



Combating Inequalities through Innovative Social Practices  
of and for Young People in Cities across Europe

## **WP7 Evaluation of an Innovative Practice ‘The New Opportunity’**

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**City: Rotterdam**

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## Cover page

|   |   |
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| <b>Centre for day treatment and transformation of multi-problem young men</b> |   |
| <b>The New Opportunity</b>  |   |
| <b>City</b>   | Rotterdam   |
| <b>Pilot type</b>   | Case study of existing Socially Innovative Practice   |
| <b>Type of target group</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Living day by day, opportunistically. Given up hope and lacking competences, social support and motivation to change;</li> <li>2. Multi-problem young men, often very low education, high levels of (hidden) psychiatric or addiction problems, large proportion with a criminal record.</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Type of practice</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning and counselling: Individual support and group sessions: social work, behavioural training and education</li> <li>2. Offering opportunities: jobs, education, specialised care, network</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Aims/objectives in brief</b>   | <p>The New Opportunity (TNO) is a “centre for change and transformation”. Its goal is to support young men (18-27) with multiple problems to participate in society by: a). working on sustainable changes in thinking and behaviour b). to direct them to work, school or, if necessary, specialised care. TNO is often seen in Rotterdam as the ‘end station’ or the ‘last chance’ for this age group.</p>  |
| <b>What needs, what inequalities</b>  | <p>TNO focusses on altering the dynamic, changeable factors behind the (delinquent) behaviour of the participants (the needs) these needs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practical problems</li> <li>• social and psychological problems, addictions</li> <li>• lack of education</li> <li>• lack of ‘labour-identity’; specific and general, communication and relationship skills to function in a job</li> <li>• lack of motivation, meaning giving, lack of identity</li> </ul> <p>The goal is transformation. From surviving to living, from chaos to stability, from criminality to good citizenship and from street culture to work identity.</p> |
| <b>What (activities in brief)</b>   | <p>Intensive (4-6 months) programme in day centre containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intake/introduction phase: motivation &amp; stabilisation (1 month)</li> <li>• transformation &amp; socialisation phase (1-4 months)</li> <li>• outflow/placement phase: finding and keeping a job or a place at school (1-3 months)</li> <li>• after care</li> </ul>  |

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|   | <p>Multi-modular day programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cooking (breakfast and lunch), sports, culture.</li> <li>• education &amp; behavioural training</li> <li>• working on Personal Development Plan with personal coaching</li> <li>• individual assistance from social worker</li> <li>• job training</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Who (actors)</b>                                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Young male participants (18-27) without stable employment and almost all without basic qualifications, also important for word of mouth 'advertising'.</li> <li>2. Intake-phase: Youth Counter (municipality), forensic rehabilitation services, District and neighbourhood-teams, Youth workers.</li> <li>3. TNO-Team</li> <li>4. Partner YOUZ (youth department of a mental health organisation)</li> <li>5. Placement-phase: specialised municipal job agencies, individual employers, District and neighbourhood-teams, Youth workers, members of the TNO-community (in development)</li> <li>6. Academic research group at TNO.</li> </ol> |
| <b>How (involvement of the actors, their roles)</b>     | <p>The participants have to show their 'willingness to change', to follow the rules and to participate actively. TNO staff have the possibility to invest time and energy in guiding the individual participants. Specialised partners help to meet the goals: Youz (care), employers/employment offices and schools. The Academic research group provides knowledge regarding target group and effectiveness of the programme.</p>   |
| <b>Scope: number of the participants of practice(s)</b> | <p>In 2014, 340 people were referred to TNO or went there themselves. 208 of them actually started the programme. At the end of 2014, 35 were still in the intake-period, 97 did not start (mainly due to contra-indications or because contact was lost).</p>  |
| <b>Duration (when the project/practice started)</b>     | <p>Since 2007</p>   |
| <b>RESOURCES</b>  |   |
| <b>Financial</b>  | <p>50/50 financed by national government: €900.000 (ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, €900.000 (municipality). No budget per person/trajectory. From 2016 onwards the municipality will be entirely financial responsible.</p>  |
| <b>Personnel</b>  | <p>17,7 Fte.<sup>1</sup>, including:<br/>General Director, director internal affairs, office manager, team manager, cook and:</p>   |

<sup>1</sup> Methodiekbeschrijving Stichting 'De Nieuwe Kans' [Methodology The New Opportunity], October 2014.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
|              | <p>5 social workers (3,8 Fte),<br/> 3 behavioural trainers (0,87 intern, 0,8 extern)<br/> 6 teachers (4,4)<br/> 1 placement coach<br/> 1 after care coach<br/> 1 psychiatric nurse (extern)</p> |
| <b>Other</b> | <p>The centre is located at the edge of a socially deprived District on Rotterdam's South Bank.</p>   |

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## Introduction

The New Opportunity is a day (treatment) centre for young men (18-27) without work, education or regular activities. Its participants are young adult males facing problems in different aspects of life and who have almost always been involved in criminal activities in the past. TNO started in 2007 as one of nine pilots for forensic day care ('pilot campus' for vulnerable and often criminal young men). Of these pilots commissioned by national government, two were continued. To date, TNO, tries to support 200 young men on a yearly basis, ordered and financed by the ministry for Health, Welfare and Sports and the municipality of Rotterdam. From 2016 onwards, TNO will be fully financed by the municipality. At the moment of writing, a merger with Horizon, a Rotterdam based organisation for youth care and education of vulnerable children, is being prepared.

At The New Opportunity young men are supported on their journey towards a different way of life. *"The goal is transformation, a change: "From surviving to living your life, from chaos to stability, from criminality to good citizenship and from street culture to work identity. That is also what participants often say themselves: 'I want to change.'"*<sup>2</sup>

Changing towards a different life means that the professionals at TNO ask the participants to take responsibility for their own behaviour, and ask to strive for a stable position in society. *"That means: working on your needs, being self-sufficient and creating new perspectives by trying to obtain education or work, or to find [specialised] care."*<sup>3</sup>

Its goal is to support young men (18 -27) with multiple problems to participate in society by: a) working on a sustainable change in thinking and behaviour b) to direct them to work, school or, if necessary, specialised care. TNO is often seen in Rotterdam as the 'end station' or the 'last chance' for this age group. It is designed to cater for those who have contra-indications for 'lighter' provisions.

## 1. Evaluation methodology

This case study is based on a combination of desk research (websites, year reports, project and methodology descriptions), semi-structured individual interviews and a group interview with participants April – June 2015 (see Appendices 1 and 2). In addition, staff of the Academic Research group at TNO kindly provided information. The Academic research group at TNO runs a large research programme on TNO and its participants.<sup>4</sup> If already available and relevant, information from this research was used for this case description.

We spoke with 3 participants, the General Director, the team manager and four staff members. A senior policy advisor at the municipality was also interviewed. All quotations are from interviews conducted for the Citispyce-research project, unless indicated otherwise. In

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<sup>2</sup> Mission from: Year report 2014: p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> This research includes: a. Brain research on young adults with a criminal record. b. Outcome research on the TNO-programme (RCT). C. Research on the Dutch approach towards of young adults with a criminal record (system, interventions, characteristics target groups).

addition, discussions with representatives of provisions (including TNO) and public officials (see WP6 Rotterdam pilot description) during meetings of a local working group on improving the intake and referral process for young people in Rotterdam provided input for this evaluation.

## **2. Project/Practice Design**

### ***2.1 Social Issue(s) addressed***

The project works for the city of Rotterdam and national government and targets individual young unemployed men, always indicated as ‘multi-problem’ and in many cases with a criminal background. It is also targeted at young men with urgent needs who are not self-sufficient. Unlike the other two practices (Buzinezzclub and Challenge Sports) referral not only takes place through the Youth Counter (central municipal office for social assistance and obligatory education for young people aged 18-27), but also through forensic rehabilitation services and through neighbourhood and youth workers. A relatively large group turns to TNO without institutional referral, because family or friends were positive (word of mouth advertisement).

TNO wants to break the circle of (self)exclusion, in which approximately 2000-5000 multi-problem young men in Rotterdam between 18-27 are trapped. TNO focusses on altering the dynamic, changeable factors behind the (delinquent) behaviour of the participants. The factors, described as needs are:

- practical problems
- social and psychological problems, addictions
- lack of education
- lack of ‘labour-identity’ (specific and general (communication and relation) skills to function in a job)
- lack of motivation, meaning giving, lack of identity<sup>5</sup>

### ***2.2. Project goals and plans***

The primary goal is to support young men to change their lives. The project is focussing on “*changing unhealthy thinking and unhealthy behaviour*” (General Director). A complex task because in that process many different choices can be made.

A core message is that everyone is welcome to grab this ‘new opportunity’. The philosophy is to be ‘warm’ towards the participants and to stress the importance of discipline at the same time. This is seen as the cornerstone of the ‘pedagogic culture’ that is seen as essential for the programme.

TNO developed – assisted by the academic research group at TNO - a well-described and detailed programme of interventions. TNO describes its approach as ‘holistic’, since it addresses physical, mental, socioemotional, cognitive and practical issues (housing, debts, and limited mastery of the Dutch language).

The goals are measured intensively by TNO, its partners Youz and the academic research group, and results are shared with stakeholders and others. For this purpose a range of

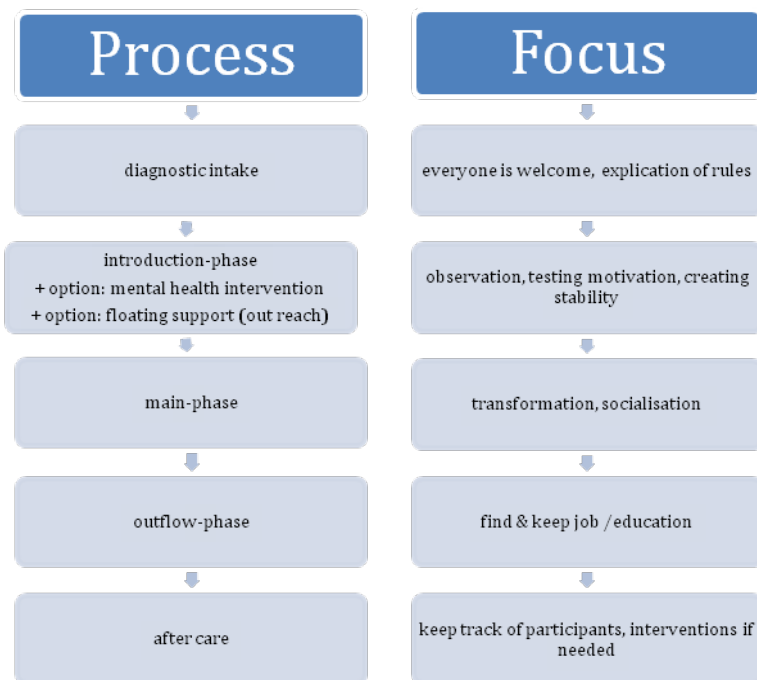
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<sup>5</sup> Methodology 2014: p.12-15.

different instruments are used, such as the SSM (Self-Sufficiency Matrix) and other checklists (TNO) and diagnostic instruments from the mental health sector (Youz). Moreover, almost all potential participants that are referred through the Youth Counter to TNO are included in a Randomised Control Trail (RCT).<sup>6</sup> All participants are included in a participant follow system.

### *Main components and phases*

#### *Overview of process and focus points*



The programme is based on:

- A good ‘pedagogic climate’: ‘warm and disciplined’
- Individual support by a team of three (triangle): a social worker, a (behavioural) trainer and a teacher.

The programme during all phases (except after care) mainly consists of group activities, but all participants develop a personal plan and progress is discussed and monitored in individual sessions. The average running time of the programme is 5 months and after care is provided for two years.

Important principles behind the programme: make young people see criticism or rejections as fruitful experiences not as simple failures. Building trust and social bonding are essential elements.

Important in the intake phase is to screen the potential participants on individual needs, including those concerning mental health or addictions. ‘Care’ has been integrated in the programme. In the extensive intake period of one month, the participants are screened on mental health issues with a ‘light’ diagnosis & treatment instrument and observed by social workers, trainers and teachers.

<sup>6</sup> No data available at this stage.



*“Rewards work better with this group than punishments. But you have to make clear: ‘on this you perform well, that has to become better. You are here and you have to go there.’ In order to make them see that they are responsible and know where they have to go.” (Job coach)*

*‘Some boys were very eager to go to work, but then it appeared to be too early. We built on a structure: what do we want to see, before someone starts in a job (trail-period). Otherwise we create only negative experiences.’ (Job coach)*

*“We found some employers who could make very clear what they often miss in this target group.” (Internal Supervisor). With that information on expectations towards attitude and skills, TNO did ‘rebuild’ its outflow to work phase. It has to be clear that someone is ready to work, to prevent drop-out and unnecessary disappointments. For this reason, an important innovation in the outflow-phase (direction work) has been a shift in focus from individual support to a combination of:*

- Pre-phases: job skills training, mini-trail period
- Collective pathways (maximum 3 months) aimed at obtaining branch-certificates (asbestos removal, bike repair)
- Individual support during official trail-period in a job and afterwards (up to two years)

The participants have difficulties in judging situations with an open mind, the internal supervisor witnesses this often in the aftercare period: *“‘The boss is an asshole’, they say, they stress out and nobody corrects them. Or they panic and don’t know what to do. Then they call us and ask for advice. We need to do more with this. (...) That’s why we want to build a community with volunteers on which our boys can count, a kind of buddy project.”*

Other aspects of the programme are summarised in the table below:

| <b>Phases</b>                | <b>Elements /characteristics<sup>7</sup></b>   |
|------------------------------|--|
| Introduction-phase (1 month) | New intakes year round <sup>8</sup>  |
|                              | Introduction-lecture<br>Weekly Personal Development Plan talks<br>Observations (checklists)<br>Address all practical issues  |
|                              | ‘Light’ Diagnosis and Treatment screening & plan by Youz (mental health service): obligatory for all participants although not all need / receive mental health care /addiction care afterwards.   |
|                              | Education: sport, arts, Dutch language, Citizenship.<br>Behavioural training: ‘Changing is acting’, both individual coaching and group sessions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity, getting to know your own life and personality</li> <li>• Patterns behind behaviour and communication</li> <li>• Victimhood and responsibility</li> <li>• Self-motivation &amp; empowerment</li> <li>• Working towards goals</li> </ul> |
| End of introduction-phase    | Decision: a). continue in programme, b). back to referring organisation, c). continue preparation for programme in an outreach setting (support light in neighbourhood) d). stop in support.   |

<sup>7</sup> Mainly taken from the Methodology description and interviews with staff members.

<sup>8</sup> New groups can start each 14 days.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Main-phase (1-4 months)    | Choosing a path to work or education.  |
|                            | <p>Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health promotion/rehabilitation:</li> <li>• Social skills training</li> <li>• Health education</li> <li>• How to raise a child<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Stress management</li> <li>• Emotion, aggression regulation training</li> </ul> <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dutch language, maths</li> <li>• Citizenship &amp; labour identity</li> <li>• Sports &amp; arts (affective &amp; physical development)</li> <li>• Theatre (ImproBattle): role play</li> </ul> <p>Behavioural training ('Changing is acting'), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social skills, communication, giving and receiving feedback</li> <li>• Responsibility, empathy, pro-active behaviour</li> <li>• Planning, conflict regulation</li> <li>• Wealth, success, meaning-giving</li> <li>• Networking, finding a job</li> </ul> <p>Studying for certificates, such as VCA (basic knowledge on safety, health and environment), obligatory for employees in many branches (construction, renovation).</p> |
| Outflow-phase (1-3 months) | General job skills training in neighbourhood (rhythm, motivation)  |
|                            | Short challenging trial-period at a company  |
|                            | Placement at school or at companies  |
| After care (up to 2 years) | Keeping track with former participants, providing assistance if needed   |

### ***2.3 Competences and resources required***

TNO staff has the possibility to invest time and energy in guiding the individual participants. Specialised partners help to meet the goals: Youz (care), employers/employment offices and schools. Beside them, the Academic research group provides knowledge regarding target group and effectiveness of programme.

The team of TNO is predominantly relatively young. Important characteristics of the team are; affinity with the target group, expertise /qualification, experience and personality. Academics and higher educated professionals work together with those who followed intermediary vocational education or are experts by experience. The team has an effective mix of competences, according to TNO.<sup>10</sup>

*“My point of departure in job performance evaluations is: how interesting are you in the eyes of the participants? Because they come to us to solve their problems, but also for us. We have to be in shape, because it all starts with extrinsic motivation. (...) It is about connecting, can you work on their needs? Can you personalise their needs? Can you understand their preoccupations no matter how strange they might seem? Can you take them and their*

<sup>9</sup> Many men in the programme have children.

<sup>10</sup> Year report 2014: p.24.

*thoughts and wobbly arguments serious. But also: are you able to counter these with your own values?* (General Director)

TNO is 50/50 financed by national government: €900.000 (ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports and municipality: €900.000 (municipality). This is a fixed budget, aimed to direct 200 participants to work, education or specialised care, but without direct financial consequences if the target is not reached. Its special status is reflected in the fact that it is not financed on a budget per person/pathway, such as many other reintegration organisations. From 2016 onwards the municipality will be entirely financial responsible.

## ***2.4 Degree of organization***

The New Opportunity started as part of a national pilot-programme aimed at innovation in reducing the nuisance in city neighbourhoods caused by young offenders. TNO has been experimenting with different methods. It started providing help in the neighbourhood and to families of the young people (according to the ACT (Assertive Community Treatment) principles). To date, most activities are located in a centre, although home-visits and outreach activities still exist.<sup>11</sup> It is clearly a top-down initiative working with a strict and well described procedures and a clear day rhythm. Programme-integrity is important. Yet, tailor-made assistance is important; staff have room to make its own choices and to vary the kind and level of support it gives to the clients. The young participants are triggered to bring in their own problems, frustrations and solutions. Creating a warm atmosphere includes giving the participants a say and tasks in, for example, cooking the daily lunch.

The practice mainly addresses the micro-(individual) and the meso-level (see also: 4.1).

TNO's approach is holistic and the participant's needs that are addressed are very diverse ranging from practical problems to behaviour at work and issues related to meaning giving and personal and group identity. Thus, the practice can be classified as addressing both (social) competences (SID) and addressing standards of "normality" (MUD). In addition, it can be seen as working on redistribution (RED) too, although only on an individual level by offering marginalised young men new opportunities for socioeconomic improvement.

In terms of the typology the practice can be placed in the fourth quadrant, since it focusses on young people with limited capacities and - mostly - lack of motivation. Many of them have previously been the subject of law enforcement measures.

## ***2.6 Transfer adaptations***

The SIP has not been transferred, and was developed in Rotterdam. Over its life course it has been adapted. Its methodology and constituent parts of its approach are described and currently researched by an academic research group affiliated to the Free University of Amsterdam (on a large grant from a charity promoting effective social change in Rotterdam).

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<sup>11</sup> TNO methodology 2014: p.5.

### 3. Organisational context of implementation

TNO works with a difficult target group that attracts constant attention from politicians looking for more effective ways of disciplining, punishing or supporting young offenders and their families, and saving the wider society from harm. As a consequence, practices such as TNO are constantly scrutinised and have to deal with strong opinions and changes in political preferences. Out of nine pilots starting in 2007, targeting young people with criminal records, 2 pilots were continued, including TNO. Yet, despite the recognition it received, TNO encountered organisational difficulties in the past and is considered as vulnerable because of its relatively small size. A merger in the near future with an organisation for youth care and education (under 18) has been made public and set in motion.

TNO is well connected to various services. Since 2013, the mental health organisation Youz offers specialised care in mental health and addiction within the TNO-programme. TNO cooperates closely with the academic research group that, among other things, carries out a large longitudinal study on young multi-problem adults (males) and researches the effectiveness of the day treatment at TNO. The Youth Counter is another important partner. For organising a positive outflow, the workers at TNO have to liaise with specialised municipal employment services, individual entrepreneurs, schools, et cetera.

In addition to the principal funding by the municipality and the national government, the organisations attracted funding and other forms of support (coaching, internships) from charities, churches and employers.

### 4. Project implementation and outputs

#### 4.1 Targeting of the program

The organisation is working with young people referred by the Youth Counter, forensic rehabilitation services and new participants that find their way to the organisation via friends, family or (youth) workers in neighbourhoods.

| <b>Where do participants come from?<sup>12</sup></b>             |        |
|--|--------|
| (Municipal) Youth counter  | 20-30% |
| Forensic rehabilitation  | 10%    |
| Welfare organisations, neighbourhood teams, youth workers        | 10-20% |
| Not referred by an organisation: own initiative, family, friends | 40-50% |

The share of the Youth Counter will probably grow as the municipality will be the only commissioner of TNO from 2016 on. The Youth Counter, since 2014 assisted by a first

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<sup>12</sup> Figures from 2014.

screening by researchers of the Academic Research group at TNO, sends only multi-problem young men to TNO. <sup>13</sup>

Inclusion criteria are:

- Male
- 18-27
- Complex problems in various domains of life: housing, school/work, finances, mental health, addiction, socioemotional development.
- Citizen of Rotterdam

The main contra indications are:

- Single problem
- Psychiatric problems cause a person to become a threat to himself or other people (acute dangerous behaviour).

*“These young people did not without reason loose trust in others, society and themselves.”* (Year report 2014). Many have been raised in families in which problems were frequent (unemployment, poverty, lack of love and attention), have been clients of youth care and have been in contact with police and other institutions at an early age. Approximately 40% of the young men deal with serious behavioural problems<sup>14</sup>. Because of their problematic behaviour they were expelled from school, or just stopped going there. A small pilot by the academic research group (under 30 participants) revealed a high prevalence of severe mental health problems (76% of the participants), of debts (83%) and a very low educational level and indications for mild intellectual disabilities.

In terms of capacity – motivation, we can conclude<sup>15</sup>:

- Not motivated – capable: 10% (but a larger share among those who come to the intake)
- Not motivated - not capable: (30%): need long and intensive support, high needs, likely to drop out (although some come back at a later stage)
- Motivated – not capable (30%): need intensive support, high needs
- Motivated – capable (30%): their past makes them struggle with themselves and society: Need practical help and support in working on trust, self-esteem, discipline and labour skills.

## **4.2 Addressing needs**

See 2.1.

The interview with participants gave some additional information regarding their situation and the way they perceive the support offered by TNO. One of the participants, (M, man, unemployed) says *“I started here in December 2014 and left in February or March. I had no address, so I had to stop. I organised that and came back.”* This participant was referred by the municipal Youth Counter.

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<sup>13</sup> Within a RCT, half of diagnosed multi-problem males (18-27) are send to TNO, other half of this group is send to the control interventions (Challenge Sports and various care programmes).

<sup>14</sup> Year report 2014: p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Estimations by management of TNO.

Another participant (D, man, unemployed) says: *“I want to go to school, become an electrician and afterwards start my own company.”* He left school in October 2014 and could only re-start at another school in September 2015. He went back to Curaçao, his land of birth but could not find work there and returned to Rotterdam after a few months. He starts in September at school, but thought: *“What am I going to do at home? I will start thinking, too much thinking. And then I will do stupid things on the street. Here at The New Opportunity is positivity. I don’t want to go backwards, but forward.”*

A third participant (B, man, unemployed) emphasizes the importance of discipline: *“Getting back a day rhythm, most people here don’t have that anymore.”* The first participant adds: *“The rules are strict. If you come in after 9.30, you are sent away. (...) If you don’t show up often, the Youth Counter is informed. (...) You have to show that you’re motivated.”*

The second participant states: *“It is also about helping yourself. (...) I came here and thought: ‘let these people do the work.’ But no, you have to do it yourself. They will help you, but you have to look for a school yourself, for example.”* And the first participant adds: *“It is a good solution. Step by step you move forward.”*

#### ***4.3 Empowerment, engagement and choice***

The programme is a fixed one and the rules are simple and strict and clear to everyone. The participants do not have a say in the daily programme. But they are encouraged to bring in personal stories and views and are motivated to speak out in lessons and other group sessions. The participants have to develop a view of the way they want to proceed towards building a normal life (formalised in a Personal Development Plan).

#### ***4.4 Stakeholders involved***

Compared to the other two practices from Rotterdam included in this study, TNO has many stakeholders and partners. As for Buzinezzclub and Challenge Sports, the Youth Counter/municipality is the most important partner and its role will grow as from 2016 it will be the principal funder of TNO. Other important stakeholders are intermediary vocational education schools in Rotterdam and businesses.

#### ***4.5 Competences and resources involved***

See 2.

#### ***4.6 Barriers and drivers for implementation***

The drivers for implementation are described in 4.7 and 4.8, in this section we will focus on critical implementation barriers that can also be seen as challenges for further improvement.

In general, it turns out to be difficult to reach the goal of a positive outflow of 200 participants per year to education, work or (specialised) care with this target group. To reach this goal, the amount of referrals and/or self-referrals should be higher, the high no-show rate (people referred to TNO but who do not start) and drop-out rate should be lower and the possibility for placements higher. We will discuss these problems/barriers in more detail:

- First, many potential new clients get 'lost' on their way to TNO. Lack of motivation is an important reason for this. In 2014, 69 participants left the programme before completing it and 12 others were detained.
- A second barrier is that jobs are hard to find for the target group, although the situation is slightly better than a few years ago. However, the positive outflow to the labour market is low. Sector-job training programmes are scarce and expensive and have to be financed by funds, churches or individual employers. Additionally, it is difficult to find enough employers who want to take the risk of working with these young adults. Success here leans heavily on personal networks of the staff and others in the TNO-network. A related barrier is that the relative success and popularity of placement in sector specific job-training programmes sometimes leads to unrealistic expectations or disappointments. *“Please I want also job training A or B’, they ask us, but it is not so simple.”* (Team Manager). All participants have to complete the programme and only 20-40 participants can be placed in such relatively expensive and scarce sector projects.
- The third problem concerns the high dropout rate at schools. *“It is still a mess. Out of 44 young people of the TNO target group, after three years only 3 are still in class. At school they are still as free as a bird. (...) And schools still can’t figure out what their real needs are. We are organising new disappointing experiences.”* (General Director).
- A fourth barrier that is identified is that *“healthy networks in the neighbourhoods are missing”* (General Director). After finishing the programme *“the participant is changed, but his network stayed the same. Although they can lean on a job or education, they can be seduced to making wrong choices again.”*<sup>16</sup>
- Another barrier is related to the way local services are financed. From 2016 on TNO will be financed by the municipality and is hence obliged to develop a price per individual re-integration pathway. This process is difficult for various reasons, an important one being that it is unclear how the outreach and after care activities can be calculated within this financial framework.
- Staff of TNO complain that the detailed information on the development of individuals that they collect is insufficiently used by the municipal youth coaches. As a result, the participants have to tell their story over and over again, coaches and others have to produce new client files, pathways and other interventions appear twice or more in statistics.

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<sup>16</sup> Year report 2014: p. 21.

#### ***4.7 Innovativeness***

As innovative aspects we have identified:

- ‘Healthy thinking’ and ‘healthy behaviour’ as basic conditions for reintegration on the labour market: Paying in-depth attention to issues such as personal identity, group identity, street culture and labour identity, real or perceived discrimination, coping with mistakes in life in preparation of down to earth, realistic, concrete actions towards leading a stable, ‘normal’ life and finding a job or education.
- Integration of care into the programme to prevent (mental) health issues to frustrate progress on other domains and to lower the threshold for accepting specialised care.
- The combination of a formalised, well thought-out internal programme with outreach work: home visits, and other forms of light, floating support. Including support for those who are not ready yet to do the programme, or for those who have been put on ‘hold’. Important because it keeps the contact alive, expresses compassion and trust and makes clear to the young people that there is a second opportunity.
- The way the demands of potential employers are integrated in the programme under the headings of, among others, labour identity, and socioemotional development. Addressing topics such as: discipline, loyalty, integrity, giving and receiving feedback.

#### ***4.8 Success factors and conditions***

The following factors can be identified as critical for success:

- The connection with neighbourhood and youth workers is important because it opens the way to find and attract people who are motivated to start the programme. This factor is of course connected with the possibility to work with young people who sign up themselves, or are referred to TNO by these workers (the other two practices studied as part of WP7, Buzinezzclub and Challenge Sports, can only serve clients via the Youth Counter).
- The connection with these community workers is also essential to keep track of people once the programme has ended.
- Additional funding and knowledge from the private sector in the outflow-phase: charities, individual employers, churches.
- Specialised care offered at the TNO-centre on mental health and addiction problems lowers the threshold for the participants to seek help. Important because these issues often hinder individual development and make people leave the programme before completing it.
- TNO is using a realistic, systematic and grounded approach to reach its goals. Some vital elements – e.g. its ‘pedagogic climate’ and the use of motivational interviewing and behavioural therapy - are evidence based. With help of the academic research group at TNO, TNO hopes to be able to prove the effectivity of the entire programme within a few years. Whether that will be possible remains to be seen, but the presence



of the researchers has already brought about a more focussed and elaborated approach, along with more reflectivity.

- The amount of time and energy that is and can be devoted to directing people towards jobs and schools or specialised care and to ‘keep in touch’ with them over a long period of time (2 years).

In addition clients highlight:

- The people working at TNO show real interest. For example: “They will phone you when you stay away. A normal school won’t. They would only make a record of that.” (E, unemployed, no basic education).
- TNO asks much of the participants, but you get something in return: “The rules are strict. (...) And you have to take action yourself. That’s good.” “But in turn they also step in to assist you. If you call up a school or firm yourself, they will often reject you quickly: “He has not finished this and that...” (A, unemployed)

## 5. Project results/outcomes

It is difficult to draw a line between direct results (effects) of the programme and the outcome, or between intended and unintended outcomes. We start with the results that are reported and monitored.

### *Results*

2014<sup>17</sup>

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| New registrations/sign ins                                 | <b>340</b> |
| Not started in 2014  | <b>97</b>  |
| Still in intake (on 31-12-2014)                            | <b>35</b>  |
| New starts 2014  | <b>208</b> |
| Already in programme (on 1-1-2014)                         | <b>91</b>  |
| Not completed programme                                    | <b>81</b>  |
| Dropouts   | 69         |
| In detention   | 6          |
| Send back to referring organisation                        | 6          |
| Positive outflow   | <b>124</b> |
| To work  | 56         |
| To education   | 50         |
| To specialised care  | 18         |
| After care: contact and support if necessary (on 1-1-2015) | <b>201</b> |

### *Outcome*

*“The New Opportunity is the ‘sink’ [takes care of the most difficult target group]. We should expect a different kind of return for the public money invested in it” (Policy Officer,*

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<sup>17</sup> Year report 2014: p. 1.

Municipality). There is broad support for the view that results at TNO should not be judged only against successful placements. There are, for example:

- indications from the crime and safety field that those participants who were involved in criminal activities, do reduce these activities considerably once they join TNO. This reduces the damage done to (individuals in) society remarkably, both in material and non-material terms (feelings of safety).<sup>18</sup>
- TNO might also contribute to cost reductions in the field of (mental) health care, although to date no data are available on this.
- TNO claims to influence the lives of at least 500 young people from the target group (potential and ex-participants included). For them TNO is a 'home'. A place for advice and support. Even if participants do not finish the programme, they know the door stays open. Failure is not forever.
- TNO has an impact on the lives of family members (parents, partners, children) of the participants. When social workers succeed in stabilizing the lives of the participants (income, debts) their family members will also benefit.
- For TNO (small steps) towards sustainable changes in behaviour are more important than reaching short term goals on delivering people to the labour market or education.

## 6. Final reflections

### 6.1 *The role of the pilot/project/practice*

The New Opportunity is a provision for young men who have missed many opportunities, almost all opportunities.<sup>19</sup> An important provision for unemployed young people (18-27) in Rotterdam who have to deal with multiple problems and are trapped in a process of (self)exclusion. Its target group is relatively large and estimated on 2000-5000 young men in this city. TNO wants to help these young men to change their lives. The practice focusses changing 'unhealthy thinking and unhealthy behaviour'. Working in a holistic and well-described way which is both systematic and pragmatic, it addresses various needs:

- practical problems
- social and psychological problems, addictions
- lack of education
- lack of 'labour-identity' (specific and general (communication and relation) skills to function in a job)
- lack of motivation, meaning giving, lack of identity<sup>20</sup>

Once people are attending the programme, TNO does everything to keep them aboard. In contrast to the dominant policy of a single counter, a single 'gate' where all young people seeking work and/or social assistance have to turn too first, TNO also works for people who only later, or never, turn to the Youth Counter. Local government admits the importance of these alternative routes, for not missing groups who wish to stay 'under the radar' as long as possible. *"Maybe we don't want these things to work that way, but we know it is good for the*

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.: p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> General Director in Year Report 2014: p.3.

<sup>20</sup> Methodology 2014: p.12-15.

*city to get them in a programme. (...) sometimes the one counter principle works against you.” (Policy Officer, Municipality)*

The practice has a warning function against attempts to look for fast ways to cut back unemployment, without eye for underlying problems. For this target group unemployment is often a symptom of their problematic situation, rather than the cause. *“We need to focus on actual changes in behaviour. The focus on outflow is a trap. (..) You have to work towards behavioural change. With a job alone, these people won’t make it. They are helped for a while, but will meet the same problems they have been struggling with for their entire life already. (...) We don’t want an outflow that just leads to recidivism.” (Social Worker)*

## **6.2 Innovation**

TNOs’ innovative strength seems to lie in:

- Taking ‘healthy thinking’ and ‘healthy behaviour’ as basic conditions for reintegration on the labour market.
- Integration of care into the programme to prevent (mental) health issues frustrating progress in other domains and to lower the threshold for accepting specialised care.
- The combination of a formalised, well build-out internal programme with outreach work/forms light, floating support.
- Integration of the demands of potential employers in the programme (labour identity, and socioemotional development).

## **6.3 Success factors**

The success factors of TNO are very diverse (see 4.8). Our conclusion is that the most critical factors are:

- The connection with neighbourhood and youth workers is important because it opens the way to find and attract people who are motivated to start with the programme. The connection with these community workers is also essential to keep track of people and assist them if needed, once the programme has ended.
- Additional funding and knowledge from the private sector in the outflow-phase: charities, individual employers, churches,
- Specialised care offered at the TNO-centre on mental health and addiction problems lowers the threshold for the participants to seek help. This is important because these issues often hinder individual development and make people leave the programme before completing it.
- TNO is using a realistic, systematic and grounded approach to reach its goals. Some vital elements – e.g. its ‘pedagogic climate’ and the use of motivational interviewing and behavioural therapy - are evidence based.
- The amount of time and energy that is and can be devoted to directing people towards jobs and schools or specialised care and to ‘keep in touch’ with them over a long period of time (2 years).

#### ***6.4 Policy recommendations, transferability***

In the target group of TNO many have a history in youth care and/or youth delinquency. In addition, many are struggling with a negative self-image, mental health problems, addictions and debts. These issues are combined with a hostile attitude towards the mainstream culture and the absence of a positive group identity. In the face of these problems, TNO emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in working with multi-problem youth/young adults.

According to TNO and the academic research group at TNO a high percentage of the young people that are referred by the Youth Counter of the city of Rotterdam do not start in the programme. To make things worse, a significant part of the participants who start fail to develop the motivation to complete the programme, or lack this from the beginning, and have to be expelled from the programme.

These facts underline the importance of a programme that combines genuine attention, care, discipline and working together as participants and staff on realistic goals. Aiming at a ‘quick delivery’ to the labour market or school, without taking negative patterns in thinking or behaviour into consideration seems a needless activity for many of these young adults.

Beside this, relatively simple measures could improve the referral process and raise the number of successful intakes. Under the heading of the term ‘warm referral’, some of these measures have been implemented or will be implemented soon. For example, staff at the Youth Counter make the potential participant phone directly with TNO, to make a clear appointment when the participant should go to the intake (preferable within two days in order to not let other ‘things’ stand in the way).

Equal to the other two Rotterdam practices in this collection, this case highlights the importance and difficulties of setting up a local monitoring system that focusses on keeping track of people over a longer period (2- 5 years) of time. Much has been improved in the referral system itself, and in the exchange of information and forms of consultation between the public and private actors during the pathways. But individual developments in the longer run are not monitored at all, or only monitored – as is this case here – by the services. This knowledge gathered by TNO and others can be used by the municipality to organise a monitoring system that supports practitioners.

National and local policies have contributed to a growing cleavage between individual re-integration pathways and street level youth work and community work through the marketization of the first, and abundant reductions in budgets of the latter. We witness traces of awareness among policy makers of the importance to reconnect re-integration and rehabilitation programmes to work in neighbourhoods and communities. A positive contribution could be the idea of a ‘The New Opportunity-community’ to help widen the social network of marginalised youth and help them find ‘healthy contacts’ These private and voluntary attempts could be fostered by public officials and bodies.

A main challenge will be to translate the activities into a price per participant, as dictated by the ‘participation budget’, the main financial source for local activation and re-integration projects and programmes (and the financial stream that the Youth Counter and its landscape of provision is working on). National legislation is demanding in this field of action a financial system based on calculations of costs per person. TNO could benefit specially from

policy initiatives to integrate and combine several sectors and financial streams. That would enable the organisation to continue to work on non-individualised prevention and outreach services. It would also mean a recognition of the fact that part of TNO's impact lies in the sphere of neighbourhood safety, crime reduction and (avoided) care. To conclude, the needs and the behaviour of part of Rotterdam's young unemployed population asks for an integration of policy efforts on participation, care and crime reduction, and for connecting public budgets.

A last point of reflection is related to the fact that the crucial investment in outflow and after care is the least formalised and documented part of the programme. At the same time, it is relatively successful, based on the personal commitment of the TNO staff and their broader network. This illustrates the limitations of evidence based working or demonstrates at least that interventions directed at youth at risk need to be accompanied by room for craftsmanship and creativity.

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Website The New Opportunity:  
<http://www.denieuwekans.nl/>

Academic research group:  
<http://www.aw-dnk.nl/>

## Appendix 1 Respondents

- General Director The New Opportunity (TNO)
- Team manager TNO
- Internal supervisor (also teacher, author of the methodology and responsible for after care)
- Social worker
- Trainer
- Job coach / responsible for outflow towards jobs/education
- policy advisor social development department City of Rotterdam
- 3 participants: Males, unemployed and without basic qualifications, all at TNO since a few weeks at the time of the interview, North-African-Dutch and Caribbean-Dutch background.