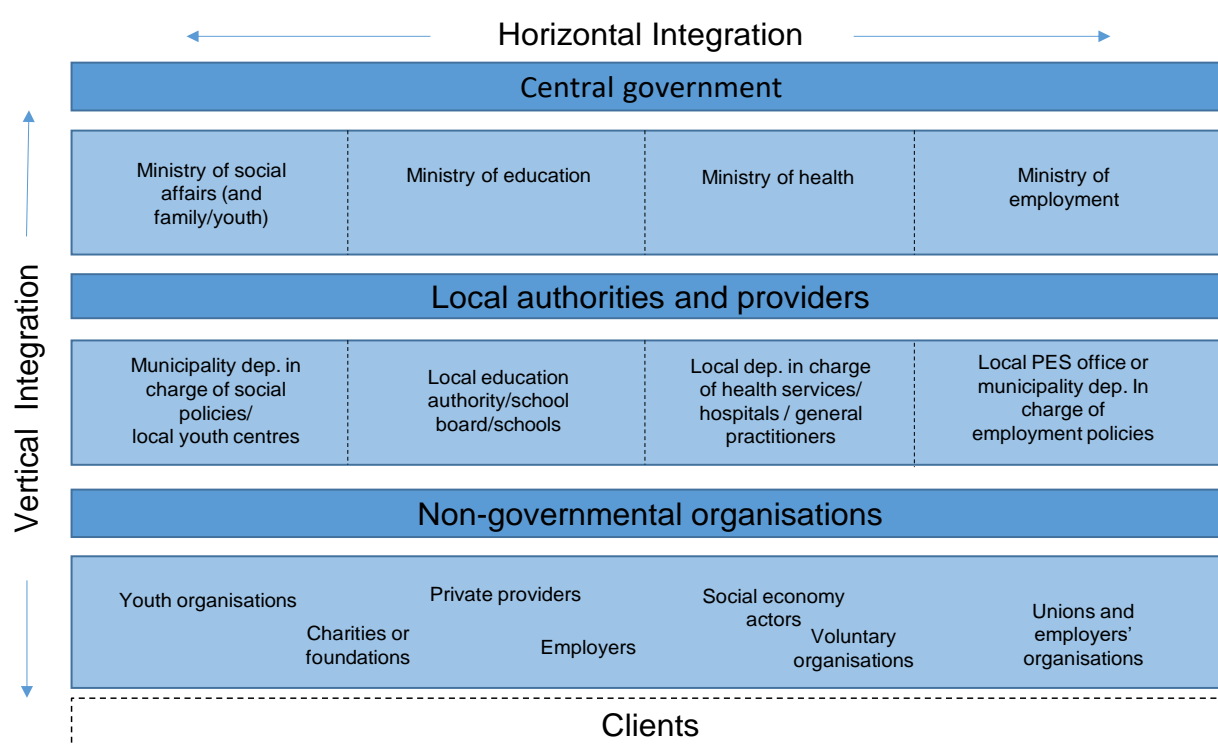
In many countries, the decentralisation of responsibilities has been combined with some kind of decentralisation of public spending. In two-thirds of OECD countries, the share of public spending undertaken by subnational governments (measured both in terms of share of GDP and share of total public spending) grew between 1995 and 2016. In 2018, subnational government expenditure accounted for 40.5% of total public spending and 16.2% of GDP on average in OECD countries. Today, when spending is measured as percentage of GDP, the most important responsibilities of subnational governments in OECD countries are education, health, general public services, and social protection. Social protection, which comprises expenditure related to social services and benefits as well as investment in social infrastructure for families, children and youth, elderly, the unemployed, disabled people, deprived persons, immigrants etc., accounts on average for 14% of subnational government expenditure and 2.3% of GDP across OECD countries (OECD, 2020^[47]).

In countries with a decentralisation of public spending especially on social services, a significant share of local budgets may go to individuals in vulnerable situations. As an example, a recent study of public spending on services in Danish municipalities has shown that on average 1% of the citizens in a municipality account for 30% of the total spending on welfare services at the local government level. On average, individuals in this 1% cost around EUR 110 000 a year and they tend to receive multiple services from different areas or authorities within the municipality (Implement Consulting Group, 2021^[48]). Depending on the subnational financing structure, the potential cost savings from integrated services delivery may significantly accrue to subnational governments. This also means that the case for reducing subnational spending on individuals in vulnerable situations is rather strong. However, given that labour market policies remain a national level competence in many OECD countries, the multiplicity of decision-making and service delivery processes is still a dominant feature (OECD, 2021^[49]).

Involving local governments in vertical and horizontal service integration

The often-significant role of subnational governments in public service delivery means that they play a central role in service integration reforms in many countries. Service integration may take place both horizontally across different authorities at a given government level, and vertically across different levels of government (Figure 3.2). In general, the more divided responsibilities for services are across levels of government, the more important the vertical dimension of service integration becomes. Equally, the more divided responsibilities for service provision are among local actors acting “on the ground”, the more important horizontal integration at the local level becomes (Froy and Giguère, 2010^[4]; OECD, 2014^[50]). In most countries, both horizontal and vertical integration are needed to strengthen support and improve employment outcomes for those who experience multiple challenges and needs.

Figure 3.2. Horizontal and vertical dimensions of service integration – an example



Source: Author's own elaboration based on OECD (2015^[5]), *Integrating Social Services for Vulnerable Groups: Bridging Sectors for Better Service Delivery*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Even in countries with very little decentralisation of service delivery, subnational governments tend to play a central role in both vertical and horizontal service integration processes due to their closeness to clients. As the level of government closest to citizens, local governments tend to have a good understanding of local needs. They also tend to have strong relations with local actors including public and private service providers, employers, social partners and social economy actors, who may all be involved in the delivery of different services regardless of how these are governed. Moreover, social services at the municipal level commonly serve as the main entry point for citizens with different social inclusion demands. These insights may be valuable when developing new and more person-centred service delivery models.

There are many reasons why service integration can be an advantage locally. First, subnational governments tend to deal with complex and interdependent issues, which often can only be solved through joint approaches. Second, solving problems especially for individuals in vulnerable situations tends to require significant resources, thus making it important to pull everyone together to invest in common challenges. Third, depending on the financing structure, integration might result in budget savings due to reduction in duplication and transaction costs, as well as in individuals in need of services. Fourth, service integration and the creation of links between local organisations and agencies may help build up social capital in a local community (Froy and Giguère, 2010^[4]).

When service integration drives decentralisation

In some countries, service integration has become the main driver of decentralisation reforms. A recent example is **Finland**, which is currently planning a large decentralisation reform of its public employment services system (OECD, 2023^[51]). One of the purposes of the reform is to transfer employment service responsibilities to subnational governments to improve the delivery of multi-sectoral and locally adjusted services for all unemployed, including the most vulnerable jobseekers (Box 3.1). The reform includes a strong financial incentive for Finnish municipalities to provide support especially for those who are furthest from the labour market. While Finland is still in the early stages of the reform process, similar efforts have been made in **Denmark**. Following a major multi-level governance reform in 2007, today Danish municipalities have far-reaching responsibilities for a range of public services, including employment and social services as well as social benefits (see also Box 4.9). Also in Denmark, strong financial incentives are in place to incentivise municipalities to support unemployed into work.

Box 3.1. When integration efforts drive decentralisation – governance reforms in Finland

Finland is preparing and implementing a reform of the regional government structure with the aim to improve the re-employment of unemployed by transferring the responsibility for public employment services from the state to municipalities as of 2025. Until now, public employment policies have been a national responsibility in Finland. Since March 2021, however, a large-scale local government pilot scheme on employment has been rolled out in municipalities across the country. The pilots in these municipalities are partly responsible for providing public employment services and aim at promoting employment by coordinating the resources, skills and services of state and municipalities. Based on thorough evaluation and monitoring of the pilot projects, the Finnish government plans to implement a nationwide governance reform, where it is expected that full responsibility for employment services will be transferred permanently to municipalities.

A key element of the reform is a change in the financing of municipalities, which means that the municipalities' responsibility for financing unemployment benefits will be expanded and brought forward in time (starting at 10% of the unemployment benefit after 100 days of unemployment and growing to 50% of the unemployment benefit after 700 days of unemployment). In practice, this means that the incentive for municipalities to get individuals into work increases over time and notably that long-term unemployed will represent a significant financial cost for municipalities. While this may strengthen the support for those furthest from the labour market, it also poses a risk of “parking” individuals that are closer to getting into work. Another key element of the reform is to provide better targeted, customer-oriented services which answers the needs of local labour markets. By transferring employment services to the local level, municipalities are provided with better possibilities to cooperate with the local stakeholder ecosystem and to combine employment services with education and training services as well as business support.

Source: Presentation by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in Finland at the OECD LEED Directing Committee 80th Session on 15 June 2022. OECD (OECD, 2023^[51]), *Evaluation of Active Labour Market Policies in Finland*, Connecting People with Jobs, OECD Publishing, Paris.

In the UK, the devolution of responsibilities to local authorities has been driven, among other things, by a wish to further integrate and localise services. In the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the Working Well Work and Health Programme is an example of how local authorities have used their new responsibilities to integrate employment, skills, and health services (Box 3.2).

Box 3.2. Integration of services for the unemployed in Greater Manchester

Among the 2.8 million population in Greater Manchester, 221 000 individuals are claiming out of work benefits, of which 64% have a health condition. At the same time, higher skilled jobs in Greater Manchester have increased from 39% to 42%, yet only 2 out of 10 boroughs exceed the national General Certificate of Secondary Education average attainment rate. In this context, the Working Well Work and Health Programme was developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to provide specialist employment, health, and skills support for the unemployed that face complex challenges. The programme is provided through joint commissioning to independent providers between GMCA and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) within the broader Work and Health Programme which is operating across England and Wales. Within the Work and Health Programme, a grant funding agreement and an extensive memorandum of understanding has been drawn up between the DWP and the GMCA to allow for the devolution of delivery responsibility to the combined authority.

The Working Well Work and Health Programme in GMCA was first developed in 2018 and following several tests and pilots, the programme is today underpinned by three core principles:

1) Personalised support where packages of support are provided to tackle personal barriers to employment and progression in an integrated way. This includes a keyworker model where one keyworker acts as a single point of client contact.

2) Local integration where a network of local integration boards broker service integration on the ground in each borough. This includes local leads in each borough, which is the single point of contact for co-ordination across boroughs. It also includes integration co-ordinators which creates the link between keyworkers and the local leads.

3) An “eco system” of work, health, and skills where systems are integrated across services to provide a joint strategy and shared goals as well as collaboration around services.

As of March 2022, the Working Well Work and Health Programme had 20 000 programme starts, over 7 500 job starts and over 100 000 external referrals to interventions above and beyond the direct delivery by the authority. Moreover, the return on investment for the pilot programmes has been £1.75 for every £1 invested.

Source: Interview with representatives from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Piloting

Pilot projects and testing of temporary models are also found in some countries. The development of nation-wide policies often draws on successful, smaller-scale initiatives tested in municipalities or regions – as is the case with the reforms in Denmark and Finland described in the previous section. The main objective of piloting is to drive national policies forwards by allowing regional and local authorities to drive the development of programmes and support measures locally within a nationally defined framework. Depending on the outcome these locally developed programmes may be scaled-up after the piloting period. Another recent example of a piloting project is the Changing Futures Programme which was rolled out over a two-year period (2012-2023) across **England**. A key objective of the programme is to generate learning and test a new partnership approach between government and local areas. This will inform future policy and the potential scale-up of new outcome-focused approaches in the future (Box 3.3).

Box 3.3. The Changing Futures Programme in England

Across the UK there are an estimated 363 000 adults experiencing multiple disadvantages, including a combination of e.g. joblessness, homelessness and mental health issues. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the UK experienced a growth in new and innovative local partnerships across the country supporting the most vulnerable people directly in their communities. The aim of the Changing Futures Programme is to build on and improve the way that local systems and services work for adults experiencing multiple challenges by supporting local governments in developing a joined-up and person-centred approach to local delivery. The programme brings together a selection of local areas that are committed to working with the national government and with each other to improve outcomes for people experiencing multiple disadvantages. As part of the programme, local areas receive funding to develop and test new approaches to integrated service delivery. The local areas are given the flexibility to highlight local priorities or challenges e.g. related to gaps in service provision or specific target groups. While allowing local flexibility, it is also expected that local areas demonstrate that the proposed approach does not duplicate but rather complement existing services and programmes.

Source: HM Government (2023^[52]), *Changing Futures: Prospectus*, [Changing Futures: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changing-futures-prospectus) (accessed on 17. April 2023)

Another example is the Connecting Communities employment support programme implemented by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in the UK from 2018 to 2022. By going into local communities across nine geographically defined neighbourhoods, the programme managed to provide intensive, personalised and context-specific services to those who might not otherwise have access to support. The physical presence in local settings helped to develop trust, build partnerships, and engage with residents in their own communities. Over the four-year period, the programme has engaged over 4 000 participants, including long and short-term unemployed and people in-work. Overall, 41% of out-of-work participants found work through the programme. The programme was overseen by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as part of their innovative employment scheme that aids combined authorities to work in partnerships with the government to support disadvantaged jobseekers into work (Bramley et al., 2022^[53]).

Service integration driven by local actors

In other cases, local integration efforts take place despite division of competences across levels of government. When synergies between services either horizontally or vertically are not pursued by national actors, local actors often respond by building networks and improving co-ordination at subnational level. Local service integrations are often structured around different forms of local partnerships where the myriad of local actors involved in service provision are brought together to provide more holistic support for individuals on the ground. Local partnerships to support service integration can come in many forms and can be more or less formalised. An example of a formalised local partnership is the “Stockholm Co-ordination Association” in **Sweden** (*Samordningsförbundet Stockholms Stad*), which aims to reduce fragmentation of policies especially for those individuals furthest from the labour market. By bringing together relevant actors with responsibilities for employment and social services, the Co-ordination Association can support individuals in vulnerable situations through multi-disciplinary teams. Another example is the Electronical Social Record implemented in the **Metropolitan City of Milan in Italy**. This is an electronical case management system that structures, coordinates, and streamlines the customer journey for individuals in vulnerable situations as well as improving data-sharing both cross the different municipalities and boroughs in the metropolitan area and different government levels (Box 3.4).

Box 3.4. Integration driven by local actors

The Stockholm Co-ordination Association, Sweden

In Sweden, employment policies are a national responsibility, while social assistance is provided by municipalities. To improve collaboration structures and develop new methods in the employment field, four different actors – the City of Stockholm, the Swedish Social Security Agency (*Försäkringskassan*), Region Stockholm and the Swedish PES (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) – formed the “Stockholm Co-ordination Association” (*Samordningsförbundet Stockholms Stad*). The association, which was formed in 2016, is responsible for a multi-disciplinary team, including PES and social assistance counsellors, which provides coordinated support for individuals facing multiple challenges. The team operates at the city’s *Jobborg* (Job square) and provides individuals with information and guidance on available support measures across numerous authorities. The team also supports the development of an individual action plan on how to reach work, studies, or self-sufficiency, which the team follow up on after six months. The co-ordination structure does not replace existing services but is a supplement “on top” for the most vulnerable individuals in the City of Stockholm.

The Electronical Social Record in Metropolitan City of Milan, Italy

To coordinate and integrate support for individuals far from the labour market and in need of social and related support, the Metropolitan City of Milan (also known as the Lombardy Region) is developing a set of guidelines and a new case management tool that cuts across the 134 municipalities in the region. The purpose of the new case management tool – named the Electronic Social Record – is threefold: 1) to gather and track beneficiaries in a uniform manner 2) to monitor the services and income support they receive and 3) to support auditing by streamlining the submission of relevant documentation from local to national level. The tool covers a range of policies and programmes that cut across the social and employment areas and where municipalities play a central role in the delivery of services in cooperation with other public and private stakeholders. With the tool, caseworkers can acquire, process, and share the necessary information to provide answers to citizens with social needs. Moreover, to ensure coordination with other actors and systems in the social and employment sphere, interoperability is established between the Electronic Social Record and other platforms that clients may be in contact with (e.g. MyAnpal operated by the regional Public Employment Services to support the unemployed and GePI operated by municipalities to support families enrolled in the minimum income scheme). The tool is developed through a process of co-design where it is continuously improved based on feedback from the many case managers that interact with beneficiaries across the region.

Source: Samordningsförbundet Stockholms Stad (2022^[54]), *UngKomp*, <https://samordningstockholm.se/insatser/ung-komp/> (accessed on 24 June 2022). Lombardy Region (2023^[55]), *La Cartella Sociale Informatizzata per la gestione dei servizi sociali dei Comuni*, [La Cartella Sociale Informatizzata per la gestione dei servizi sociali dei Comuni \(regione.lombardia.it\)](https://www.regione.lombardia.it/it/la-cartella-sociale-informatizzata-per-la-gestione-dei-servizi-sociali-dei-comuni) (accessed on 17 April 2023).

There are however limits to the forms of service integration that can be pursued through local partnerships. Since local partnerships are placed at least partially “outside” the public service structure, one challenge is that they can provide services but not benefits or income support to participants. In addition, partnerships cannot develop if local actors or institutions see themselves as competitors for scarce resources rather than potential partners who can all gain from service integration. Lastly, local partnerships to support service integration will always work in addition to, or even despite national structures, which may limit the reach and effectiveness hereof.

4

Service integration in practice – from national to local integration

In practice, service integration in different forms is already taking place in many OECD countries. While the main bulk of national reforms have focused on the integration of employment and social benefits with employment services (PES-led reforms), additional and often more locally driven examples are emerging not least for youth and families in vulnerable situations. In this section, examples of different forms of service integration across OECD countries are presented. First, it analyses the integration of passive and active labour market policies through national PES-led reforms. Then it zooms in on more locally driven or locally based service integration reforms for youth and families in vulnerable situations.

The integration of passive and active labour market policies

Over the past 25 years, OECD countries have taken steps towards integrating passive and active labour market policies to overcome incoherence in service delivery and strengthen support for jobseekers. Many of these integration reforms have focused on the integration of benefit and employment systems as a way to adjust public employment services to changing labour market realities.

Among the most advanced reforms are the development of different forms of “one-stop-shops” – i.e. administrative solutions in which service areas have been combined at a single point of delivery (Lindsay, McQuaid and Dutton, 2008^[61]; Taylor, 2009^[35]; Minas, 2014^[62]; Angers, 2011^[63]; Askim et al., 2011^[64]). Beyond the administrative co-location of services at a single point of delivery, these reforms often include the introduction of 1) integration of management and delivery of active and passive labour market measures; 2) job search conditions for most benefit recipients of working age, 3) a linkage of benefits and sanctions to sustain labour supply, 4) provision of services for new risk groups (e.g. training, rehabilitation and social services) and 5) a multi-professional approach to barriers to work (European Commission, 2018^[65]).

While all these reforms are already very far-reaching in their scope and ambition, more could be done to further integrate other services, move beyond co-location and take account of actors operating at the local level. Many of the reforms do not include further integration of other services such as social, health, and education/training. Moreover, while all being rather ambitious, the degree to which services are truly integrated as opposed to just being co-located varies depending on the design and implementation of the reform. Lastly, not all reforms take fully into account the range of actors operating on the local level.

Box 4.1. One-stop-shops – one concept, many uses

One-stop-shops are government offices where multiple services are offered at the same place. In public administration, the concept of one-stop-shops emerged in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s where it was an element of the New Public Management approach to running public sector organisations. Inspired by service models applied in the private sector, the ambition was to make to improve the efficiency of the public sector and to enhance client satisfaction by making services more consumer centric. The concept has since spread to many other OECD countries, but the use of the concept varies significantly, including in terms of the number and type of services and the stages in the case-handling process that is covered by the organisational model. One-stop-shops range from reception models where basic services are provided under one roof but where citizens are referred to other places for more specialised support, to more comprehensive models where everything is provided in the same place and within the same case management process.

From a labour market perspective, the establishment of one-stop-shops is often only one element of a large reform process moving towards an activation paradigm (e.g. establishing a closer link between passive and active labour market policies, introducing active job search requirements etc.). National Public Employment Service (PES)-led one-stop-shops have often focused on the integration of unemployment and social benefits with employment services.

Source: Minas (2014^[62]), *One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation?* International Journal of Social Welfare, Vol. 23(S1), 10.1111/ijsw.12090

Examples of PES-led service integration reforms

A few examples of PES-led reforms integrating passive and active labour market policies are found in Ireland and the United Kingdom, among other countries (Box 4.2). Key to these reforms is in the integration of services for the long-term unemployed (and other vulnerable jobseekers) and in some cases a more holistic approach to the client. In both **Ireland** and **the United Kingdom**, income maintenance and active employment support services have been combined and are today provided in one-stop-shops (Intreo in Ireland and the Jobcentre Plus in the United Kingdom) that serves as one point of contact for most unemployed individuals.

Box 4.2. Examples of one-stop-shops integrating passive and active labour market policies

Intreo in Ireland

Over the past decades, the Irish PES has undergone considerable changes. Previously, PES provision was administered by a number of agencies under the remit of different ministerial departments. However, following the 2008 global financial crisis, from 2011 a far-reaching reform of the Irish PES was undertaken. The reform included the integration of income maintenance and active employment supports in a one-stop-stop service called Intreo placed under the remit of the Department of Social Protection (DSP). In addition, due to significant increases in the Live Register, which shows the number of individuals registering for the two unemployment benefit schemes (Jobseekers Benefit and Jobseekers Allowance) in 2011-12, a new contracted service, JobPath, was created in 2015 with a focus on the activation of long-term unemployed to increase overall PES capacity. With the introduction of a new case management system that links unemployment benefit payments to active engagement with jobseekers supporting them into training and employment, the reform also represented a move

towards greater activation of unemployment benefit recipients to improve their progression to employment. Today, Intreo is the first point of contact for all unemployed and is responsible for processing all claims and payments of benefits and for providing activation services targeting the unemployed.

Jobcentre Plus in the UK

With a major reform in 2001, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was created through a merger of two previous separate organisations, the Department for Employment and the Benefits Agency, thus combining the job matching and job search activities with the benefit claims processing. With the merger of these two organisations and the creation of the Jobcentre Plus scheme, which is a part of the Department for Work and Pensions, a single point of contact for all individuals of working age seeking unemployment and social security benefits and engaging in job search activity was created. Today, there are over 600 Jobcentre Plus offices (local PES offices) across the UK, which provide personalised support to jobseekers.

Source: OECD (2021^[66]), *Disability, Work and Inclusion in Ireland*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/74b45baa-en>. Kelly et al. (2019^[67]), "An initial evaluation of the effectiveness of Intreo activation reforms", *ESRI Research Series*, No. 81, ESRI, Dublin. European Commission (2015^[68]), "Literature review and identification of best practices on integrated social service delivery - Part II", <https://doi.org/10.2767/723690>. Riley et al. (2011^[69]), *The introduction of Jobcentre Plus: An evaluation of labour market impacts*, Department for Work and Pensions, Research Report No 781. Considine et al. (2015^[70]), "The United Kingdom's Dual System", in *Getting Welfare to Work*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198743705.003.0004>.

Some PES-led reforms have gone further and sought to integrate social services with active and passive labour markets policies (Box 4.3). In Norway, NAV offices have the combined responsibility for the provision of income support measures, public employment services and social welfare services. The one-stop-shop centres operate at a local level and are equipped with staff that possess knowledge of both employment and social services.

Box 4.3. The Labour and Welfare Service (*Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen, NAV*) in Norway

Between 2006 and 2010, Norway merged different services and two different levels of responsibility (state and local) into a new Employment and Social Security Directorate (NAV). It builds on the former State National Insurance Administration that oversaw all social security benefits, the State Employment Service Administration that oversaw unemployment benefits, employment measures and public employment services, and local government social welfare systems that were in charge of social assistance benefits and social services. The reform aimed to increase working participation by making the administration more user-friendly, holistic, and efficient. Following the merger, 457 regional and local NAV offices were set up with staff from labour and welfare services and the local authority working together to provide coordinated services focused on clients' needs. The local offices operate as a part of the social services of municipalities. While subnational governments have the autonomy to make agreements with the central authorities on how they will implement the reform locally, it is required that one welfare office functioning as a joint frontline service shall exist in each municipality.

Source: European Commission (2015^[68]), *Literature review and identification of best practices on integrated social service delivery - Part II*, <https://doi.org/10.2767/723690>. Lara Montero et al. (2016^[37]), *Integrated Social Services in Europe*, European Social Network, Brighton. Minas (2009^[71]), "Activation in integrated services? Bridging social and employment services in European countries", *Arbetsrapport/Institutet för Framtidsstudier*, Vol. 11.

Supporting youth in vulnerable situations through service integration

Many young people have been hard hit by both the global financial crisis of 2008 and the COVID-19 crisis, and this may have long-term negative consequences for the smaller group of youth who experience significant social, health and labour market difficulties. As shown in the first part of this paper, NEET rates have gone up across OECD countries, including in countries that up until now did not face great problems with youth employment and education. While many of the young people figuring in these statistics will only experience short-term difficulties related to education and work, a smaller group of youth are at risk of experiencing significant long-term difficulties. This group of youth often face complex challenges (e.g. difficulties in the family, difficulties with learning, school dropout and lack of educational qualifications, mental and physical health problems, homelessness, substance abuse, crime, and unemployment), that require services from multiple public authorities (for an in-depth analysis of integrated services for young care leavers see (OECD, forthcoming 2023^[68])).

A whole-of-government approach is needed to support youth with complicated needs. Young people with complicated needs may access services from many places, which can lead to the most vulnerable not accessing the services they need and slipping through the cracks in the system. As shown among others in the OECD *Investing in Youth* series (e.g. (OECD, 2019^[72]; OECD, 2019^[73]; OECD, 2021^[74])), youth policies are designed and delivered by a mix of the central government, local government and the social economy organisations, covering a wide remit of services, including health, education, employment and training. Responsibilities often overlap and often there is no overarching department or authority responsible for the policy co-ordination. Therefore, policies enacted by different organisations risk negating or acting in contention with one another. As recognised by the OECD “2013 Action Plan for Youth”, which was updated in 2021 (OECD, 2021^[75]), a whole-of-government approach to youth is particularly needed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Managing youth school-to-work transitions

A central challenge for youth in vulnerable situations is the many transitions they go through when moving from adolescence to adulthood. In these transitions, young individuals have to make choices e.g. about their future education and career paths and will have to move from one service area or support system to another (OECD, 2019^[73]; OECD, 2019^[72]; OECD, 2021^[74]). International comparative studies on school-to-work transitions have shown that young people’s transitions have become increasingly de-standardised placing more responsibility on the young individuals to find their way through the systems (Müller, 2005^[76]; Albaek et al., 2015^[77]). This makes formulating and implementing integrated transition policies highly challenging (Walther and McNeish W, 2002^[78]).

In many countries, there is a fundamental difference in the nature, organisation and administration of policies targeting youth and policies targeting adults (e.g. under/over 18, 25 or 30 years old). The services a young person requires change as they age and therefore so does their engagement with the system. Different authorities, however, tend to focus on particular age-groups and this may create challenges for youth as it implies contacts with different/new caseworkers and authorities; that some services are no longer available while others have to be applied for again; and new requirements regarding activation. In addition, youth measures generally tend to focus on the “point of entry” and often stop once the young person has been placed into education or employment (Martin, Nativel and Sunley, 2001^[79]).

There is a strong consensus in existing literature, that comprehensive and holistic approaches to tackle youth unemployment are more effective for disadvantaged youth than single interventions (Newton et al., 2020^[80]). Combinations of support that include help to prepare for work, gain work experience, improve workplace skills and also address other barriers appear both common and effective. Combining multiple interventions in one programme also increases the likelihood of success of a given intervention type. In addition, studies also show that effective support for young people furthest from the

labour market is underpinned by intensive advisory support and personalised information, advice and guidance. The literature points to two factors in particular: the provision of one-to-one advisory support, and the continuity of the adviser throughout an intervention period (Newton et al., 2020^[80]).

Examples of national youth service integration reforms operating locally

Some countries are already experimenting with different forms of co-ordination and integration policies to overcome increasing differentiation across areas supporting youth. As shown with examples from Australia, Poland and Finland, often these measures come in the form of one-stop shops/youth centres (Box 4.4). In **Poland**, the *Voluntary Labour Corps* are operating locally to offer a range of services and activities for young people. In **Finland**, the *Ohjaamo centres* are an example of a national multi-service agency or one-stop-shop that provides multiple services for youth in local places. In **Australia**, the Individual Placement and Support Programme (IPS) is a national programme implemented across 50 selected headspace locations. In all three examples, the structure and content of the one-stop-shops are operated and decided on at the national level. However, the service delivery takes place at the local level supported by a network of local stakeholders.

Box 4.4. Integration of services for youth in vulnerable situations– national structures working in local places

Voluntary Labour Corps in Poland

The “Voluntary Labour Corps” (*Polisch Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*, OHP) is a state-run organisational unit working to prevent the social exclusion of vulnerable young people (between 15 and 25 years old). It consists of 721 organisational units and branches operating throughout Poland offering a range of services and activities, including education services to improve the general and vocational education of young people, employment support including counselling and guidance, job matching services and information, and social support measures. These services are delivered in close co-operation with actors in the local community including local government authorities, employers, and non-profit organisations.

The Ohjaamo guidance centres for youth in Finland

Since 2014, almost 70 one-stop-shop guidance centres for young people have been established at the regional level in Finland. The main objective of the centres is to bring together different service providers from private, public and third sectors in one place to provide co-ordinated support for youth in their transition from education to work. The centres are operated by municipalities or groups of municipalities. The broad network of partners involved in the centres includes youth and employment counsellors from the Finnish PES, social workers, nurses, outreach workers and a range of providers. The centres are staffed with multi-disciplinary professionals that can provide multi-sectoral information, advice, guidance and support in various matters (e.g. education, housing, employment, family, well-being and money matters). A key ambition of the centres is to challenge conventional practice and operational cultures and to develop on-the-ground leadership of youth services. Services at the centre are free of charge and everyone under the age of 30 can access the centres voluntarily. For youth who cannot access the centres in person, options to contact the centre by phone, WhatsApp, text messages and e-mail also exist. A national coordinating authority named Kohtaamo has been put in place to act as a mediator between the national government and the regional centres and to evaluate results. A number of evaluations of the youth centres have shown high level of participation and satisfaction among youth who received support from the centres. However, evaluations have also shown several areas where the centres could be further developed, including developing the local networks that are fundamental to providing transdisciplinary services and coordinating and engaging businesses and social economy

organisations in providing follow-up services for youth. To strengthen the multidisciplinary nature of the Ohjaamo centres, the Finnish government is testing a municipal incentive model funded by the EU Recovery Fund. Within this model, municipalities can apply for funding to cover salary costs related to the hiring of new experts in social, healthcare or training services.

The Individual Placement and Support Programme (IPS) in Australia

The IPS programme integrates employment and vocational services with clinical mental health and on-vocational support and focuses on the individual needs of young people with mental illness who are seeking to enter, or remain in, education and/or employment. The programme, which is also implemented in a range of other OECD countries, has been trialled since 2016 and is now being scaled up and rolled out through local headspace centres across the country. The headspace model involves the delivery of IPS services through a variety of organisations across Australia. Therefore, each centre has a lead agency (e.g. government health entities, community health organisations, medical services, large not-for-profit providers, or Aboriginal health services) that is responsible for the overarching organisational governance of the centre. The centres also work with a range of other services, including housing support, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, financial services, an independent living skills course and other allied health services, to achieve the best outcomes for participants. Especially in areas with limited service systems (e.g. rural and remote areas), the programme has proved effective as an “outreach” service for individuals that are otherwise difficult to engage in the support programmes.

The Youth Guarantee Support System in Estonia

In Estonia, the Youth Guarantee Support System (YGSS) implemented in 2018 is a tool for local government to map and reach out to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and offering them proactive, targeted support to continue their education and/or integrate them into the labour market. The mapping and out-reach to youth is based on data collected in the Social Services and Support Data Register. Within the support system, youth can draw on resources from the local ecosystem of already existing services aimed at preventing youth unemployment, including local municipalities, schools, the Estonian PES agency, and other partners that work with young people in order to find the best solution for each person. A study of the support system undertaken by the Institute of Baltic Studies has shown that the YGSS in conjunction with other support services has significantly helped non-active youth enter the labour market and/or to continue education in Estonia. In particular, the programme has been successful in reaching youth in need of assistance and proactively supporting them through a case management model where the individual needs and opportunities are at the centre of service provision and support. However, a key challenge for the YGSS is that only around half of the young people registered in the Social Services Support Data Register as NEET were contacted through the programme. Moreover, the cost-effectiveness of the programme could be improved, especially at the local level and that strong national support and coordination of initiatives across local areas is key to the success of the programme.

Source: Cedefop (2021^[81]), *VET toolkit for tackling early leaving - Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC)*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/da/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/ochotnicze-hufce-pracy-ohp-voluntary-labour> (accessed on 29 September 2021); European Commission (2018^[82]), *One-Stop-Shop Guidance Centres for young people (Ohjaamo)*, [PES Practice Guidance Centres FI \(3\).pdf](#) (accessed on 25 August 2022); Määttä (ed) (2020^[79]), *One-Stop Guidance Center (Ohjaamo) - Ready to offer multi-agency services for the young*, Kohtaamo (ESF), ELY-Centre Central Finland, <https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162148/OneStopGuidance.pdf?sequence=5> The Finnish Government (2023^[83]), *Municipal incentive model for Ohjaamo operations - payment of special government grant*, [Municipal incentive model for Ohjaamo operations - payment of special government grant - Suomi.fi](#) (accessed on 17 April 2023); OECD (2021^[6]), *Building inclusive labour markets: Active labour market policies for the most vulnerable groups*, OECD Publishing, Paris; Department of Social Services (2023^[84]), *Individual Placement and Support Program (IPS)*, [Individual Placement and Support Program \(IPS\) Program | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#) (accessed on 17 April 2023). Käger et al. (2020^[81]), *Analysis of the impact and effectiveness of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Support System*, Baltic Studies Institute, Tartu, https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Lopparuanne_NGTS.pdf

When youth service integration reforms drive decentralisation

In some cases, national ambitions to develop integrated and holistic youth services have resulted in decentralisation of responsibilities to lower levels of government. Through decentralisation reforms, governments are seeking to facilitate the provision of integrated approaches that are place-based and adjusted to different local realities and to empower subnational governments to make the right policy decisions for its young people. This is the case for example in **Denmark**, where the 2017 reform of the preparatory training and education system (FGU, *Forberedende Grund Kursus*) resulted in a concentration of responsibilities for youth policies at local government level. As part of the reform, Danish municipalities were given the full responsibility for preparing all young people under the age of 25 to complete secondary education or gain permanent connection to the labour market. It is also the case in **the Netherlands**, where a large decentralisation reform in 2015 placed all responsibilities for children, youth and family policies at local level (Box 4.5).

Box 4.5. When integration drives decentralisation – examples from Denmark and the Netherlands

The FGU reform in Denmark

In 2017, Denmark reformed their preparatory training and education system for youth under 25. The reform included two main elements. First, it replaced a large number of existing preparatory training and education offers for youth with one single, integrated and coherent programme for youth seeking to undertake upper secondary education or get into employment (*the FGU, Forberedende Grund Kursus*). The target group of the *FGU* is youth in vulnerable situations, under the age of 25 who have not yet finished an upper secondary education or entered the labour market. Second, as a part of the reform and to deliver a more integrated service for this target group, Danish municipalities were given the full responsibility for aiding all young people under 25 in completing secondary education or gaining a permanent connection to the labour market. All municipalities now have the responsibility to assess if young people are in the target group for the new *FGU* and to coordinate youth support measures across the education, employment and social areas. In terms of service integration, the Danish *FGU reform* is an example of a multi-service agency or one-stop-shop where service clients access one building for integrated services, including assessments and individual action plans and where previously separated services are combined in a single programme of merged provisions.

The decentralisation and transformation of the Dutch youth care system

As a part of a larger decentralisation reform in 2015, Dutch municipalities became responsible for all youth care services in the Netherlands. Dutch municipalities now steer a wide range of services for children and families, ranging from universal and preventive services to more specialised care for children and young people. Prior to the reform, services for children and young people were divided between local, provincial and national authorities, and services were often fragmented and ineffective. The goal of the decentralisation reform was to create a more streamlined, co-ordinated and holistic system and to adapt services and approaches to local needs. The decentralisation of youth policies was combined with decentralisation measures in the fields of long-term care, employment and education, thus making municipalities responsible for the whole continuum of welfare services for all citizens, including children, young people and families in need of help. Despite high ambitions, evaluations of the implementation of the Youth Act in 2018 and 2020 concluded that the expected outcomes of the reform had not yet been fulfilled. Among other things, the evaluation from 2020 highlighted that vulnerable children and youth still did not receive the specialised care they needed and that municipal expenses surpassed budgets.

Source: FGU Danmark (2021^[85]), *Reformen*, <https://fgu.dk/uddannelsen/reformen/> (accessed on 29 September 2021); and European Commission (2018^[86]), *Youth policies in the Netherlands – Youth Wiki national description*, European Commission – Youth Wiki, Brussels.

Locally driven youth service integration reforms

Beyond national reforms there is also a rich body of examples of locally driven service integration that operates on top of or as alternatives to national integration reforms. In Europe, interesting examples of locally driven youth service integration policies are found among others in Paris (France) and Manchester (the UK) (Box 4.6). In **Paris**, a Youth House (*La Maison de la Jeunesse*) has been established as a type of one-stop-shop service where youth can access relevant information and guidance. However, following national structures, youth services remain separated and are not merged into an integrated service. In **Manchester**, the City Council has introduced the co-location of career services to get young people already classed as NEET into education, employment or training.

Box 4.6. Locally driven service integration for youth in vulnerable situations – Europe

La Maison de la Jeunesse in Paris Centre, France

From September 2021, the City of Paris opened the Youth House (*La Maison de la Jeunesse*) in the centre of Paris. The main objective of the Youth House is to provide a one-stop-shop service for youth to get access to the many different national as well as local services in place in the city. In the “Youth House”, youth can access information and guidance in areas such as education, employment, childcare, health, sports and leisure and adult learning provided by a multi-disciplinary team. The project targets youth aged 16-25 enrolled in college or high school, but anyone can go, even without any proof of age or residence, and services are free of charge. The project is based on close co-operation with local stakeholders, including local employers providing apprenticeships, internships, and mentorship opportunities for youth.

Co-location of career advance services in Manchester, the UK

In 2018 the Manchester Local Authority NEET Reduction and Prevention project was launched by the Manchester City Council which introduced the co-location of a career service across five local areas. The purpose of the co-location model was to work with young people, parents and service partners in a more co-ordinated, integrated and partnership-based manner to get young people already classed as NEET into education, employment or training and increase participation and engagement rates of those who are at risk of becoming NEET. The co-located services were provided by Career Connect – a charity operating in the UK. One idea behind the co-location of career services was to promote a “culture of change” where Career Connect advisors would proactively engage with the host organisation and develop targeted and innovative services. An evaluation of the project showed numerous benefits arising from the co-location model, not least for the young people who found that the new form of guidance was helpful and engaging. The evaluation also showed that integration of advisers into the host organisation, strong communication channels, and specialised knowledge of the local area were important to achieve good results from the co-location model.

Source: Paris Centre (2021^[87]), *Maison pour la Jeunesse dans l'ancienne mairie du 1er arrondissement*, <https://mairiepariscentre.paris.fr/pages/reunion-de-presentation-du-projet-de-maison-pour-la-jeunesse-le-mardi-29-juin-a-19h00-18096> (accessed on 28 September 2021). Blake and Parker (2021^[88]), *An Evaluation of the Career Connect Co-Location Model*, International Centre for Guidance Studies, Derby.

Beyond Europe, examples of locally driven service integration for youth are found for example in New York City and Denver (the United States) (Box 4.7). In **New York City**, the NYC Justice Corps programme targets justice-involved youth and young adults that are in need of support to enter the workforce. The programme is managed by the City Council but is delivered by three independent service providers. In **Denver**, the Out-of-School Youth Services offers a range of service to not only youth but also their parents and families and to meet employment, education and social challenges.

Box 4.7. Locally-driven service integration for youth in vulnerable situations – the United States

The NYC Justice Corps programme, the United States

The NYC Justice Corps was first launched in 2008 by the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity as part of the city's strategy to fight poverty, including among young adults who are disconnected from work and education. The programme targets justice-involved youth and young adults and seeks to connect them to the workforce, either directly through job placements or through bridge opportunities such as educational programmes, vocational training, or similar youth development programs in New York City. The programme operates across four sites managed by three service providers. Each provider offers services in three main phases: 1) programme intake and orientation (2-4 weeks); 2) a community benefit project (13-15 weeks) and 3) an alumni phase (4 -10 weeks). Through these phases participants engage in cognitive behavioural development, workforce readiness, community engagement activities, educational classes and youth development programmes and they receive one-on-one case management.

The Out-of-School Youth Services in Denver, the United States

In Denver, comprehensive career and educational support services are provided to out-of-school youth in Centres of Family Opportunity (CFOs). The centres offer a range of "wrap-around" services to youth, parents and families designed to meet their employment, education and personal aspirations and they have a variety of staff on site – including case managers, social workers, and co-located staff from partner organisations. Throughout their participation youth receive support from a single case manager that communicates with them informally, travels off-site to meet in locations convenient to them, assess whether their basic needs are met, and helps them navigate the benefit systems. The centres offer in-house services to address mental and behavioural issues, build life skills, promote educational attainment and job training and promote career exploration. Among other things, youth pursuing education and training can access training funds, they are offered up to 120 hours of paid internships and a job developer matches them to available jobs through online databases.

Source: Cramer et al. (2019^[89]), *ridges to Education and Employment for Justice-Involved Youth*, Urban Institute. Matri and Zukiewicz (2017^[90]), *Denver WIOA Out-of-School Youth Services: Using Evidence-Informed Practices to Advance Youth Self-Sufficiency and Well-Being*, Mathematica Policy Research, Washington DC, <https://www.mathematica.org/-/media/publications/pdfs/labor/2017/denver-dps-brief.pdf> (accessed on 30 June 2022).

Integration of services for families in vulnerable situations

Families in vulnerable situations and at risk of social exclusion may be defined by their multiple risks and needs for support. Contrary to other groups, families in vulnerable situations are characterised by a form of vulnerability that affects the whole household instead of individuals alone. Multiple and often interrelated factors contribute to family vulnerability, including (long-term) unemployment, low education, insecure housing, financial insecurity, health or disability problems and different forms of abuse and family violence (on the last point see OECD (2023^[89]) for further analysis on integrated services to address gender-based violence). Often, multiple challenges faced by adults in the family affect the upbringing of the children and youth who then grow up with an increased risk of school-drop-out, criminality and mental health issues. These complex needs are often insufficiently addressed in the mainstream support system.

Families in vulnerable situations need help to create and maintain stability in their lives through access to coherent and accessible services that meet their complex needs in a holistic manner. If given the right support, they are an example of a group that often can be re-integrated into the labour market, as they are often vulnerable due to limited educational attainment, job or housing insecurities, or behavioural difficulties (Rosenheck, Resnick and Morrissey, 2003^[91]). Ideally, the service provision for families in vulnerable situations should be integrated not only for the individual member of the family but also for the family as a whole (OECD, 2015^[5]).

From national strategies to local implementation

A number of OECD countries are experimenting with the design and implementation of integrated service delivery for families in vulnerable situations at national level. At the national government level, some countries have taken steps to strengthen co-operation across national departments and agencies through formal or informal governance arrangements – e.g. national strategies monitored by inter-departmental co-ordination groups and “umbrella ministries” covering child, youth and family policies (OECD, forthcoming 2023^[91]). These types of co-operation across national departments support the move away from fragmentation and towards a more holistic service provision for families. However, there is no guarantee that they will translate into joined-up service provision at the local level (Froy and Giguère, 2010^[4]).

To move from national co-ordination strategies to local integration of front-line services, a more comprehensive approach supporting also vertical integration across levels of government and horizontal integration at local level is needed. Moves in this direction have been taken in some countries, including **New Zealand** and **Ireland** (Box 4.8). While these different family centres are important examples of service integration for families or households in vulnerable situations, many of them are characterised by a lack of integration with the PES models described above (Box 4.2). Given the importance of labour market attachment for families in vulnerable situations, future models of service integration for families should seek to find ways to also include PES service delivery.

Box 4.8. Examples of national strategies to support service integration for families in vulnerable situations

The Strengthening Families Strategy in New Zealand

The *Strengthening Families Programme* has been in place since 1997 with the objective to establish a co-ordinated process where multiple organisations and agencies are working together with a family to plan and organise services under one roof. The services provided by a range of community and government agencies is free of charge and provided on a voluntary basis to families with a child, children or young person(s) in their care and who needs help from more than one agency. Services include social work, truancy, budget advice, accommodation referrals, health programmes, schooling and other education services, counselling etc. 60 local management groups (LMGs) oversee the programme throughout New Zealand. The LMGs are often composed of managers from the government and community agencies, local government staff, indigenous organisation representatives and people involved in other community organisations. Among their main tasks are to encourage and promote the use of the programme and monitor and assess interagency co-operation.

The Family Resource Centres in Ireland

Through its network of 121 centres nation-wide, the *Family Resource Centres* (FRC) is Ireland’s largest family support programme delivering universal services to families in disadvantaged areas. Each FRC operates autonomously working inclusively with individuals and families to combat disadvantage and

improve the functioning of families in vulnerable situations. The programme has a strong local and community-based element, with emphasis on involving local communities in tackling the problems they face and creating successful partnerships between voluntary and statutory agencies at community level. In the centres, individuals and families can receive information, advice and support concerning the range of services available locally and their rights and entitlements to access these services. In this way, FRCs is a focal point for onward referrals to mainstream service providers rather than a one-stop shop for service provision.

Source: New Zealand Government (2021^[92]), *Strengthening Families*, <https://www.strengtheningfamilies.govt.nz/> (accessed on 29 September 2021). Tusla – Child and Family Agency (2021^[93]), *Family Resource Centres*, <https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/family-resource-centres/> (accessed on 29 September 2021).

Piloting new projects in local settings

The development of integrated service models for vulnerable families is also supported by piloting new and innovative programmes in local settings in some countries. One example is a pilot project in **Denmark** from 2014-2016, where they tested different models of service integration for families in vulnerable situations in 10 municipalities (Box 4.9). The results of the pilot project fed into the following national reform of services for individuals in vulnerable situations.

Box 4.9. Integration of services for families in vulnerable situations in Denmark – from pilot project to a political agreement on a new legal framework

Between 2014 and 2016, 10 Danish municipalities participated in a pilot project to develop local models to provide more holistic and integrated services for families in vulnerable situations. The target group of the project were families where 1) one or both parents received public benefits and 2) the family was characterised by complex social, health and/or unemployment challenges that cut across different areas. The municipalities were given the flexibility to develop their own integration models as long as they included the following:

1. A structure for binding collaboration across departments and management levels
2. Shared methods and tools for professionals to examine the situation of the family and develop a coordinated action plan
3. Multi-disciplinary teams
4. Involvement of relevant professionals outside municipalities
5. Involvement of civil society
6. Continuous evaluation of the needs and progression of the families

Building on the evaluation of the pilot project, a new legal framework for individuals in vulnerable situations was adopted in 2022. The framework includes the following principles: i) everyone shall receive a multi-disciplinary assessment of their situation, preferably coordinated by one case manager and resulting in a single coherent action plan based on which all following decisions on service provision shall be taken; ii) a simplified procedure for appeal; and iii) freedom of choice for municipalities with regard to the local organisation of service provision.

Source: The Danish Government (2018^[94]), *Aftale mellem regeringen, Socialdemokratiet, Dansk Folkeparti, Alternativet, Radikale Venstre og Socialistisk Folkeparti om rammerne for en helhedsorienteret indsats for borgere med komplekse problemer*, The Danish Government, Copenhagen, <https://www.regeringen.dk/media/6039/aftale-om-rammerne-for-en-helhedsorienteret-indsats-for-borgere-med-komplekse-problemer.pdf> (accessed on 24 September 2021).

Another example of a pilot project which has been going for many years is the P.I.P.P.I. Programme in Italy. The programme, which by now has been tested in numerous municipalities across the country, provides multi-dimensional support for “negligent families” where there is a significant risk of out-of-home placement (Box 4.10). An evaluation of one of the later stages of the programme statistics showed significant effects on children’s total risk of out-of-home placement.

Box 4.10. The P.I.P.P.I Programme in Italy

The “Programme of Intervention for the Prevention of Institutionalization” (P.I.P.P.I.) was launched at the end of 2010 as an attempt to promote stronger co-operation between national ministries, universities and subnational governments in the support for families in vulnerable situations. The first and second stage of the programme covered 10 Italian cities, while later stages have covered many more cities/territories across the country. The target group of the programme is so-called “negligent families” where there is a significant risk of out-of-home placement. Families involved in the project receive multi-dimensional support including four main activities: home-care intervention, parents’ and children’s groups, natural family helpers and co-operation between school, families, social and health services. An evaluation of the fourth stage of the programme based on a quasi-experimental impact evaluation showed statistically significant effects on the reduction of children’s risk of out-of-home placement. In addition, parents’ response to child’s needs were positive and, in general, professionals’ support to parents becomes less important after they have participated in P.I.P.P.I.

Source: Serbati, Lus and Milani (2016^[95]), “P.I.P.P.I. Programme of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalisation Capturing the Evidence of an Innovative Programme of Family Support”, *Revista de cercetare [i interven]ie social*, Vol. 52, pp. 26-50.

5

Challenges associated with service integration and the need for more evidence

Despite the significant number of individuals and groups in society that might benefit from service integration, real and extensive policy integration remains low in many OECD countries. This might be explained by the many barriers associated with integration reform. While public policy reforms are always challenging, integration reforms may be even more so due to the fundamental objective of going across policy areas and actors. In this section, the different barriers to reform as well as the lack of comprehensive evidence on the economic and social outcomes of reforms are analysed.

Possible barriers to service integration reforms across levels of government

While there are many possible gains from the integration of public services, there are also many possible barriers to integration – ranging from the political reluctance to undergo changes to the more practical difficulties when implementing reforms. In every case, the integrating actors need to agree on how the different organisations will be linked and their different roles, how to share information and data, how to handle staffing issues and possibly also need to develop a common language and shared understandings of purpose of the integration.

For local governments, the rationale or business case for service integration may not always be clear and many possible disincentives to pursue integration exist. While subnational governments in many countries play a role in service delivery, there may be elements in the governance and financing systems that create disincentives for both national and subnational governments to work together on service integration. Such structural elements must be well understood and taken into account when designing integration reforms.

Among the main challenges in this process are complex governance structures/multi-stakeholder service provision, differences in financing models, incompatible rules and regulations, professional differences, IT and data sharing, management and skills, third-party involvement and political differences:

- **Complex governance structures:** Responsibilities for public services remain spread across different levels of government in many OECD countries (Lauringson and Lüske, 2021^[96]). Authorities and service providers at each level of government are characterised by their own organisation, financing, management, interests and incentives. This may serve as a barrier to integration as it often entails significant structural and organisational changes. In countries where service delivery is spread across multiple public, private and not-for-profit providers, integration is more challenging and can be difficult for both local and national governments to pursue. Clear incentives, responsibilities and mechanisms for monitoring results must be in place to guarantee co-operation in these cases. This does not preclude variations at the regional or local level in the

implementation of integration measures, but strong accountability or transparent benchmarking is needed. In countries where most services are decentralised, subnational governments have more room to push forward horizontal integration, including through interaction with local providers. Yet, even in these systems there may be disincentives to service integration locally, including due to differences in culture or working methods and disagreement on management and leadership locally.

- **National strategies without implementation frameworks:** National strategies to promote co-operation between national ministries and other national actors can be important to pursue service integration also at local level. Yet, co-operation at the national level does not necessarily translate into increased co-operation locally. Often national strategies come without implementation frameworks that set out the details of how integration should work in practice, or how to take into account local variations, or without the budget needs to transform service provision locally.
- **Differences in financing models:** Integrated service models often require a large, fixed capital investment as well as running costs. Often the funding of these costs will come from different authorities (e.g. shared financing between national and local government or between different administrations or service areas within the municipality), that work according to their own (often tight) budgets. If financial responsibilities are spread across different levels of government, there may be perverse incentives to shift costs to make more use of services funded by another level of government. In addition, depending on how the returns from investment in services are shared between government levels, there may be disincentives for governments to increase investment if other government levels would benefit more. An example is the case where benefits or income support measures are placed at the national level, while employment and/or social services are placed at local level. In this case, local governments are not guaranteed that all the gains from spending on support services (e.g. in the form of reduced spending on benefits if individuals get into work) will fall on them. When integrating services, authorities need to find ways to pool their resources in a way that reflects the efforts that they put into the system and develop a model that provides adequate sources of finance and sustainable commitments to all involved actors.
- **Incompatible rules and regulations:** In most OECD countries, a complex system of rules and regulations characterised by their own objectives, logics and services regulates each service area. Even when the financial and organisational set-up is in place, differences in the legal texts may pose a significant barrier to practical integration on the ground. Service integration may be difficult due to incompatible objectives (e.g. a focus on activation and employment in the employment legislation vs. a focus on well-being in the social policy legislation) and priorities of services (e.g. whether to start with family counselling, housing support, career guidance or adult learning).
- **Professional differences:** Integration implies co-operation between a range of professionals with very different educational backgrounds, skills, culture, pay-levels, employment conditions and regulations of professions. Differences in skills and culture can make it difficult for professionals to understand and trust each other and can result in controversies over the right approach to individual cases (Maslin-Prothero and Bennion, 2010^[97]). As an example, approaches to employment support for youth range from more “human-capital centred” approaches (focusing on training and social development as a precursor to employment) to “work first” approaches (where rapid entry to work is prioritised). Moreover, differences in terms of pay and employment conditions may create internal hierarchies and result in disincentives to collaboration (Munday, 2007^[36]).
- **IT and data sharing:** Data systems play a central role in today’s public service delivery. Most public service transactions are recorded electronically in OECD countries, including data on individual service users and decisions on the assignment of services or benefits. Often, the different IT systems are built to fit the needs and work methods of a specific organisation and they are not capable of being adapted, integrated or even interfacing with other service systems. However, the effectiveness of integrated service delivery relies on the ability and willingness of professionals to

share data and information across organisations. Without this, each case worker only has access to a subset of knowledge which can negatively affect the quality of the overall support system. This requires integration of the underlying IT systems as well as legal adjustments to overcome issues related to service user's information and privacy (Maslin-Prothero and Bennion, 2010^[97]). However, IT system integration often takes time and is costly, which can make subnational governments refrain from engaging in these types of projects.

- **Management and skills:** The success of integration also very much depends on the interest and capabilities of management as well as clear assignment of responsibilities to avoid management gaps. When undertaking integration reforms, it is important to clarify questions such as who is ultimately responsible for administering the service, how are assigned budgets managed, and to whom is performance reported? Moreover, it is important to be aware that integrated services often require new types of professionals and inter-professional teams, which might require re- and upskilling (Hunt, 2012^[98]; Webber, Mccree and Angeli, 2013^[99]).
- **Third-party involvement:** In today's mixed service economies, private and voluntary or informal carers play an increasing role in providing public services. This is the case especially for social economy actors (OECD, 2020^[100]). In addition, in many countries, national or subnational governments contract the provision of services, including employment and social services, out to third party providers (Langenbucher and Vodopivec, 2022^[101]). The increasing number of actors may further complicate effective integration, but their presence also makes integration more relevant than ever. When designing reforms, policymakers must be aware of the role of third parties in integrated settings and of how to regulate and monitor the quality and continuity of their service delivery.
- **Political opposition:** Service integration is a complex reform exercise that typically involves and affects a range of stakeholders. The parliamentary system and the constellation of government as well as the economic and social situation may influence the ability to get such comprehensive reforms through the political system. Moreover, as with any other welfare reforms, differences in the view and interests of citizen groups may pose a significant barrier to change. As an example, organisations representing individuals in vulnerable situations may fear that the introduction of more flexible and active inclusion service systems will result in a loss of rights to benefits and services for their members and the introduction of stricter activation requirements. The same kind of political opposition to integration reforms may be found at the subnational government level, where party politics remain and where decisions are even closer to citizens and their organisations of interest. In addition, the risk of misalignment between short-term costs and long-term benefits as well as the uncertainty about the expected outcomes of welfare reform may introduce a political status quo bias against change (Hardy et al., 1999^[102]; European Commission, 2015^[103]).

In the literature, some attempts at overcoming these challenges as well as factors that determine success of integration have already been identified. These include clarity and harmonisation of goals across cooperating agencies; a clear division of responsibilities between agents; carefully designed financial and administrative incentives for co-operation; and adjustment of performance indicators to account for joint efforts (European Commission, 2015^[103]; European Commission, 2015^[68]; OECD, 2015^[5]; Taylor, 2009^[35]; European Commission, 2018^[65]). However, more research and international knowledge-sharing is needed to identify what works and what does not work in service integration.

Due to large economic, employment and demographic differences between regions, cities and local communities, the effectiveness of service integration at subnational level depends on the local context (Froy and Giguère, 2010^[4]). Factors such as geographical location and socio-demographics as well as the capabilities and resources of local governments may influence the ability of subnational governments to make service integration work in practice (Leurs et al., 2008^[56]; Williams and Sullivan, 2010^[57]). At the same time, institutional reforms made at the national level

provide opportunities or constraints when seeking to develop local service delivery models. The “Comprehensive Support Programme” (*Accompagnement Global*) in France is an example of an integration programme where continued division of responsibilities across levels of government combined with flexibility in local implementation has led to varying results across departments (Box 5.1) (OECD, 2021^[6]). To achieve equity in service delivery, regional and local areas, national and subnational governments must work together to develop service integration models that balance local flexibility with national coherence and quality.

Box 5.1. The Comprehensive Support Programme in France

The Comprehensive Support programme (*Accompagnement Global*) is a co-ordinated programme provided by the French PES (*Pôle Emploi*) in co-operation with the County Council (*Conseil départemental*). The programme targets the most vulnerable jobseekers who are not only unemployed but also struggle with other social challenges such as homelessness, health issues or financial issues. Within the programme, participants simultaneously receive support from an employment counsellor and a social counsellor, who regularly exchange information about the progress of the client. The decision to place individuals in the programme is taken by the PES and social counsellor in cooperation and in most cases is based on a number of bilateral interviews with the jobseeker undertaken by the PES and the County Council in parallel. A key element of the programme is intensive and individualised support, which means that most participants also participate in face-to-face meetings with PES and/or social counsellors at least once a month.

The cooperation across employment and social services builds on a national partnership agreement signed by the Assembly of French County Councils (ADF) and Pôle Emploi. In practice, this means that counsellors from the PES and the County Councils are not placed “under the same roof” and they are not at the same level of territorial governance, since employment policies remain a national competence in France, while social policies are governed at department level. Rather, cooperation takes place on a day-to-day basis and relies on the ability of individual counsellors and managers to work together.

An evaluation of the programme was carried out in 2017 in partnership with 11 County Councils. Overall, the evaluation showed that one year after their entry into comprehensive support, at the national level, more than half of the people have had access to employment (43% had access to a job lasting more than a month and 23% to a long-term job). Moreover, the evaluation showed that the programme has improved the ability of PES counsellors to detect social obstacles, which is considered relevant or very relevant by 85% of the counsellors questioned in the context of the evaluation. The evaluation also showed a number of challenges related to the specific cooperation model.

First, in many instances, the services provided remain relatively parallel despite the obligation to coordinate across authorities. As an example, most of the meetings with the jobseekers take place in parallel rather than as three-party interviews, e.g. due to availability constraints of counsellors. This increases the complexity of the process as well as the number of meetings the jobseeker must participate in.

Second, the differences in professional cultures across the two authorities sometimes causes a form of imbalance in the support with employment support being prioritised over social support.

Third, the governance model has resulted in significant variation across the County Councils. In the County Councils where co-ordination is most effective, social counsellors are dedicated to work on the programme, one social counsellor oversees the work of all those within the team and is responsible for the communication with the PES colleagues, and both parties are involved in setting up a joint

integration plan for the client. In the County Councils where support is spread over a large number of social workers, PES counsellors are required to interact with many individuals, which burdens the coordination system unnecessarily.

Source: Pôle Emploi (2018^[58]), *Éclairages et Synthèses: L'Accompagnement Global des Demandeurs d'Emploi: Une réponse adaptée aux besoins d'un public particulièrement fragilisé*, Statistiques, Études et Évaluations, Paris, https://www.pole-emploi.org/files/live/sites/peorg/files/documents/Statistiques-et-analyses/E%26S/ES_47_accompagnement_global_des_DE.PDF (accessed 16 May 2023). Pôle Emploi (2022^[59]), *L'Accompagnement Global*, <https://www.pole-emploi.fr/region/hauts-de-france/candidat/pole-emploi-vous-accompagne/laccompagnement-global.html> (accessed on 24 June 2022). Csillag (2021^[60]), *European Network of Public Employment Services: Support to vulnerable groups*, European Commission, Brussels. OECD (2021^[6]), *Building inclusive labour markets: Active labour market policies for the most vulnerable groups*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

The lack of strong evidence on social and economic outcomes from service integration

Despite great expectations of the positive results from service integration, the evidence on the long-term outcomes of integrated service delivery for individuals in vulnerable situations is still limited (Taylor, 2009^[35]; OECD, 2015^[5]; Lara Montero et al., 2016^[37]). When it comes to evidence on the economic outcome of integration of employment, social and other related services, to a large extent work still depends on predictions and desktop calculations rather than on actual observed cost savings. Among other things, this has to do with the difficulties in isolating the effects of integration from broader employment and social interventions. However, in the health sector there is more extensive evidence on the cost effectiveness and cost savings of service integration (OECD, 2023^[104]). Another challenge is related to the multi-sector and multi-service nature of service integration programmes. In multi-sector cooperation programmes, evaluations can be challenged due to different understandings of how social exclusion can be prevented and which outcomes and indicators to measure. Moreover, when providing multiple services at the same time and often by different actors using different financial resources, it can be difficult to measure the effects of the whole package.

Among the few examples of evidence on the economic outcome of integration processes in the employment and social field is the evaluation of the Jobcentre Plus reform in the UK (Box 5.2) and the reform of the Irish PES. The evaluation conducted by the Department for Work and Pensions found that the reform is likely to have led to a small rise in GDP of about 0.1%, which in the longer term outweighs the initial investments made by the government. Also, the quantitative evaluation of the pilot project to support youth in vulnerable situations in Denmark (see Box 4.2) showed positive outcomes in terms of employment. The evaluation showed that 25% of those adults who were not in employment prior to the project, had been in employment one or more weeks during the project period (17% had been in employment in five weeks or more). Moreover, the self-reported well-being of the adults in the project increased, especially for those adults that entered into employment during the project period (Deloitte, 2017^[105]).

Box 5.2. Evaluation of the Jobcentre Plus reform

With the introduction of a stronger work focus to benefit a broader group of individuals, the business model for Jobcentre Plus was based on the assumption that it would increase effective labour supply. Thus, leading to an improvement in the functioning of the labour market, with consequent economic benefits and public expenditure savings. Based on empirical analysis in the years following the reform, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has estimated that by the time Jobcentre Plus was fully rolled out across the UK, flows from benefits into jobs were likely to be around 40 000 per year higher than they would have been had the reform not take. By simulating the potential macroeconomic effects of this move from benefits to employment, DWP found that the reform is likely to have led to a small rise in GDP of about 0.1%, which in the longer term outweighs the initial investments made by the government.

Source: Riley et al. (2011^[69]), *The introduction of Jobcentre Plus: An evaluation of labour market impacts*, Department for Work and Pensions, Research Report No 781.

In the literature, a more extensive body of research and evidence on the *social outcome of integrated service delivery* exists. In the OECD review of existing literature on the (mainly short-term) effects of integrated service delivery for individuals in vulnerable situations (OECD, 2015^[5]), benefits for both practitioners, youth and families are identified. For practitioners, integration has been shown to facilitate changes in the working culture, which result in a better understanding of the roles of other professionals, better information sharing, a reduction in duplication of services and better communication with local communities (e.g. (Statham, 2011^[106])). For families, better parenting practices, and parents feeling more effective in their roles as well as improved experience of service usage and better clarity of, and accessibility to, services are highlighted (e.g. (Sloper, 2004^[107]; Statham, 2011^[106])). For youth, targeted interventions for youth with complex mental health concerns as well as mentoring by local case workers and co-location of youth support services have shown positive impacts on the willingness to and actual enrolment in education or employment (e.g. (Muir et al., 2009^[108]; EMCC, 2013^[109])).

Examples of specific programmes that have showed positive results in terms of social outcomes cut across different welfare areas but often remain rather limited in size and scope. Among these are the housing-first approach for the homeless in England, the integration of mental health services with educational institutions for children with mental health problems and the use of holistic services for families in vulnerable situations in Denmark (Tsemberis, 2010^[110]; Remaeus and Jönsson, 2011^[111]; OECD, 2012^[112]; Deloitte, 2017^[105]). Based on a collection of 44 practices on integrated services from public authorities across Europe, the European Social Network (Lara Montero et al., 2016^[37]) finds that the most commonly identified effects of projects according to authorities are 1) improvement in services co-ordination for the organisations involved, 2) improved service access for service users, 3) and improvement in service users' well-being.

6 Conclusion

Integrated service delivery presents a promising way for governments at all levels to support individuals in vulnerable situations and to do more with limited public means. Across the OECD, many countries have taken important steps towards more integration of employment, social and other services nationally as well as locally. Yet, significant barriers to integrated service delivery remain and knowledge on both social and economic outcomes is still limited. As governments at all levels set out to design and implement new service integration reforms and programmes, it will be important to further build the evidence base on what works and what does not work and how service integration can be a positive investment that also shows results in terms of national and local budgets. Within countries, there is a need for more systematic evaluation of the implementation and results of both national-level reforms implemented across all local areas as well as locally based pilots and locally driven initiatives. At an international level, systematic, comparative analysis of different service integration approaches across countries and local areas could also help improve knowledge on the challenges and social and economic opportunities that arise from service integration.

It is at the local level where services are delivered on a day-to-day basis that service integration can make a real difference for individuals in vulnerable situations. Given the significant regional and local variation in challenges with vulnerable populations, a nationally designed one-size-fits-all approach to service integration would most likely not be effective in most countries. Rather, the ambition should be to design place-based policies that take into account local contexts and acknowledges the positive role local actors can play in integrated service delivery. This paper has outlined examples where local actors play an important role in the design, management and implementation of service integration reforms and programmes. These include local implementation of national reforms, piloting of programmes in local settings, and locally driven service integration programmes that work on top of or in addition to existing national structures. Moreover, in some countries, decentralisation has been used to push forward service integration by placing the responsibility for a range of welfare services at lower government level.

Going forward, the different roles that subnational governments can play in integrated service delivery and the different vertical co-ordination and collaboration measures that may support or impede place-based integration policies could be studied more in-depth. Within multi-level and multi-actor governance systems, vertical co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms are necessary if national strategies or reforms are to result in integrated service delivery on the ground. A wide range of co-ordination mechanisms already exist across OECD countries (e.g. guidelines for service delivery standards from national to subnational levels, joint service delivery agreements across levels of government, funding arrangements to incentivise co-operation and integration, cross-government co-ordination bodies, and cross-government data-sharing mechanisms) (OECD, forthcoming 2023^[91]). Yet, more systematic, cross-country knowledge on the mechanisms that work and do not work and how different models of decentralisation and re-centralisation affect co-ordination efforts is needed. A particular focus within this work could be on the financing structures that incentivise or disincentivise service integration at local level. Building from this, recommendations could be developed on different ways to involve subnational governments in national reforms and strategies, the types of vertical co-ordination problems that should be addressed when designing reforms within multi-governance structures and the types of tools to facilitate this.

Furthermore, there is a need to better understand the factors accounting for success and failure when integrating services locally e.g. through local pilots that are locally-driven programmes. This includes further analysing the influence of factors such as the coherence/incoherence in national and local legislation, local government organisation and management structures, systems for local administrative data collection and sharing, local demographics and labour market conditions, locally developed caseworker cultures, and local funding mechanisms. It could also include in-depth studies of the key characteristics of service provision for vulnerable groups in different local settings (e.g. their contact points with different local authorities, the services they receive and how these are coordinated, and the costs associated with the support for these groups). Similar considerations apply for the involvement of third parties. This includes the question on how to expand the role of the social economy in service integration and create local structures that harness the potential benefits of partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors. Taken together, such studies could help local governments develop and increase the efficiency of their service offers for vulnerable groups. Enhanced knowledge on these issues could also support the development of pilots to test new programmes in local settings as well as the identification of best-practice programmes with the potential to be scaled up to national level.

In the end, service integration is first and foremost about creating a better service experience and delivering a higher quality service for individuals and families. International analysis and comparisons are often done from the perspective of institutions, laws and regulations. How end users in different countries experience these programmes and services remains underexplored. Individuals in vulnerable situations may at the same time be those most in need of services and those who are least equipped to navigate between different providers. Going forward, a better understanding of how services are perceived and experienced by the clients and how to move towards more human-centred design is also needed.

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