SWOM Model Implementation Guidelines

for Practitioners in Lithuania and Finland



swom

ŽISPB

VALO valmennus yhdistys

Social Innovation Initiative

Co-funded by the European Union

HUMAK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

REVEALING THE HIDDEN RESOURCES: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR NEETS WITH SUPPORT NEEDS

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike (CC BY-NC-SA)
License. You are free to share and adapt this material for non-commercial purposes, provided that appropriate
credit is given and that any modified versions are distributed under the same license.

CC BY-NC

This publication has been co-funded by the European Union. The views and opinions expressed are those of the
authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the National Agency.

Version: 1.0 | Date: September 2025
Prepared for practitioners, career coaches, social workers, and employment support professionals

Co-funded by the European Union

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

REVEALING THE HIDDEN RESOURCES: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR NEETS WITH SUPPORT NEEDS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction to the SWOM Model 4

2. Local Context: Lithuania & Finland 10

2.1. Local Context – Lithuania 10

2.2. Implications for SWOM Implementation in Lithuania.....13

2.3. Finland: Youth Employment in Finland:

Current Challenges and SWOM Model Solutions.....14

3. Phases of SWOM Model Implementation 16

3.1. Phase 1: Pre-Employment Coaching.....16

3.2. Phase 2: Partner Collaboration.....21

3.3. Phase 3: Matching and Job Coaching.....28

4. Monitoring & Evaluation SWOM Model Phases.....37

5. Addition benefits/side effects project.....41

1. Introduction to the SWOM Model

SWOM in the Netherlands established an inclusive, evidence-informed employment support model that empowers young people and individuals with disabilities (talents) to achieve sustainable employment. It integrates personalized coaching, public-private partnerships, and systemic advocacy to address structural barriers in the labor market.

Core Principles

- Embrace diversity as a strength
- Promote autonomy and confidence through tailored support
- Facilitate real-life labor market experiences
- Collaborate with employers and policymakers for long-term inclusion

SWOMs Approach

SWOM contributes to this vision by:

- Developing and implementing inclusive guidance models that strengthen pathways into employment — not only transitions from study to work, but also job-to-job changes, return-to-work after illness, and reintegration.
- Supporting employers and organisations in creating inclusive environments — not only sustainable jobs — through consultancy, knowledge sharing, awareness-building, and related capacity-strengthening activities.
- Empowering youth voices in all stages of policy development and implementation.
- Connecting public and private stakeholders to encourage system-level innovation.
- Working with national and European frameworks, such as the CRPD, the Youth Guarantee, and European Social Fund+ priorities.

SWOM is currently piloting inclusive transition models with over 120 employers and public service partners, including the Dutch Public Employment Service (UWV) and various municipalities. These models demonstrate that integrated, cross-sector approaches can be both socially impactful and economically effective.

SWOM's employer network includes socially committed frontrunners such as Henkel, Starbucks, Danone, DZB Leiden, Volksbank, and Erasmus University Rotterdam. These organisations not only offer jobs but also co-develop tools and strategies for sustainable inclusion, showing that real participation is possible when support and opportunity come together.



Why is this model innovative?

No	Field	Details
1.	**Name of the Innovative Solution**	Tailor-Made Studying and Working Model of SWOM

No	Field	Details
2.	**Elements Scaled Up or Transferred**	- Individualized coaching and mentoring. Central to SWOM model is personalized support through coaching and mentoring, addressing each participant's unique strengths and challenges. SWOM developed innovative tools to support the job inclusion of people who lack skills and work experience and to empower them seek jobs and take the responsibility of their own employment. Structured short-term job coaching and mentorship helps young people avoid “dependency” on social benefits. - Employer engagement and job matching. SWOM emphasizes building relationships with employers to create tailored job opportunities that align with participants' abilities. Experts of SWOM sign the cooperation agreements with the employers in the region and support employer’s pathway of creating more inclusive environments by organizing workshops, lectures and counselling sessions about neurodiversity, inclusion, best practices, organize contact fairs, informal meetings between candidates and employers. Job matching is based on the creating relationship between the employer and an employee instead of regular CV, letters and job interviews. - Supported employment. Beyond employment, SWOM provides comprehensive assistance, including skills training and social integration services. This holistic approach ensures participants are well-prepared for employment and can maintain their positions in the workforce. Employee is allowed to participate in training and workshops provided by SWOM online during this on-the-job training.

No	Field	Details
3.	**Domain(s) Incorporating the Innovative Approach**	*Tick the domain(s) that include the scaled-up or transferred innovative approach* □ effective outreach to the target group ☒ learning models and environments ☒ arrangements for skills validation and activation in the labour market
4.	**Location of Implementation and Lead Organisation**	***Lange Voorhout 58*** ***2514 EG The Hague***



No	Field	Details
5.	**Description of the Solution and the Problem Tackled**	In the Netherlands, approximately 2.4 million people are on the sidelines of the labor market due to factors such as disabilities, diverse backgrounds, or complex regulations. This exclusion not only affects the individuals but also results in a loss of potential talent and diversity in the workforce. It addresses challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, poverty, low skills, and migrant backgrounds. The model focuses on intensive, individualized coaching and mentoring to help NEETs identify their strengths, overcome barriers, and find suitable employment. It emphasizes practical skills development through real-world experiences like work placements. With tailored support for activities such as vocational profiling, job coaching, education, and social participation, participants regain confidence and independence step by step. SWOM's personalized guidance ensures individuals are equipped to successfully reintegrate into society and achieve their career goals. By collaborating with employers, SWOM creates inclusive workplaces and facilitates successful job placements. Through initiatives like the Rick Brink Award, SWOM recognizes and promotes employers who actively engage in inclusive practices, inspiring others to follow suit. SWOM actively advocates for an inclusive labor market through various initiatives as alongside JongPIT and MKB Nederland, calls on employers to engage more talents, emphasizing the importance of accessible employment opportunities. They also presented their "Manifest Hoofdlijnenakkoord 2024" to Dutch parliament members, urging enhanced support for vulnerable youth in the labor market. This comprehensive approach aims to empower NEETs to achieve sustainable employment and improve their long-term economic and social outcomes.

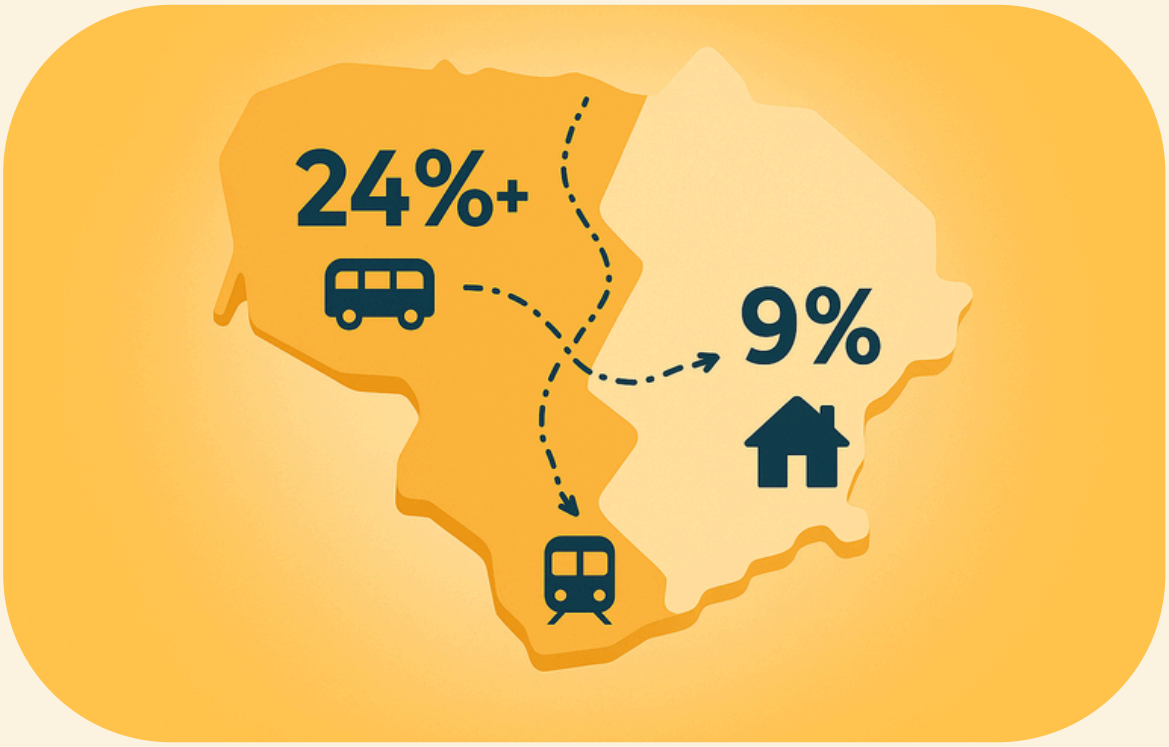
No	Field	Details
6.	**Key Results and Benefits**	**Key Results and Benefits:** · **Extensive Partnerships.** Over the past 13 years, SWOM has collaborated with more than 130 partners, working collectively to promote inclusivity in the labor market. · **Talent Support.** The organization has assisted over 10,000 talents in finding their place in the workforce, ensuring they can participate fully in society. · **Recognition for Social Entrepreneurship.** In June 2023, SWOM achieved the PSO 30+ certification, the highest recognition in social entrepreneurship, acknowledging their efforts in creating opportunities for individuals facing challenges in entering the labor market. · **Inclusive Projects.** SWOM provides socially inclusive projects that allow organizations to invest in young talent, converting each euro invested into €2.83 of societal value, as validated by collaborations with Deloitte and Social Finance NL. · **Comprehensive Reintegration Services.** Their reintegration services assist individuals in re-entering society by guiding personal and professional growth, offering support in employee skills, education, and job application training through the UWV (Employee Insurance Agency). · **Simplified Social Return on Investment (SROI):** SWOM simplifies SROI for employers, ensuring that their impact is tangible and visible, and offers complete support from start to finish, including transparent and measurable reporting.
7.	**Traceable Source**	**https://swom.nl/over-ons**

2. Local Context: Lithuania & Finland

2.1. Local Context – Lithuania

Youth employment in Lithuania remains one of the most pressing social and economic challenges despite some signs of progress in recent years. According to the Public Employment Service (Užimtumo tarnyba), the registered unemployment rate in mid-2025 stood at 8.8 per cent overall, with young people representing a disproportionately high share of the jobseeker population. On 1 July 2025, approximately 30,600 young people were registered as unemployed, accounting for around one-fifth of all registered jobseekers. Among them, a particularly vulnerable group consists of those with no vocational qualifications, whose numbers have risen in comparison to previous years. Although the official registered youth unemployment rate is recorded at 7.5 per cent, survey-based estimates (Labour Force Survey, Eurostat) suggest that the actual rate is considerably higher, reaching 16.5 per cent in July 2025. This discrepancy indicates that a significant proportion of young people experiencing unemployment do not engage with the employment services at all, either due to ineligibility, perceived ineffectiveness of the system, or lack of awareness.

The duration of unemployment highlights another challenge. While young jobseekers are, on average, unemployed for a shorter period than adults - 137 days compared with 245 days - many find themselves in cycles of temporary or seasonal employment, often without opportunities for sustainable career development. This pattern reflects a wider problem of short-termism and instability in the labour market, where young people frequently move between casual jobs with little security or progression.



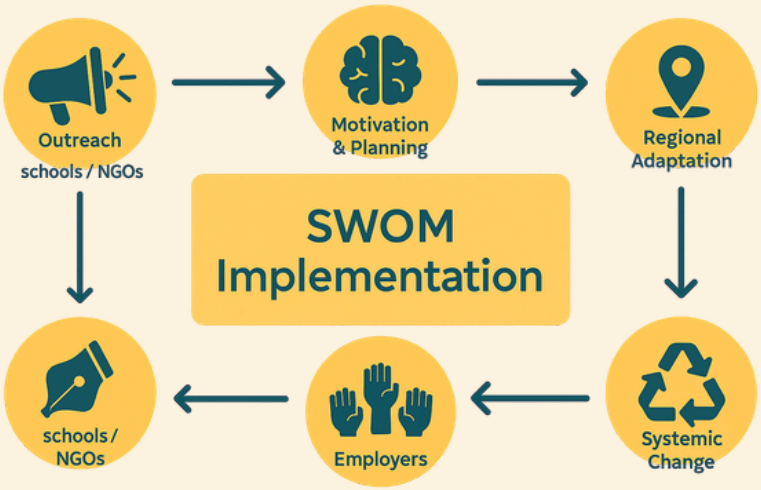
Regional disparities are stark. Municipalities such as Šiauliai district and Širvintos report youth unemployment levels above 24 per cent, while others, such as Pakruojis or Birštonas, record significantly lower figures.
These regional differences underline the uneven distribution of economic opportunities and the limited mobility of young jobseekers, many of whom face barriers such as poor transport links, lack of affordable housing, or local labour markets dominated by low-skilled work.

Employer attitudes further complicate the picture. Reports from Užimtumo tarnyba and the national media suggest that young people frequently turn down positions that are perceived as unattractive, particularly those with low wages, limited prospects, or poor working conditions. Employers, on the other hand, often regard young candidates as lacking motivation or being unprepared for the demands of work. This mutual mistrust leads to situations where vacancies remain unfilled, even though a large pool of young jobseekers exists. The gap between employer expectations and youth aspirations is especially visible in sectors such as hospitality, logistics, and low-skilled manufacturing, where work is available but unattractive.

Institutional limitations also play a role. While the Public Employment Service administers a range of active labour market measures, including subsidised employment and training programmes, the number of young people taking part has decreased. For example, in one recent six-month period, only around 2,100 young people were engaged in such measures, representing a decline of more than sixty per cent compared with the previous year. This low level of engagement reflects both service fragmentation and a lack of trust among young people in the effectiveness of the measures offered. Unlike in the Netherlands, Lithuania does not have quota legislation obliging larger companies to employ people with disabilities or other support needs. As a result, NGOs and public agencies face significant obstacles in persuading employers to participate in inclusive employment initiatives.

Overall, the Lithuanian youth labour market is characterised by structural mismatches, unstable employment, and weak cooperation between young people, employers, and public institutions. The NEET population - young people not in education, employment or training - remains a concern, with many staying outside the reach of formal support systems. For these reasons, models such as SWOM, which combine personalised coaching, active employer engagement, and systemic advocacy, have particular relevance. Their implementation in Lithuania would not only help to identify and prepare hidden youth for work, but also address the persistent problem of employer reluctance by demonstrating the social and economic value of inclusive recruitment practices.

2.2. Implications for SWOM Implementation in Lithuania



The Lithuanian context points to several specific areas where the SWOM model can make a difference. First, because a large share of unemployed youth remain outside the reach of public employment services, proactive outreach through schools, municipalities, youth centres, and NGOs will be essential to reach those “hidden” NEETs who are not formally registered. Second, intensive pre-employment coaching should focus on motivation-building and realistic career planning, since many young people disengage due to discouragement or inflated expectations. Third, the model’s emphasis on employer cooperation and workplace coaching is highly relevant in Lithuania, where scepticism among employers continues to be a barrier. Structured “speed dating” events and targeted employer training could help build trust and gradually reshape employer attitudes. Fourth, regional disparities suggest that implementation should be tailored to local conditions, prioritising areas with persistently high youth unemployment. Finally, advocacy for systemic change - particularly around employer incentives and longer-term support structures - should be pursued in parallel with service delivery, as this will be necessary to ensure sustainability beyond the project’s lifetime.

2.3. Finland: Youth Employment in Finland: Current Challenges and SWOM Model Solutions

Finland's youth employment situation has improved in recent years, though regional disparities and challenges persist. The youth unemployment rate reached a historic low in 2024, with around 17,000 young people unemployed. This is partly due to a shrinking youth population and higher labor demand. However, many young workers face temporary contracts and monotonous work, reflecting their weaker position in the labor market.

Challenges: Despite the decline in youth unemployment, economic fluctuations, regional disparities, and a mismatch between available jobs and skills remain ongoing issues, especially in the social and healthcare sectors. Finland's labor market faces a shortage of skilled workers, which is expected to slightly ease but not disappear. Public systems are in place to support young people and those with disabilities, but service fragmentation and hidden barriers continue to hinder full inclusion in the workforce.



SWOM Model Response:

- **Skills Mismatch:** SWOM offers personalized pathways to employment, connecting skills development with real work experience and fostering close cooperation with employers to tailor job tasks and recognize competencies.

- **Declining Employment Rate & Rising Unemployment:** SWOM strengthens employability through coaching, mentoring, and peer support, offering practical models like supported internships and apprenticeships to ease transitions into the workforce.

- **Transition Issues:** SWOM develops smooth pathways from education to employment in collaboration with educational institutions, municipalities, and employers, addressing the needs of those requiring additional support.

- **Employer Cooperation & Responsibility:** SWOM supports employers with inclusive recruitment, onboarding, and workplace development, while building networks for sharing best practices.

- **Youth Voice & Inclusion:** SWOM prioritizes youth participation, especially from those requiring additional support, ensuring their experiences inform service development and policy-making.

This integrated approach aims to improve youth employment outcomes and provide more inclusive, accessible pathways into the labor market in Finland.

3. Phases of SWOM Model Implementation

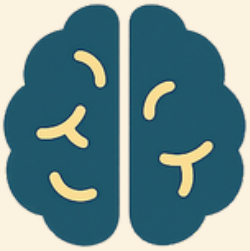
3.1. Phase 1: Pre-Employment Coaching

Key Elements:

- **Exploratory conversations to assess goals and support needs**

Exploratory conversations are an essential first step in building a supportive, individualized coaching process. These discussions aim to create a safe and respectful space where the client can openly reflect on their current situation, clarify their goals, and express their support needs. The focus is on understanding the client as completely as possible, not only as a job seeker but as a person navigating complex life circumstances.

A key aspect of the initial conversation is understanding the client's own motivation for seeking coaching. This includes discussing their personal goals, what they hope to achieve, and how they view their current situation. It's important to explore whether they are ready and able to take steps toward employment, and what they perceive as meaningful or realistic outcomes. It is also important to clearly communicate what job coaching can and cannot offer. Coaching can support clients in areas such as setting realistic employment goals, preparing application materials, practicing interview skills, and creating structure in the job-seeking process. What coaching cannot directly offer is job offers, which means it's important for the client to continually look for work.





Discussing previous work experience and educational background provides important context for identifying both strengths and areas where further development may be needed. This includes exploring what kinds of jobs the client has had, any formal qualifications or vocational training, and their experiences in the labor market. It is also helpful to understand what has worked well in the past, and what hasn't. Many clients face complex challenges that contribute to long-term unemployment or difficulty finding stable work. These may include physical health conditions, mental health concerns, cognitive challenges, or social stressors. Openly addressing these topics helps to identify realistic steps forward. Where appropriate, the conversation should also touch on possible executive functioning issues, such as difficulties with planning, prioritizing, memory, or emotional regulation, that can affect daily functioning and job readiness.

The goal of the exploratory conversation is to collaboratively assess whether the coaching service is a good fit for the client's current needs and capacity. If there is a mismatch, this should be discussed openly, with a focus on finding the right kind of support, even if that means referring the client elsewhere. Transparency at this stage helps build trust and ensures that expectations are realistic on both sides.

- **Intake and development of a personal profile**

The intake and development of a personal profile is a foundational step that allows for a comprehensive understanding of the individual's current life situation, aspirations, and challenges. This profile typically includes a personal description, where the individual shares their background, personality traits, and lived experiences that shape their identity. Understanding their work-related interests and goals helps counsellors align potential career paths with the client's passions and motivations.

In addition, identifying existing talents and skills alongside areas the individual wishes to develop further allows for the creation of a realistic, supportive plan for professional growth. While the personal profile can certainly serve as an internal tool for gaining insight, its primary purpose is to introduce our candidates to partners who may offer suitable job opportunities. The structured format of the profile supports open communication about facilitation or support needs, lowering the threshold for employers to start an informed and constructive conversation.

The intake process, when done thoroughly, becomes a collaborative exploration of both strengths and barriers to employment.

A critical part of this profile includes the individual's perspective on possible health issue(s) they may be managing, such as chronic pain, anxiety, or neurodivergent factors. It is important to understand not only the medical aspect but what the condition means personally, how it affects their daily life, self-image, and sense of agency. This insight allows coaches to propose specific workplace accommodations, like flexible scheduling for medical appointments, getting work tasks and guidance in written form, or the use of assistive technologies. By integrating such solutions into the personal profile this helps ensure the individual's condition is respected and managed in a way that supports sustainable employment. Offering direct solutions in the personal profile also makes it easier for a possible employer to discuss and take into consideration how these solutions could be managed at a workplace. This personalized approach fosters confidence and inclusivity, reinforcing the client's ability to thrive professionally despite challenges.



- **Workshops**

Workshops on communication and assertiveness are valuable components of pre-employment coaching, aimed at enhancing clients' interpersonal skills and confidence in professional settings. The workshops typically focus on helping participants express themselves clearly, listen actively, set boundaries, and handle conflict constructively. Through role-playing, group discussions and practical exercises, clients learn how to communicate their needs, opinions and rights in a respectful yet confident manner. This is especially important for those who may struggle with low self-esteem, social anxiety, or past negative experiences in the workplace.

By building these skills, participants not only strengthen their readiness for job interviews and workplace dynamics, but also benefit from the peer contact that many describe as highly valuable. Learning alongside others increases both knowledge and confidence, while also enhancing their sense of social and societal participation. Ultimately, these workshops help clients improve their chances of securing and maintaining employment.

- **Use of coaching tools**

In job coaching, the use of tools like the Traffic Light Model and strength identification techniques plays a vital role in supporting clients toward meaningful employment. The Traffic Light Model helps clients assess their current situation by categorizing tasks, feelings, or behaviours into three zones: green for what feels good and manageable, yellow for areas of uncertainty or mild stress, and red for situations that are overwhelming or harmful. This visual and intuitive tool empowers clients to reflect on their boundaries, energy levels, and triggers, making it easier to plan realistic steps forward. The Traffic Light Model is useful throughout the coaching process. After finding work, the model can be used to reflect on how a client can cope with changes and possible stressors work life brings, and how to manage a work–life balance.
In parallel, identifying strengths helps shift the focus from limitations to capabilities. By uncovering and reinforcing these personal resources, clients gain self-confidence and clarity, allowing them to better match their strengths with suitable job roles and work environments. For every candidate who is placed in a job, a support plan is developed. This plan includes concrete agreements about, for example, early signs of stress or tension and how the employer can respond to them, as well as clear arrangements regarding support and facilitation needs.
Together, these tools and agreements create a supportive structure for self-awareness, decision-making, and long-term success.

Best Practices:

- **Collaborate with local youth centers or employment offices**

Collaboration with outreach youth workers and youth help centers (e.g. Ohjaamo in Finland) is essential in effectively reaching young people who could benefit from job coaching services. These professionals often have established, trust-based relationships with youth in vulnerable or transitional situations, making them key partners in early engagement. It is also important to involve the job coaches themselves from the very beginning, e.g. during initial contact, even informal conversations, or giving a presentation about the coaching services to a group of youths. This will lower the threshold for youth to become a client, when they know who their coach is. This early involvement allows counselors to build rapport gradually, understand each youth's unique context, and tailor guidance to their needs and readiness.

- Customize tools to local language
- Offer hybrid sessions to improve rural access

Key Elements:

- Exploratory conversations to assess goals and support needs
- Intake and development of a personal profile
- Workshops on communication, assertiveness, etc.
- Use of coaching tools: traffic light model, capacity to work scale

Best Practices:

- Collaborate with local youth centers or employment offices
- Customize tools to local language and cultural context
- Offer hybrid sessions to improve rural access



3.2. Phase 2: Partner Collaboration

Key Elements:

- **Fixed contact person for each employer**
- **Initial meeting & evaluation checkpoints**

Effective collaboration with employers is at the heart of the SWOM model. In Lithuania and Finland, where scepticism among employers and limited experience with inclusive hiring remain persistent obstacles, building trust and creating continuity are essential. Employers must be able to rely on consistent communication and understand the tangible value of working with partner organisations.

For this reason, each employer should be assigned a fixed contact person. This ensures continuity, reduces misunderstandings, and allows a relationship of trust to develop. The contact person becomes a recognised representative of the organisation, capable of responding quickly to questions, monitoring progress, and ensuring that the employer feels supported throughout the process.

The relationship begins with an initial meeting, where the needs and expectations of the employer are clarified, and realistic commitments are agreed. Importantly, both sides work towards a shared goal: creating sustainable employment together. Follow-up evaluation checkpoints should then be scheduled at regular intervals. These provide an opportunity to review progress, address emerging challenges, and adapt support.
In both Lithuania and Finland, where employer confidence in social sector services has traditionally been low, these structured checkpoints help demonstrate accountability and professionalism.

- **Workshops for partners and employers: 'Cross the Line', 'Pressure Cooker'**

Beyond one-to-one contacts, collective workshops provide an effective way of engaging employers more deeply. Two experiential methods - *Cross the Line* and *Pressure Cooker* - have been identified as particularly suitable for addressing challenges in both contexts.



Cross the Line

This workshop is designed to uncover hidden assumptions and foster empathy. In Lithuania, young people are often perceived by employers as unmotivated or unreliable, while in Finland the long pre-employment phase leads to doubts about whether young people are ready for the labour market at all. *Cross the Line* allows employers, practitioners, and sometimes young people themselves to reflect on their own experiences and biases in a structured and safe setting.

Purpose

The exercise aims to uncover hidden assumptions, address stereotypes, and highlight shared human experiences. It is particularly useful in settings where mistrust exists between employers and young people, as is the case in Lithuania, or where employers doubt the readiness of candidates after long pre-employment phases, as often seen in Finland.

Preparation

- Space large enough for participants to move freely.
- A clear line marked on the floor with tape or rope.
- A prepared list of 10–15 statements, moving gradually from general to more sensitive topics.
- A facilitator briefed to manage emotional reactions and encourage reflection.

Step-by-step facilitation

1. Invite all participants to stand on one side of the line.

2. Explain the rules: when they agree with a statement, they step across the line. When they disagree, they remain where they are. There are no right or wrong answers.

3. Begin with simple, neutral statements (e.g. *"I have worked in more than three jobs in my life"*).

4. Progress to more reflective prompts (e.g. *"I have felt excluded in a workplace"; "I believe motivation matters more than qualifications when hiring"*).

5. After each round, invite short reflections from volunteers. Encourage them to share why they moved or stayed.

6. Continue with increasingly sensitive statements linked to stereotypes about youth, disability, or employability (e.g. *"I sometimes assume young people lack persistence"*; *"I have underestimated someone's abilities because of their background"*).

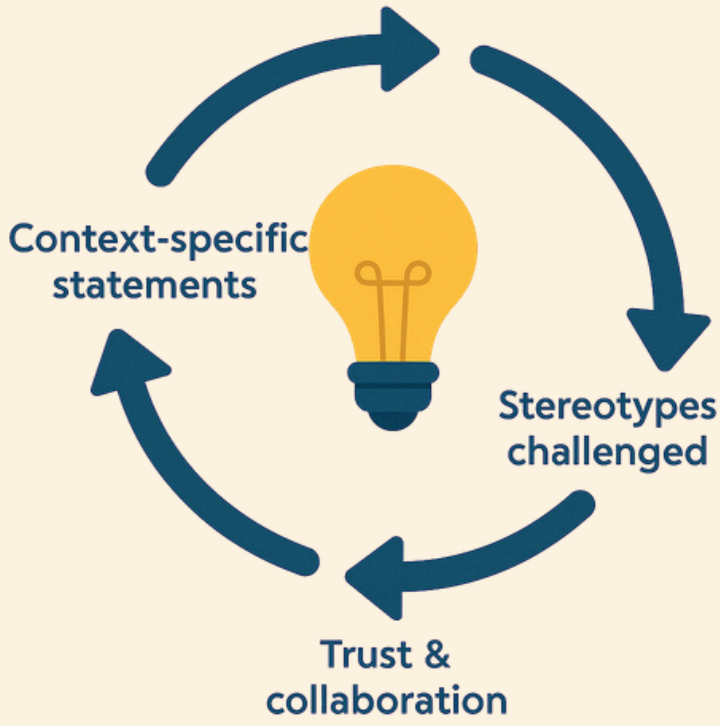
7. Conclude with a collective debrief: what did participants learn about themselves and each other? How do these insights relate to inclusive hiring?

Examples of context-specific statements

- *"I have rejected a job because the pay felt too low for the effort required."* (Lithuania, where wage dissatisfaction is common).
- *"I sometimes wonder if young people are ready for the workplace after years in preparatory programmes."* (Finland, reflecting long pre-employment phases).
- *"I believe employers should receive support when hiring young people with additional needs."*
- *"I have felt judged in a job interview."*

Outcomes

- Employers see their own vulnerabilities mirrored in the experiences of young people.
- Stereotypes are exposed and challenged in a non-confrontational way.
- Trust between employers, practitioners, and youth participants is strengthened.
- Provides a starting point for deeper collaboration.



Pressure Cooker

The *Pressure Cooker* method is a short, intensive group exercise where participants co-create solutions to specific inclusion challenges under strict time pressure. In Finland, where economic uncertainty and scarce vacancies lead employers to prioritise efficiency, the method allows them to generate realistic ideas for low-cost, practical adjustments. In Lithuania, where regional disparities and wage dissatisfaction are major obstacles, the exercise can lead to proposals on how to make unattractive jobs more appealing through job redesign, mentoring, or flexible arrangements.

Purpose

The workshop stimulates creativity and joint problem-solving under time pressure. It is particularly effective for generating actionable solutions to challenges such as low job attractiveness in Lithuania or employer hesitation due to limited vacancies in Finland.

Preparation

- 90–120 minutes, with 12–30 participants.
- Tables for small groups (4–6 people each).
- Flipcharts, markers, sticky notes, and a visible timer.
- One or two pre-defined challenge questions that are relevant locally.

Examples of challenge questions

- Lithuania: *“How can we make entry-level jobs more attractive to young people despite low pay?”*
- Finland: *“How can small companies with limited resources support young employees with special needs?”*
- Cross-country: *“What can we do to reduce anxiety in recruitment processes for young people with limited experience?”*

Step-by-step facilitation

1. Introduce the challenge question and explain the rules: groups have a limited time to develop as many solutions as possible.

2. ExplaiRound 1 (20 minutes): brainstorming without judgement. Encourage wild ideas.

3. Round 2 (20 minutes): select 2–3 promising ideas and refine them into workable proposals.

4. Pitching: each group presents its solution in 3–5 minutes.

5. Feedback: participants ask clarifying questions and give constructive feedback.

6. Reflection: the facilitator guides a discussion on feasibility, next steps, and potential for piloting.

Adaptations for context

- In Lithuania, ensure that discussions touch on regional realities, such as shortages of attractive jobs in rural areas. Solutions might include job redesign (splitting tasks), mentoring schemes, or hybrid roles.
- In Finland, discussions should explore low-cost adjustments that small companies can implement, such as flexible hours, shared job coaching, or peer support within teams.

Outcomes

- Concrete, employer-driven solutions emerge within a short timeframe.
- Employers shift from passive recipients of ideas to active problem-solvers.
- Shared ownership of inclusion initiatives increases the likelihood of follow-up.
- Builds a culture of innovation within employer networks.

Relevance to Lithuania and Finland

Both methods address structural barriers observed in the two countries. In Lithuania, where employers frequently report reluctance to hire inexperienced young people and young people often reject low-paid jobs, Cross the Line helps reframe perspectives, while Pressure Cooker produces concrete ideas for reshaping entry-level positions. In Finland, where the employment situation is generally tighter and young people spend long periods in preparatory programmes, these workshops can reduce employer hesitation and encourage more flexible pathways into work.

Together with the fixed contact system and regular evaluation checkpoints, these tools provide a structured yet adaptive framework for building employer networks. They move collaboration beyond transactional recruitment into a space of mutual learning, empathy, and innovation - an essential condition for rooting the SWOM model in the Lithuanian and Finnish labour markets.



3.3. Phase 3: Matching and Job Coaching

Matching

Key Elements:

- **Based on interests, support needs, and potential**
- **Open introduction and preparation**

Finding the right place of employment for the client is a way to guarantee better outcomes and leaves both the client and the employer satisfied with the service provided. This requires the organization providing the service to have a strong network of employers to pull from, to find the right vacancies. Also, the situation of the whole work market plays a role here and with difficult work situation the ability to match the position with the right client becomes a challenge. In the end though matching should also be a tool to build these networks and attempting to do so should be in the core of implementing this model into your organization. When the situation is more difficult clients can look for jobs on the open market while the organization does the network building on the background. When making these matches in the beginning especially, it is key to find the right match, so that good experiences working with your organization can spread and good employer experiences can be used to market the service to build a stronger network of employers to provide vacancies for clients.



To make the right match, the first and most important step is to get to know your clients well and to understand their interests, strengths, support needs and potential. This makes it easier to recognize good vacancy opportunities and know what you can and cannot fill from the pool of clients you have available. Knowledge of the support needs helps you to communicate with the employer in a way to lower the barrier of taking the client onboard despite having differing needs from the general public. Right communication about these needs helps to make it concrete that having support needs isn't a burden and those needs can be met rather easy with knowledge and good planning. This makes it so that the employer is also more open to hire people with support needs in the future and makes it more likely that they can be a contributor in your employer network in the future. There are some scenarios where some support needs cannot be met in certain vacancies, such as those related to moving around and doing physical labour as being the most obvious, but knowledge of support needs also means that you won't match a client with otherwise seemingly promising vacancy, that would lead to disappointment in all parties involved.

The double bind problem

When starting the most likely scenario that an organization will face is that you don't have the network of employers ready and you don't have clients ready to be employed by the non-existent network. The issue that arises from this is that you cannot focus on just one side of the issue, if the goal is to form a functioning network that is ready to employ your clients now and in the future. If you build the employer network without having anyone for them to employ with the promise of clients to work with them, they won't see you as a reliable partner.

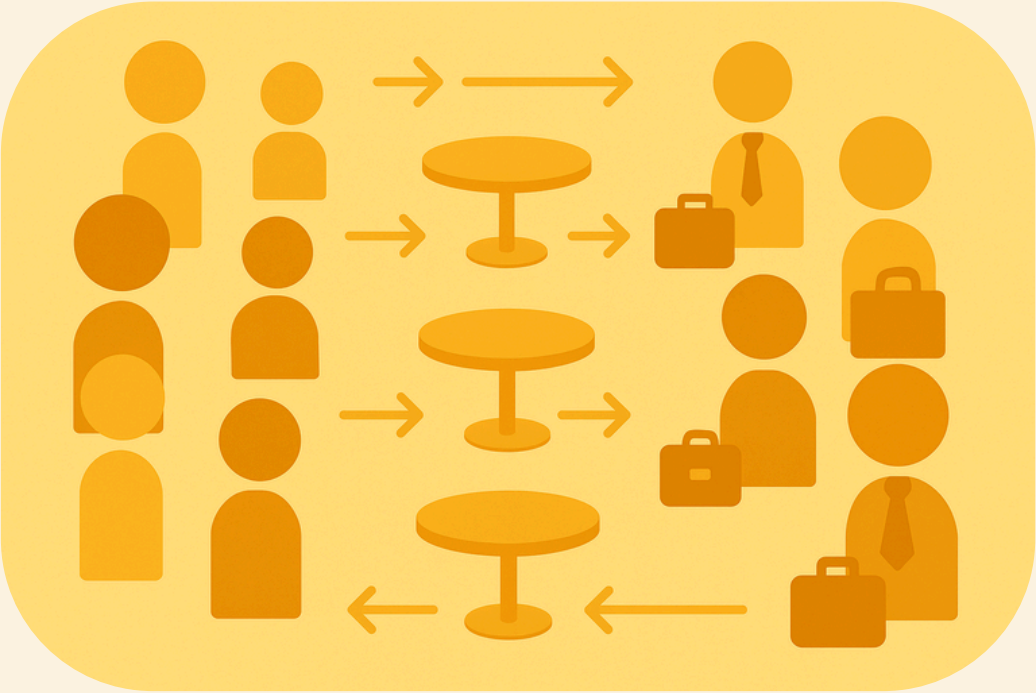
If on the other hand you have a lot of clients without anywhere for them to get employed the model won't work as intended. From the point of view of continuity, it is still a better situation to have clients first even without having the network built, as the clients can still look for jobs in the open market with your assistance and have you ready to back them up and help with the onboarding process. This way you have access to a supply of diverse stream of clients to direct towards the employer network when it starts to form, as forming such network might take more time to build than forming a stable flow of clients for an organization specialized in assisting people with employment or other social services, which is the most likely type of organization interested in implementing this sort of a model into their service pool. There might exist scenarios where the network of potential employers exists before having access to clients or even a scenario where both exist already and in such a scenario, the model can be implemented more seamlessly as a part of daily functioning.

When an organization finds itself in this double bind, it is better to start working on building both of the processes in parallel, even when having access to either side of the divide more readily. Leaning on too heavily on what already exists will likely create a situation where the side that is lacking doesn't get enough attention and the problem of getting stuck on the side of the bind that is more natural to the organization arises. When there is a disbalance of what is available more focus should be placed initially on the side that seems harder to build, so that enough focus can be placed there so as to not get stuck in the bind.



Ways to use matching as a way of parallel process building

Matching clients and employers can also be used as a way to build these processes in parallel. One way of doing so might be the use of a “speed dating” method, where you invite potential employers to meet your clients in an inviting environment without pressure to hire and without it being an interview for clients, but rather for both sides to get to know each other and for the employers to get more familiar with the clientele. The idea behind this method is to lower the barrier for the employers to hire people like your clients and also it humanizes the employer side to the clientele itself. When done well it can create employer interest to expand your network and also it brings your clientele closer to the world of working, by showing them that the people who seek for jobs are people just like them and they can be met with respect and healthy curiosity by them as well. This makes it so that your clientele’s possible emotional barriers towards seeking work gets lowered and it also makes it clear for the employer side that your clientele’s possible support needs aren’t some nebulous insurmountable obstacle for them to be employed either.



When organizing such a meet messaging should focus on lowering the barrier of discussion and special care should be taken with the introduction part when the parties gather. The discussions should revolve around the hopes of the clientele, their strengths and some preparation should be put towards having the clientele be able to clearly communicate how their own support needs can be met with specific and low barrier solutions, if those topics arise. The discussion shouldn't revolve too much around the specific support needs and one way of lowering this likelihood is to have a preamble about some common support needs and ways of meeting them as to not have the discussions circle around those topics when the time comes for the "speed dating" portion of the event. Also, the organizer should emphasize that the idea is to get to know each other and get to know the hopes and needs of both parties involved in the discussion, while the employer side can also be directed to think about how these people might fit into their organization as a valuable part of their work community. The clientele that is going to be participating in this sort of event are most likely very motivated to move forwards and they should have gone through some amount of coaching before having them partake in this sort of event, so they will be ready. When done well such an event can have long lasting positive effect on the outlook of employers towards people with support needs and it can affect people with such needs in the future in a positive manner without your further involvement.

Finding openings in the open job market that fit your clients and being involved in the onboarding process yourself can also be an effective way of building your network in a less board, but more involved manner. The idea there should be to show the value of your involvement and having resources available to the employer to lower the perceived barriers to employ a person with support needs. To have further effect positive experiences should be catalogued some how and asking the employer to describe their point of view and how they benefitted form your involvement can be used to market this service to other employers.

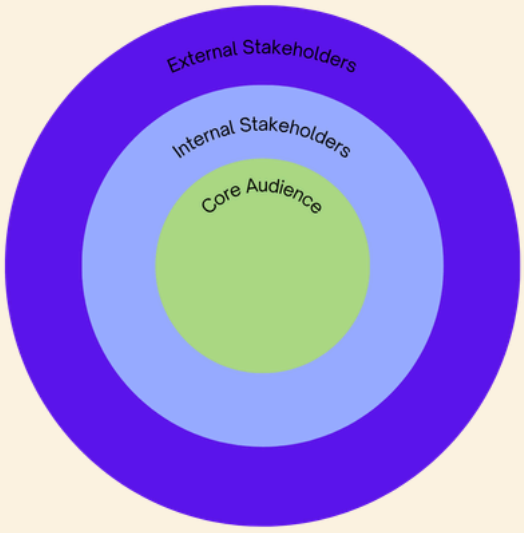
Words coming from their side of the table will seem more pressing and impressive, so that their doubts can be laid to rest more easily. When possible asking employers to act as a reference in regards to networking is also a good idea, here the focus should be to not ask too much involvement in this regard, but rather to ask them to provide a succinct anecdote when called upon should be enough. Asking the most interested parties to be your employer "ambassadors" is also a good idea, as having employers vouch for you in such a way builds a trusted image in a long run for your organization in the employer field. By employing these methods you can leverage the connections you gain to further bolster your network.

Stakeholder circle:

Used to identify relevant stakeholders in terms of matching candidates with employers and overall relevance to the project itself.

Stakeholder Circle

Organize stakeholders into groups to clarify the project's priorities. Think about the relationships between the groups.



Empathy table:

Used with the "speed dating" method and given to both parties after the rotation of discussions to clarify each participant's view about the other group and help to humanize them to each other.

Job Coaching

Key Elements:

- **Workplace plan and ongoing coaching**
- **Coordination with employers**

Job coaching represents the most intensive and sustained part of the SWOM model. It is the phase where young people and employers move from preparation into the reality of daily work. In Lithuania and Finland, where both short-termism in youth employment and employer hesitation are widespread, structured workplace planning and ongoing coaching are indispensable for ensuring that placements result in durable and positive outcomes.

Workplace Plan and Ongoing Coaching

A **workplace plan** is developed jointly by the coach, the young person, and the employer at the very beginning of an employment relationship. Its purpose is to set clear expectations, identify areas of support, and agree on how progress will be reviewed. The plan should cover:

- **Job role and responsibilities** (tasks, schedule, reporting lines).
- **Individual support needs** (accommodations, adaptations, or mentoring arrangements).
- **Learning and development goals** (skills to be strengthened during the first six months).
- **Evaluation checkpoints** (dates for reviewing progress and making adjustments).

In Lithuania, where many young people struggle with confidence and motivation, workplace plans should include specific confidence-building milestones, such as presenting work to a supervisor or managing a new task independently. In Finland, where long pre-employment phases mean clients may arrive with well-developed “training experiences” but little real-world employment, the workplace plan should focus on transferring those skills into practical work and reducing anxiety during the transition.

Ongoing coaching is critical for maintaining momentum. Coaches should meet with the young person regularly (at least once every two weeks at the start, tapering to monthly as stability grows). These sessions focus on reflecting on workplace experiences, addressing challenges, and reinforcing strengths. Coaches should also remain accessible by phone or online for urgent situations, especially in the first months. A flexible, responsive presence is essential for preventing early dropouts.

Coordination with Employers

Effective job coaching also depends on **systematic coordination with employers.** Coaches act as mediators, ensuring that both the employer and the young person have the support they need. This involves:

- **Regular check-ins with supervisors** to discuss performance, integration, and any emerging difficulties.
- **Coaching for employers,** helping them understand how to accommodate specific needs, communicate effectively, and provide constructive feedback.
- **Problem-solving support,** where the coach intervenes quickly if misunderstandings or conflicts arise.
- **Highlighting success,** by encouraging employers to acknowledge progress and by sharing positive outcomes within employer networks.



In Lithuania, employer coordination should pay special attention to small and medium-sized enterprises, which often lack human resource departments and may feel unprepared to take on youth with support needs. Here, the coach can play a quasi-HR role, offering guidance on induction, feedback, and inclusive team practices. In Finland, where employers are often concerned about the costs of additional support, coordination should emphasise efficiency: small adjustments that reduce barriers, early feedback to avoid escalated issues, and clear demonstration of the added value young people bring.

Outcomes

When workplace plans and employer coordination are implemented effectively, job coaching not only supports the young person in adapting to a new environment but also helps employers build confidence in inclusive recruitment. This dual benefit is essential for sustainability: young people gain stability and skills, while employers experience the tangible advantages of supported employment, making them more likely to continue the practice beyond the project's lifetime.



4. Monitoring & Evaluation SWOM Model Phases

Tools:

- Coach feedback loops
- Participant self-assessment
- Employer evaluations

Metrics:

- 6-month retention
- Increased confidence
- Employer satisfaction

The Importance of Evaluation and Monitoring

Ongoing and structured evaluation is important in the context of supported employment. Different evaluation methods act as tools that support growth, reveal development, and guide decision-making throughout the process. A well-planned evaluation system ensures that both clients and coaches can respond effectively to progress, challenges, and changes in circumstance. All evaluations should be as transparent to the client as possible, with clear communication of goals, successess and areas of growth. This collaborative review process can help strengthen self-confidence and reinforce a sense of ownership over their employment journey.



Evaluation should ideally begin at the pre-employment phase with assessments done both at the beginning and end of the phase. The initial evaluation helps establish a baseline for the situation, capabilities, skills and potential challenges for the client, while the evaluation done at the end of this phase is essential for reassessing goals, identifying strengths and achievements, and making informed decisions about whether continued coaching is necessary before transitioning to further phases of the program or to independent employment. Monitoring and appropriate forms of evaluation should continue regularly during the employment phase to highlight progress and so that support can be offered if difficulties arise.

Tools for Evaluation

A key principle of effective evaluation is alignment with goals established in collaboration with the client. These goals form the framework upon which all evaluations are based. To be effective, evaluations must be:

- Clear and comprehensible to both coach and client
- Focused on demonstrated abilities, not just subjective impressions
- Consistent, to allow comparison over time
- Flexible, to accommodate individual needs and shifting circumstances

Evaluations and monitoring can be conducted in different ways depending on the specific operating environment, the needs and capabilities of the clientele, the specifics of the local labour market and the requirements of the organization responsible for the supported employment program. The evaluations can be done by the coach, in the form of self-assessment by the client, or by the employer once the client has been succesfully employed. Ideally all three are to be used together and cross-compared to form a comprehensive picture of the client and their progress.

In general, evaluations can be conducted using one of three formats:

- Open-form evaluations, which allow for free-form observations, insights, and narrative feedback.
- Standardized scaled evaluations, which involve rating various competencies or behaviors on a set scale (e.g., 1–5).
- Hybrid evaluations, which combine scaled assessments with qualitative comments, offering a balance between structure and flexibility.

For scaled assessments to be meaningful, the scales used must be well-designed, unambiguous, and supported by sufficient data points. A single rating on a vague scale is unlikely to offer useful insight. Instead, thoughtful design and consistency are key to generating useful data.

Coach-led evaluations are based on the observations made during coaching meetings and at other times during the program, as well as in relation to reaching the goals set together with the client. Coach-led evaluation forms the core that other types of evaluations can be compared to.

Self-assessment is a powerful tool for highlighting perceived change. When clients are asked to reflect on their own progress, it can reveal shifts in mindset, confidence, and self-perception that may not be visible to others. Self-assessments are most useful when paired with coach evaluations, allowing for comparison between internal perception and external observation.

Employer evaluations are especially important during and after the employment phase. Employers provide an external, workplace-based perspective that can reveal how well the client is integrating into the job, what strengths they are exhibiting, and where they may still need support. Additionally, employer feedback can highlight systemic or environmental issues that may hinder the client's ability to succeed in their role, allowing for early intervention and support.

Key Metrics to Monitor

To track progress meaningfully, a combination of qualitative and quantitative metrics should be observed, including:

- Self-reported increases in confidence and capability: This metric can be observed through client self-assessments and evaluations discussions.
- Employer satisfaction: Gauged through structured interviews or evaluation forms. Employer satisfaction in both the client's performance at the workplace, and the support provided for the employer and client during the supported employment should be considered.
- Six-month retention: A strong indicator of job fit, workplace integration, and long-term success in employment.

Tracking these metrics over time offers insight into both the effectiveness of the coaching program and the sustainability of the client's employment.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite best efforts, evaluation is not without its challenges. One of the most significant issues is the changing nature of a client's needs and circumstances. Life events, shifts in motivation, health concerns, or external pressures can affect a client's journey. Therefore, it is essential that evaluation tools and strategies are designed with flexibility and adaptability in mind.

This challenge can be mitigated through the use of multiple evaluation types and by maintaining a consistent focus on the client-established goals. When clients are at the center of the evaluation process, and when tools are used dynamically and responsively, evaluation becomes not just a measure of progress - but a driver of it.

5. Addition benefits/side effects project

- Public-Private Synergy
- Flexible Support Models, tailored made approach
- Leverage Existing Services
- Advocacy Role

Although the SWOM model is primarily designed to create direct employment opportunities for young people with support needs, its implementation in Lithuania and Finland generates wider benefits that go beyond individual job placements. These side effects strengthen the overall ecosystem of youth employment support and create lasting value for partner organisations, employers, and society.



Public–Private Synergy

One of the most significant benefits is the creation of new forms of cooperation between public institutions, NGOs, and private employers. In both Lithuania and Finland, these sectors have traditionally worked in parallel rather than in partnership. By positioning NGOs as reliable service providers to employers, the SWOM model encourages a culture of co-responsibility, where employment becomes not only the task of the state but a shared effort across sectors. This synergy increases trust, improves communication, and lays the foundation for sustainable cooperation beyond the project period.

Flexible Support Models and Tailor-Made Approaches

The model demonstrates that employment services can be adapted to the needs of individuals rather than forcing individuals to fit into rigid programmes. Through personal profiles, workplace plans, and ongoing coaching, young people receive support that reflects their strengths, ambitions, and challenges. In Lithuania, where many services remain standardised, this approach shows how flexibility can lead to higher motivation and retention. In Finland, where young people often spend long periods in pre-employment measures, the tailored approach provides a faster and more effective pathway to actual jobs.

Leveraging Existing Services

Rather than duplicating efforts, the SWOM model builds on and strengthens what already exists. Employment offices, municipal youth services, and NGOs all provide valuable resources that can be better coordinated and made more effective when combined with structured employer engagement. For example, outreach centres in Finland (Ohjaamo) and municipal youth spaces in Lithuania already reach vulnerable youth but often lack structured links to employers. The SWOM approach bridges these gaps, ensuring that existing services are used more efficiently and produce tangible results in the labour market.

Advocacy Role

Finally, the project contributes to longer-term systemic change by introducing advocacy as an integral part of employment support. In the Netherlands, lobbying for quota legislation and equal opportunities has been a cornerstone of SWOM's success. While Lithuania and Finland lack similar legal frameworks, the project highlights the importance of speaking with a collective voice to influence employer attitudes and policymaking. Even if legislative changes cannot be achieved within the lifetime of the project, building networks of NGOs, youth organisations, and employers who are committed to inclusive employment will lay the groundwork for future reforms.

The broader benefits of the SWOM model reinforce each stage of its implementation. Public–private synergy strengthens employer collaboration in Phase 2, while flexible and tailor-made support models give greater depth to the individual coaching outlined in Phase 1 and Phase 3. By leveraging existing services, the model prevents fragmentation and ensures that outreach, matching, and job coaching are embedded within the national systems of Lithuania and Finland rather than remaining isolated project activities. Finally, the advocacy dimension creates a bridge between individual change and systemic reform, linking daily practice with long-term structural improvements in labour market inclusion. Taken together, these benefits ensure that the SWOM model does not only help young people into jobs, but also contributes to building more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable employment ecosystems in both countries.

SWOM believes that by creating real impact at the individual level - supporting young people with complex challenges into work and education - we can drive broader systemic change. *Our approach is rooted in lived experience, using practical results to challenge stigma, influence policy, and advocate for a more inclusive labor market. Through tailored support and strong partnerships (micro-level impact), we aim to prove that inclusive practices are not only possible but necessary, inspiring structural change at the macro level.*





swom

ŽISPB

VALO
valmennus
yhdistys

Social
Innovation
Initiative

Co-funded by
the European Union

HUMAK
UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES

REVEALING
THE
HIDDEN
RESOURCES:
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT
FOR NEETS WITH SUPPORT NEEDS