

RESEARCH PILOT PROJECTS CAMPUSES

1. DESCRIPTION PROJECTS AND TARGET GROUP

August 2008

INTRAVAL

Groningen-Rotterdam

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

© St. INTRAVAL

Correspondence address:
Postbus 1781
NL-9701 Groningen
E-mail info@intraval.nl

www.intraval.nl

Groniongen office:
St. Jansstraat 2C
T +31 (0)50 - 313 40 52
Fax: +31 (0)50 - 312 75 26

Rotterdam office:
Goudsesingel 184
T +31 (0)10 - 425 92 12
Fax: +31 (0)10 - 476 83 76

August 2008

No part of this publication may be reproduced and/or published by means of print, photocopy, microfilm or any other medium without the prior written consent of the publisher.

Text:	B. Bieleman, J. Snippe, M. Boendermaker, M. Hofman
Translation:	Jensen Localization
Layout:	M. Boendermaker, M. Hofman
Cover design:	E. Cusiël
Printing:	Repro GMW
Client:	Ministry for Youth and Families/Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment

ISBN: 978 90 8874 038 1

SUMMARY

With a view towards tackling non-participating youths, a number of ministries (Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment; Ministry for Education, Cultural Affairs and Science; Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports) are jointly investing ten million euros in practical initiatives run by councils and other local/regional project implementers. These projects consist of sending youths at risk of drifting into crime to facilities where they will follow an intensive training and re-education programme. The Ministry for Youth and Families is responsible for the pilot projects, which are being evaluated by INTRAVAL, bureau for social-scientific research and consultancy. This report is the first of three evaluation reports, and starts by describing the policy assumptions, which also build the analysis framework for the evaluation. This report then goes on to describe the pilot projects and their target groups. Finally, the target groups, goals and the characteristics of the youths participating in these projects are compared with those of current projects for non-participating youths.

1. Pilot projects

The projects' goals and the projects' design are compared with the goals and design assumed in the policy assumptions. The following points are important.

- The content of the pilot projects is still in development and is continuously changing. Different projects have adapted their methodology based on the experiences they have gained. This makes evaluating the projects difficult.
- The projects are very different in terms of intensity, duration and design. These differences are explained by the fact that the ministries did not define clear selection criteria for the pilot projects.
- The projects' main goals, namely the completion of a (normal) training that will help youths get (normal) jobs, match the goals formulated in the policy assumptions. Most of the projects focus on both goals, while some of the projects focus on only one of them.
- One of the starting points the policy assumptions build on, is that the youths spend long days in the facility, whereby the aim is to keep them occupied for 12 hours a day and in some cases even provide 24-hour support. Four pilot projects actually offer a 12 to 24-hour day, five to seven days a week. The intensity of the other projects is lower, both in terms of the number of days per week as well as the number of hours per day. A number of these projects have indicated that low intensity is not good for the target group.
- The policy assumptions are based on an integral approach in which several agencies bundle knowledge and competence. For a number of projects, this integral approach is indeed one of the methodology's key elements. This is, however, not the case for all of the projects.
- In light of the description of the target group ('recalcitrant youths') the ability to use pressure and force is an important element in the policy assumptions. The projects should be set up to take on youths that have been forced to participate and are not very cooperative. Most of the projects treat cooperativeness as a selection criterion for participation. Even for the projects where pressure and force can be used, the project staff indicate that the project will not help participants who do not show even the slightest cooperation. A number of projects are not at all equipped to help youths that are entirely uncooperative. The fact that most projects have (minimal) motivation as a

selection criterion does not mean that they do not reach the target group of the policy assumptions. Participants can be not motivated for a job and going to school, but can at the same time be (minimal) motivated to participate in the project.

- A number of projects use selection criteria to judge the participants' cognitive skills. For some projects, (serious) psychiatric disorders are a contraindication. In addition, some of the projects have refined the selection criteria in the implementation phase because the target group that was initially reached was too uncooperative and/or too difficult to support. By refining these selection criteria, the target group reached by the projects increasingly differs from the group targeted by the policy assumptions.
- Although most of the projects have the financial and human resources needed to accept the intended number of participants, the majority of the projects have empty places. The projects attribute the disappointing influx to the reticence of the referrers and the elusiveness of the target group.

2. Target group

The policy assumptions are mainly based on youths between the age of 12 and 27 who skip school for longer periods of time, do not have a job, are not on benefits, are not looking for a job or training, do not have a basic qualification and are not reached by the current facilities. And, they do not have to care for anyone. In policy documents of a later date in describing the target group, no reference is made to be or to be not on benefits or have or have not a basic qualification. In these policy documents is said that youths from the target population sometimes cause serious social nuisance or threaten to slip further and further into unemployment or criminality. Comparing the above-mentioned target group with that of the pilot projects and the participants that actually enter the programme reveals the following points.

- The policy assumptions state that the pilot projects are intended for youths that have been skipping school for a longer period of time and do not have a job. Most of the projects not (only) target youths that do not go to school or do not have a job, but (also) youths that are at risk of dropping out of school or of losing their jobs. Of the participants that entered the programme, very few actually skip school or do not have a job. The target group that is reached is different than the group the policy assumptions are targeting.
- The problems that the participants who enter the projects have are usually worse than the project leaders expected. The severity and complexity of the problems are often underestimated. Although psychiatric problems are a contraindication for participation in most of the projects, the project staff have indicated that a number of participants have psychiatric problems. These problems often only surface during the project. The project staff also indicate that the limited cognitive skills of some participants create a bottleneck in the target group.
- Although almost all of the projects target boys and girls, 87 per cent of the participants are boys. There is only one project that has an equal number of male and female participants.
- The policy assumptions assume that the projects target youths between the age of 12 and 27. The age of the projects' intended target group varies by project, but falls within the 12 to 27 range in all projects. In actual fact, hardly any youths younger than 15 or older than 23 have entered the projects.
- Although the total group of participants shows an equal representation of youths of Dutch, Surinamese and Moroccan ethnicity, the distribution within the individual projects is very different. In some projects, all of the participants are of Dutch ethnicity, while in other projects, not one of the participants is of Dutch ethnicity.

- When the alcohol consumption of youths participating in the pilot projects is compared with national figures, the percentage of participants that have consumed alcohol is lower than the national average. The percentage of participants that have used soft drugs is, on the other hand, considerably higher than the national percentage. The number of participants that have used hard drugs is lower than the number of soft-drug users, but here too, the usage is higher than the national average.
- The pilot project participants between the age of 12 and 17 have committed more criminal offences in their entire career than youths of the same age category have committed on average. An examination of the number of criminal offences committed in the last year reveals that younger participants (aged 12 to 15) have committed more criminal offences than average, while participants aged 16/17 have committed less criminal offences than average. Good comparison material is not available for participants aged 18 and older.

3. Comparison with current projects

The policy assumptions assume that the pilot projects target youths that have been disqualified for current projects run by education, child and youth welfare, and the judiciary. In order to determine whether the pilots really reach a target group that has been disqualified for current projects, a comparison has been made between the goals, the target group, i.e. the participants and the contents of the pilot projects on the one hand, and the target group, i.e. the participants and the contents of current projects on the other hand. The comparison revealed the following points.

- The majority of the current projects are aimed at steering participants towards (normal) education or (normal) work. This means that the main goals of the current projects match those of the pilot projects.
- The current projects' target group generally consists of youths whose behavioural problems disqualify them for normal education, youths that are not willing to follow a training programme or look for a job, criminal youths or youths that the judiciary has placed as part of a supervision or juvenile detention measure. These are all youths that do not have a basic qualification and do not want to go to school. By lowering the offer's threshold, the projects are trying to reach youths that have turned their backs on social services. This target group broadly corresponds to the group targeted by the pilot projects. In terms of age distribution, sex and ethnicity, the participants entering the current projects are comparable with those entering the pilot projects. Two of the pilot projects have indicated that they specifically target participants that do not qualify for current projects. With the exception of these two projects, the group targeted by the pilot projects is the same as that targeted by the current offer.
- The contents of some of the pilot projects is different than the contents of the current projects. None of the current projects, with the exception of the juvenile detention centres, are more intensive than 40 hours a week, whereby half of the pilot projects have an intensity that is higher than 40 hours a week. In a number of pilot projects, some of the participants are placed in a setting outside their own living environment, which distinguishes these programmes from current programmes. And finally, a number of pilot projects differ from current projects in terms of the partnerships between the different organizations. Both the current projects and the majority of the pilot projects indicated that they work very closely with the different social services. For some of the pilot projects, this collaboration is more of a key element of their methodology than for current projects.
- To the extent that can be currently estimated, the aftercare provided by the pilot projects is not much different than the aftercare provided by current projects. Both the

duration and the intensity of the aftercare provided by the pilot projects, as is formulated in the project plans, are comparable with the aftercare provided by the current projects.