



Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Defence-related Research Action - DEFRA

ACRONYM: INSERT-BD

Title: Integrating NEETs in Society through Employment, Recruitment and Training in the Belgian Defence

Duration of the project: 01/12/2021 - 30/11/2023

Budget: € 225 145 (of which € 199 725 RHID)

Key words: NEET, Sustainable employment, Labour market transitions, Recruitment, Work organisation, Military organisation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The research scope of INSERT-BD is related to the group of young people who are currently not in employment, education or training (NEET). In the light of the considerable NEET group in our society, combined with acute personnel shortages in the Belgian Defence, and its wish to contribute to society, we bring together expertise from HIVA KU Leuven (labour market, skill development, HRM, organisation and job design) as project coordinator and the Chair of Sociology of the Royal Military Academy (organisational culture, diversity and inclusion, employee retention and attrition in the Belgian Defence) as projects partner, with committed support by SD Worx Staffing Solutions (partner in recruiting for the Belgian Defence), Antwerp Management School (future of work, sustainable careers), and the Netherlands Defence Academy (military work and organisation). We combine expertise and insights on labour market transitions, organization studies, HRM, in support of recruitment, training, and sustainable employment of NEETs.

Beyond the process of matching potential candidates to job openings and training them, existing organisational aspects including HRM, work organization and job design may produce barriers (and thus also open opportunities) for attracting and retaining NEETs. In order to provide in the societal challenges related to the NEET-group, and the potential – and cost-effective - role of the Belgian Defence in this matter, we will combine a statistical analysis of labour market transitions of NEETs with focus group based SWOT analyses. Starting from the gained insights, we develop an action based research to investigate how the Belgian Defence could adapt recruitment campaigns, selection standards, education and training methods, including specific aspects of work organization, job design, HRM practices, and corporate culture in order to facilitate NEET integration, as part of a broader

approach to support the strategic needs of the Belgian Defence. In that way we contribute to the culture of innovation planned within the Belgian Defence and support its employment policy.

Within this scope we define five project objectives

- Clear view on the population of NEETs in Belgium and on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of policies and strategies that are targeted at NEETs
- Quantitative analysis of labour market outcomes of NEETs in general and the in- and outflow dynamics at the Belgian Defence in particular
- Understanding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding NEETs in the Belgian Defence
- Identification of challenges and possible interventions related to the engagement and follow-up of NEETS
- Designing and testing of concrete interventions which can subsequently be implemented by the Belgian Defense

Apart from the academic papers and scientific reports which will be produced during the project we aim to discuss the (intermediate) results not only with partners from the Belgian Defence but also at academic conferences. Moreover, we will explore possibilities for further research on the challenges of the Belgian Defence (and similar military organisations abroad) in collaboration with project stakeholders and external experts. Based on the combined research results, a portfolio of practical challenges and concrete interventions will be produced in order to facilitate NEETs attractiveness, integration and retention, including five interventions which have been thoroughly tested and are ready for immediate implementation. We will organize a closing conference with both plenary keynotes and small-scale, hands on workshops for the Belgian Defence and the partners of this project.

The project aims at developing scientific knowledge and gathering data on a theme that is considered as a top priority by the Belgian Defence. Our research project aims at fostering employment for the Belgian Defence in line with the People Our Priority (POP) global plan implemented since February 2021 at the Belgian Defence; optimising Defence's recruitment processes to societal evolutions (in our case, the NEETs) in order to attain the required personnel objectives; putting a special focus on the diversity of profiles (e.g. gender and ethnic diversity) of potential candidates in the recruitment process in order to encourage a greater employee diversity in in the Belgian Defence.

Through the collaboration between the KU Leuven and the Royal Military Academy our project will strengthen academic collaboration and scientific excellence in the field of security and Defence. Since the challenges related to the NEETs are part of the larger challenge of finding innovative approaches and concepts in order to resolve the shortage of personnel, increase efficiency and optimise organisational and decisional processes within a rapidly transforming societal context, we will explore options for future collaboration as part of the valorisation strategy.

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