

“BACK TO WORK”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at

<http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	BACK TO WORK
Location	1) Country - Bulgaria 2) Area – nation-wide 3) City -all
Main theme	Young parenthood
Practice/Programme-related keywords	Early return to work of mothers of young children, reduction of unemployment
Summary of programme/ practice	The programme aims to reduce the unemployment rate and raise the employability of young women who are also mothers of young children by allowing them to return to work early while employing an unemployed person to care for their children at their own home.
Target	Target groups/issues/problems addressed: Young women who have used maternity, parental and childcare leaves are one of the main target groups in the project. Even though their jobs are protected by law while on leave, the lengthy leaves in Bulgaria create problems for the mothers once back in the workplace. They need training to catch up with the changes and to refresh their knowledge and skills.
Objectives of programme/ practice	The main goal of the project is to create conditions for equal access of women to employment and securing their involvement in paid work after they become mothers through raising the quality of the workforce. There are two objectives within this framework: - to decrease in the number of unemployed women including those among the discouraged persons and those over 50

	years of age. - to provide conditions for employment and career growth of women returning to work after taking childcare leave.
Content of programme/ practice	The project includes the following activities: - Identification of the target groups - Motivating of unemployed women for active job search - Information and consultation of the unemployed and vocational orientation, - Training of the unemployed women in relevance with their work experience and vocational qualifications. The training can be organized on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis for the employed mothers but no less than 4 hours of training daily. When the training is on a fulltime basis, the employer can employ a replacement from the Employment Centre and the salary will be paid by the Employment Office.
Time scale	The project runs from 2003 till 2005. While there is no published evaluation of this programme it was found successful by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and on its basis they developed the new programme 'In support of motherhood' described in the next template.
Programme/ practice design	Development of programme/practice: It started as a pilot project and then developed into a longer and better funded programme.
	Decision-making actors and process: The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
	Management and leadership of programme: National Employment Agency and local employment offices
	Implementation: The institutions implementing the project are the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Employment Agency; the regional and local employment offices, commissions of social partners, organizations for vocational training, private and public employers.
	Legal framework: The project has a national scope and provides equal access to all through transparency, wide information and intolerance toward any kind of discrimination. It is in done on the basis of the Law for Encouraging of Employment and builds upon an individual approach towards the target groups.
Resources involved	The funding for the project comes from the state budget in accordance with the Law for Encouraging of Employment and the National Action Plan. It provides funds for motivational training, vocational training, stipends, and travel and housing expenses for the unemployed involved in the project. The policy contexts is the following: The argumentation of this project starts with the necessity Bulgarian legislation to be put in concordance with European Directives. Cited are the European Employment Strategy and the Strategy for gender equality.

	The challenges that this project addresses are the disproportional presence of women or men in certain economical sectors and occupations, as well as the disadvantaged position of women in the sphere of employment, and career development. It has been reported that men are more active in the job search and their share among the unemployed is declining more rapidly than that of women. Young women seem to be among the most vulnerable groups among the unemployed. The share of those under 29 among the unemployed women is 28.9%. One of the main reasons for the high level of unemployment among women in this group is the reluctance of employers to hire young women because of the expectation that they will have children and be absent for a long time during maternity and parental leaves. Half of unemployed women are with low education – basic or less and about two thirds are without any qualifications. These subgroups are with the longest periods of registration as unemployed – about 18 months.
Evaluation	1) Evaluation process Not available 2) Results / impact of programme For the 3 years of the project it provided employment to 361 persons and it cost 188259 BGN. However, after its finishing 190 of the participants registered as unemployed again. 3) Difficulties encountered Not commented by the Ministry's experts but in our view the skills gained during the project were not accepted as valid by potential employers. 4) Assessment of programme/ action/ practice in terms of sustainability This project was evaluated positively by the Ministry since they developed it into the new programme 'In support of motherhood'.
Lessons to be drawn from programme or practice implemented	We chose this project because it was cited by the Bulgarian experts who participated in the Up2Youth conference in Valencia as a good practice, meeting an acute need of young mothers. Analysing the available data from the 3 years of the project, we found that its scope, although wider than that of the Family Centres, remained very small. The project aimed to train 400 women and thus to raise their employability and career prospects. The figures show that it has come close to the target – it involved 381 persons all of whom have been trained. The project was quite successful in recruiting unemployed mothers and helping them find jobs but failed to serve its second objective – to help the career development of mothers coming back from maternity leave – all in all only 4 employed mothers have been trained during the project. Another negative outcome is that half of the participants (190) have lost their jobs and registered as unemployed after the end of the project. Building on the lessons from this practice the Ministry developed the programme 'In Support of Motherhood' which focused on the encouragement of the earlier return of mothers to work.

Contact information	No information
Other doc related to the programme/ practice	http://www.mlsp.government.bg www.az.government.bg www.asp.government.bg