



Cities for Active Inclusion

The active inclusion of young people: Rotterdam

**EUROCITIES NETWORK
OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
OBSERVATORIES ON
ACTIVE INCLUSION**

CITIES FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION

The EUROCITIES Network of Local Authority Observatories on Active Inclusion (EUROCITIES-NLAO) is a dynamic network of nine European cities - Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Krakow, Lille Métropole - Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm - each with a local authority observatory (LAO) within its administration.

Their aim is to share information, promote mutual learning and carry out research on the implementation of active inclusion strategies at the local level. The nine observatories are coordinated by EUROCITIES, the network of major cities in Europe, and supported through a partnership with the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion).

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1. Introduction

1.1 National level

The Netherlands has a population of some 16.5 million: 2 million are young people aged 15-24¹. In The Netherlands, as in many other countries, education is traditionally considered the most important instrument for the active inclusion of young people. Education is primarily a national responsibility: from kindergarten to university, education policy is developed and financed through the national policy makers in The Hague.

However, over the past few decades, there has been a growing awareness at the national level that there is more that should be done to promote the active inclusion of young people than simply offering accessible high quality education. Various initiatives have therefore been introduced nationally: for example, schemes to prevent young people from dropping out of school, extended education programmes, and various labour market support and guidance activities for unemployed young people. In addition, over recent years, several new action plans for the active inclusion of young people have been developed and implemented². These are in line with the national Youth Unemployment Programme (Actieprogramma Jeugdwerkloosheid) and the Dutch National Reform Programme, which is developed on a three-year cycle as part of the EU's Lisbon Strategy.

It has also become clear that local authorities, who are more aware of local economic problems and opportunities, do have an important role to play in this field.

The government's introduction of the Investment in Youth Act, on 1 October 2009, represented a major shift in Dutch national social policy. Under the Act, unemployed young people aged up to 27 years old are no longer entitled to unemployment benefit. Instead, young people are now offered work-placement and learning opportunities: only by participating in these can unemployed young people receive an income.

In the Netherlands, the figures for the end of 2009 show a general unemployment rate of 3.9%, and a youth unemployment rate of 7.8%: both rates are relatively low in an EU wide context. However, youth unemployment has been rising disproportionately since the onset of the financial crisis, jumping by 48% in 2009³.

1.2 Local level

With a population of some 610,000, Rotterdam is the second largest city in The Netherlands, and is also Europe's largest port. 84,000 of the population are young people aged 15-24⁴; and the city is home to more than 160 nationalities.

¹ CBS Statline: 01.01.2010.

² For a brief overview of some national action plans to reduce youth unemployment in The Netherlands see (in Dutch) C.M. van Ommeren et al., *Eindrapport Kwalitatieve Scan Actieplannen Jeugdwerkloosheid, Zoetermeer* (Regioplan).

³ *A preventive approach to youth unemployment, Rotterdam / The Netherlands*, in: *Urbact Cities Facing The Crisis, Impact and Responses* (ERDF November 2010), p. 54.

⁴ COS Rotterdam: 01.01.2011.



Rotterdam has seen a significant increase in youth unemployment in the last few years. Between July 2009 and July 2010, youth unemployment went up by 11%⁵; and between March 2010 and March 2011 it went up by 18%, while the overall unemployment rate only increased by 3.1%⁶. Lower-skilled young people were particularly hard hit, as were those on flexible contracts, as these are the first jobs to go when companies cut back⁷.

In the current year, 2011, it is expected that some 3,500 school-leavers will be unable to find a job and will therefore apply for social benefits: this is 2,000 more than the usual average of 1,500 young people unable to find a job when they first leave school.

With a very young population profile, a key concern for the city of Rotterdam is to avoid high levels of youth unemployment, which could lead to a possible 'lost generation'.

Initiatives to address youth unemployment in Rotterdam are being developed within the framework of regional and national action plans, as part of the Dutch National Reform Programme on preventing youth unemployment.

Like other Dutch cities, Rotterdam is involved in many different policies and projects to achieve a better match between young school-leavers who are looking for a job and the opportunities available in the labour market. These policies and projects include subsidising wages for job-placements, reducing the drop out level in secondary schools, developing special training courses, and on-the-job training schemes.

Raising the education levels and employment prospects among young people by keeping them in school for longer, and by supporting them in the transition into employment, is an important policy goal for the city. In line with this, some of the city's Social Inclusion of Youth programmes have been delegated to the Rotterdam's 14 city districts: the reasoning is that local district politicians and civil servants have a better understanding of the local situation and of local opportunities.

In 2009, as part of a Europe-wide initiative to promote the active inclusion of young people, Rotterdam was designated the first European Youth Capital. During the year, some €22 million of EU funding was spent on around 500 youth projects of all sizes, designed by young people. In the 'My Generation' project, Rotterdam co-operated with ten other European cities on youth issues⁸. In a letter to Rotterdam City Council, Lucas Bolsius, a vice-mayor of Rotterdam while the city was 2009 European Youth Capital, emphasised that one of the lessons learnt during the year was that young people want to be approached in a positive and inclusive way⁹. This is a very important insight, as policy-makers in the Netherlands have often have little or no understanding of postmodern youth culture, and have not understood that most young people want to be as mainstream as possible.

In terms of funding specifically to tackle youth unemployment, the Rotterdam region was awarded €6.5 million of the total budget of €23 million for the national Youth Unemployment Programme (Actieprogramma Jeugdwerkloosheid).

⁵ UWV Werkbedrijf, Basisset Regionale Arbeidsmarktinformatie, Rotterdam (UWV Werkbedrijf Rijnmond), juli 2010, p. 4. See also: Table 1 in Annex 1 to this report.

⁶ Snelinformatie Arbeidsmarkt, Rotterdam (UWV Werkbedrijf Rijnmond), april 2011.

⁷ Yamina Guidom, Rotterdam: a preventive approach to youth unemployment (URBACT case study of cities' responses to the crises), EU URBACT, Brussels (August 2010), pp. 2-3; on-line version available at www.urbact.eu.

⁸ See <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/active-inclusion/my-generation/homepage>.

⁹ Letter of Vice-Mayor Lucas Bolsius dated May 18, 2010 to the Rotterdam City Council. On-line version (in Dutch): www.bds.rotterdam.nl/dsresource?objectid=199896&type=org.



Rotterdam also applied successfully for funding from the European Social Fund: €2.7 million was allocated for 2010-2011 for tackling youth unemployment, and the city applied for another €3.2 million for 2011-2012. These ESF funds are spent on mentoring and career planning, to help lead young people into the labour market.

The total budget for the city's Early School Leaving prevention projects consists of €13.4 million local funding and €4.3 million national funding.

Rotterdam has also developed a general economic recovery programme. The city seeks to mobilise a budget of around €323 million, mostly through the re-allocation of funds.

2. Policy and practices for the active inclusion of young people

2.1 Prevention of early school leaving

The main focus of Rotterdam's policies for the active inclusion of young people is on youth at risk. A first priority has been to set up a major Early School Leaving prevention programme to reduce early school leaving or, as it is often called, unqualified school leaving.

In Rotterdam, far too many young people still finish their education and training without a basic qualification: this is especially the case for pupils leaving preparatory vocational education for 12 to 16 year olds (vmbo: voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs), and also for those leaving upper secondary vocational education (mbo: middelbaar beroepsonderwijs), which lasts a further one to four years. One reason for the lack of qualifications is because school is not attractive for them: it does not fit in with their way of life. But another key reason is that many of these young people live in difficult home situations or have other problems that adversely influence their school careers and their results. Often these young people at risk give up education and training prematurely because of learning difficulties, social problems, a lack of motivation, or insufficient guidance and support.

If young people are no longer on the normal educational trajectory and they are also not in work or training, they are referred to as drop-outs.

Up to the age of 23 years, drop-outs in The Netherlands are included in municipal policies designed to reduce early school leaving and dropping out, by leading young people back to education and training and/or the labour market. These policies comprise preventive measures as well as curative measures.

A top priority is to reduce truancy as far as possible and as early as possible. When truancy occurs, it needs to be tackled immediately. So schools take action that involves both the pupil and the parents. Schools report cases of truancy to a central desk; and the school's attendance officers then take action to bring the pupils back into school as soon as possible.



As part of the Early School Leaving prevention programme, many local organisations cooperate together, under the overall direction of the local authority. This cooperation is either organised at a central level, through the city's Youth Desk, or at a decentralised district level through the DOSA Network (City District Organisation for an All-inclusive Approach: Deelgemeentelijke Organisatie Sluitende Aanpak). Both these organisations offer tailored solutions for each client, based on specialist expertise.

If young people drop out of school because of severe problems in their personal and home lives, the Youth Desk or the DOSA Network provide help to solve these problems, as described below:

The Youth Desk

The Youth Desk (Jongerenloket) provides a one-stop service where young people can access all the city's relevant youth-focused services. It is part of Rotterdam's central policy for Youth at Risk, for young people aged 23 years and under. Implementation of this policy is overseen by four vice-mayors and also involves four city departments working together: Youth, Education & Society (JOS); Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe); Health and Wellbeing (GGD); and Safety (DV). Central coordination is undertaken by the Board of the mayor and vice-mayors.

The main activities of the Youth Desk are as follows:

- tackling truancy in pupils aged 16 - 23 who are in upper secondary vocational education and who do not yet have a basic qualification;
- offering advice and guidance on education and training trajectories for young people aged 16 - 27 years: within eight weeks of registering with the Youth Desk, a young person has to be placed either in education, or in a dual learning trajectory that combines a job and school, or in a reintegration pathway, or in the care system;
- keeping track of all young people aged 16 -23 who are not in education, training or work, and actively including these young people back into education, training and/or work;
- providing the city's Central Youth Reception service (COJ) for homeless young people.

To provide these activities, the Youth Desk works with a variety of other organisations, including: secondary and upper secondary vocational schools, city districts, the DOSA Network, mentoring systems, the city's job centre (UWV), care systems, young immigrant reception centres, and social welfare organisations.

The DOSA Network

The DOSA Network provides an all-inclusive approach at city-district level (Deelgemeentelijke Organisatie Sluitende Aanpak). It is a network of specialist partner organisations helping young people aged 12 - 23 years old who have problems in more than one aspect of their lives: for example, problems with school, health, work, parents and/or housing. The partners in the network are a variety of governmental and non-governmental organisations who are experienced in helping young people who have problems. The schools in each district are particularly important partners.

DOSA was set up by the city of Rotterdam in order to deal with young people's problems more effectively, through a local, district-based approach. Each of Rotterdam's 14 city districts has



its own appointed DOSA director who works out of the district offices. An additional director coordinates all the DOSA activities across the whole city, by keeping in touch with the 14 district-based directors.

Each district director acts as the key contact for all the social organisations in that district. If one of the local organisations is having difficulty in solving a particular problem for a young person, they contact the district director. If the young person belongs to the DOSA target group, the district director brings together the appropriate institutions and professionals who will design a tailored approach, to be supervised by the director via regular progress reports. If progress is unsatisfactory, the director can restart the process or refer the case to the Youth Consul who is a higher city-based authority and who will decide an appropriate course of action. Each DOSA partner organisation is interconnected via the DOSA Network¹⁰.

New District Schools and Skills Schools

Some additional educational initiatives have also been set up to bring young people who have dropped out back to school. For example, District Schools (Wijkschool) offer intensive training and personalised coaching in the neighbourhood as a route back to regular training. In addition, Skills Schools (Vakschool) focus on providing easy-to-achieve skills development, in order to encourage sufficient motivation for students to eventually sign up for regular vocational training.

Tailored information

Increased provision of tailored information on the opportunities available in the job market is helping young people to plan more effective and appropriate educational trajectories. It is also helping to prevent the disappointment caused when young people are unable to match their qualifications to their career aspirations.

Increased cooperation between schools

Traditionally, many young people have found the transition between lower secondary vocational education (vmbo) and upper secondary vocational education (mbo) very difficult. This has caused a high proportion of young people to leave school without qualifications. However, cooperation between these types of schools is now making the transition easier for pupils, which should help improve the proportion of young people staying on and gaining qualifications.

2.2 Emerging trends

In Rotterdam, as in The Netherlands as a whole, the problems associated with the exclusion of young people are becoming more severe.

When a young person registers with the city's Youth Desk, they are interviewed in depth, and their problems are recorded on a self-actualisation matrix form (ZRM)¹¹. Analysis of the data shows

¹⁰ See Section 2 in Annex 1.

¹¹ ZRM is short for 'ZelfRedzaamheidsMatrix'. It is a score, based on an interview with the young person when they register with the Youth Desk, indicating their self-actualisation skills: the capacity to achieve their maximum potential .



that the number of problem areas per young person is rising. The latest figures show that 45% of the young people that look for help through the Youth Desk have problems in multiple domains. This is a national trend, not limited to Rotterdam.

A further national trend that is seen in Rotterdam is the increasing percentage of young people with temporary jobs rather than permanent jobs. Temporary work is relatively insecure, and the young people working in these temporary jobs are more vulnerable: they are entitled to fewer rights than people working on a fixed contract, whose employment rights are guaranteed by national law.

3. The main challenges for the active inclusion of young people

As a consequence of the current economic crisis, the city of Rotterdam expects that for the first time for many years, there will be an increase in the numbers of young people with good qualifications who will not be able to find a job in 2011.

It is likely that a significant percentage of these young people will choose not to take up further education, and will instead apply for social benefits. It is hard to predict the precise numbers, but, as mentioned in section 1.2 above, the city expects that in September 2011 some 3,500 young people will be unable to find work: 2,000 more than in previous years. Rotterdam is preparing for this major challenge by creating additional pathways for young people and by optimising the existing pathways.

Up until now, Rotterdam's Social Inclusion of Youth programmes have not been affected by budget cuts. However, it seems likely that budget cuts may be made in the future.

Rotterdam's other social inclusion policies are to a large extent financed by the city's Participation Budget¹²: these are funds that the city receives from the national government. Another challenge for the city is that this Participation Budget is to be cut dramatically in 2014: from €290 million to €90 million per year.

The implication is that Dutch cities will no longer be receiving finance from the government for supporting young people in their search for a job. Instead, young people will have to find their own way into employment. The government cuts that have been announced for 2014 will have an immediate and direct consequence for the target group of young people. As a result, it will become more important to access funding from the European Social Fund. The city of Rotterdam is therefore currently looking at further opportunities to apply for European funds.

In the meantime, this new low-funding approach will probably be counter-productive. The city of Rotterdam will lose contact with substantial numbers of its young people. They will only be in contact if they are part of the Early School Leaving prevention programme and valuable opportunities will be lost.

¹² Social Benefits and Re-integration Projects are nationally financed. In the allocated budget there is an income element to be spent on social benefits, and a work or re-integration element to be spent on participation pathways.



A significant challenge for Rotterdam is that municipalities in The Netherlands have little or no influence on policy making in the field of education. For example, Rotterdam's city authorities have no influence on the decisions of schools and other educational institutions as to whether to continue or suspend certain training programmes. Similarly, municipalities cannot persuade schools to accept multiple dates for new pupils to join during the school year, even though this would be beneficial for some of the city's more vulnerable young people.

An additional challenge is that some city policy-makers in Rotterdam see some aspects of youth culture as contributing to the problems of young people. It is seldom realised that 99% of the city's young people want to be part of mainstream society. One of the main reasons for the verbal resistance that characterises a wide range of postmodern youth cultures may be a response to discrimination against young people. So another challenge for the city is to help change policy-makers' perceptions of young people.

4. Good lessons

The following gives details of two good examples of successful initiatives for the active inclusion of young people in Rotterdam: one developed by the city's civil service, and one developed by the third sector:

Central Youth Reception

The Central Youth Reception service (Centraal Onthaal Jongeren: COJ) has been created as part of the city's Youth Desk service, and is specifically focused on helping homeless young people.

Through the Central Youth Reception service, the city offers young homeless people a central portal through which they can contact some 18 public and private organisations involved in the active inclusion of young people¹³.

Developed by the city of Rotterdam, a significant advantage of this central approach is that organisations in the field know exactly who is providing which services to a client. After a client registers with the service, the client's needs are clarified, and an individual pathway, embracing all the necessary services, is assigned and implemented. Progress along the pathway is monitored and evaluated, and when necessary, the pathway is adapted. The benefits include transparency for the client and a highly efficient delivery of a range of services, including back office functions.

¹³ It should be noted that young people up to 27 years are not automatically entitled to Social Benefits. Young people are supposed either to attend school, a course or any other sort of education or are working, either in a regular paid job or on a *participating base* - which in Rotterdam means "working for a social benefit".



Rotterdam SkillCity

A second recent initiative in the field of active social inclusion is SkillCity¹⁴: an urban revitalisation programme developed and implemented by Dr Henk Oosterling, who is a philosopher and lecturer at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Rotterdam SkillCity is founded on an insight into the effects of Rotterdam's post-war development: over the past four decades the city has evolved from being an industrial port needing manual labour into a city that is more focused on culture, global business and technology, where the development of relevant skills for working class people has been neglected. SkillCity is designed to reverse this trend by inspiring young people to become actively interested in shaping their future. The project is an integrated part of Rotterdam's South Pact programme (Pact op Zuid): this aims to revitalise the relatively disadvantaged southern part of the city south of the River Maas, supported by public and private organisations including housing corporations.

One school where SkillCity is being implemented the Brede primary school in Bloemhof. Every day, these Bloemhof school children feel the benefits of SkillCity: the project provides them with lessons in judo, gardening, cooking and philosophy for about six hours a week. As Dr Oosterling explains: 'Philosophy is food for the mind, while sport is food for the body.' The children are given a hot meal every day, in a restaurant setting. And because many children think food just comes from a supermarket, the gardening and cooking classes show them where healthy food really comes from. The project engages children and helps them understand the cycle of ecological interdependence, which they can then discuss in the philosophy classes.

The initial results for Rotterdam SkillCity are very promising. The children feel better, they are also more motivated and as a consequence they perform better¹⁵; and this also benefits the school as a whole.

5. Future plans for promoting the active inclusion of young people

Rotterdam's social inclusion policy, which includes the active social inclusion of young people, has now been rolled out and is fully operational. This social inclusion policy has the specific aim of actively including unemployed people in Rotterdam¹⁶, and unemployed young people represent an important target sub-group. The active social inclusion of youth will be continued into the future, and where possible the associated programmes will be expanded.

¹⁴ Based on an interview (in Dutch) with Dr. Oosterling by Janneke Horlings, "*Socrates begon ook op straat*" in: *Trouw*, 26.11.2010. Quotes were translated. Cf. Henk Oosterling, (2009), *Woorden als daden. Rotterdam Vakmanstad / Skillcity 2007-2009*, Heijningen (JapSam Books).

¹⁵ See for a first evaluation (in Dutch) Nanne Boonstra, Harrie Jonkman en Huub Braam, *Oefenen in Vakmanschap. Rotterdam Zuid: effecten van het onderwijsprogramma Vakmanschap en Fysieke Integriteit*, Utrecht (Verweij-Jonker Instituut) 2009.

¹⁶ See Rotterdam's 'Social Inclusion' Policy e.g as described in the NLAO-report *Social Economies in Cities: Rotterdam*, available at the Eurocities-NLAO website: www.eurocities.eu/Minisites/NLAO/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=111&Itemid=70.



In planning future projects to promote the active inclusion of young people, it will be important for the city to focus particularly on three aspects, as follows:

Career guidance

To help guide unemployed young people into those economic sectors that are already economically important and that offer future sustainability and future growth potential, e.g.

- the port and its associated logistics industry;
- the creative sector, including computer games and graphics;
- the medical and care sector.

Young entrepreneurs

To promote and develop the entrepreneurship skills and abilities of unemployed young people in Rotterdam, by capitalising effectively on the significant talents of young people and by forging partnerships between the education sector and Rotterdam's business sector.

Career opportunities

To address the displacement phenomena in the Rotterdam labour market in which older and better educated employees have jobs which would perfectly match the skills of many less educated unemployed young people, by developing career opportunities for these existing employees the working of the labour market could be improved substantially.

There are plans for the various active inclusion of youth programmes and activities to be monitored more systematically in the future. In this way the city of Rotterdam will be able to identify the most effective approaches and so become a highly effective city in terms of the active inclusion of young people.



ANNEX 1: Data

Unemployed young people aged 16-27 covered by the Investment in Youth Act¹⁷

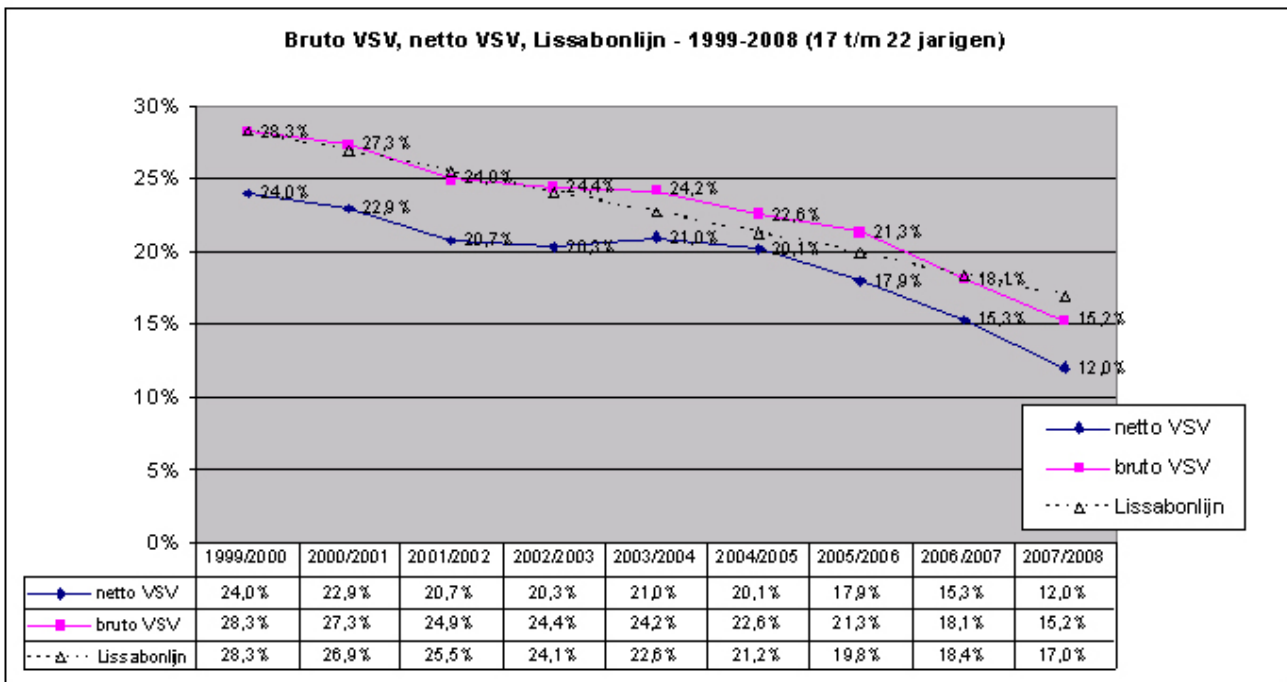
	Amsterdam	Rotterdam	The Hague
01-06-2009	2675	3196	1463
01-01 2010	3100	3288	1680
01-10-2010	3525	3574	2205

¹⁷ Source: Gemeente Rotterdam, "Ga gewoon door". De Rotterdamse aanpak van de jeugdwerkeloosheid 2011-2012, Rotterdam (gemeente Rotterdam), p. 8. Policy paper (in Dutch) available at: www.rotterdam.nl/BSD/Document/collegedocumenten/Ga%20ge-10woon%20door!%20De%20Rotterdamse%20aanpak%20van%20jeugdwerkeloosheid%202011-2012.pdf.



ANNEX 2: Graphs

1. Rotterdam: Early School Leavers Monitor 1999 - 2008

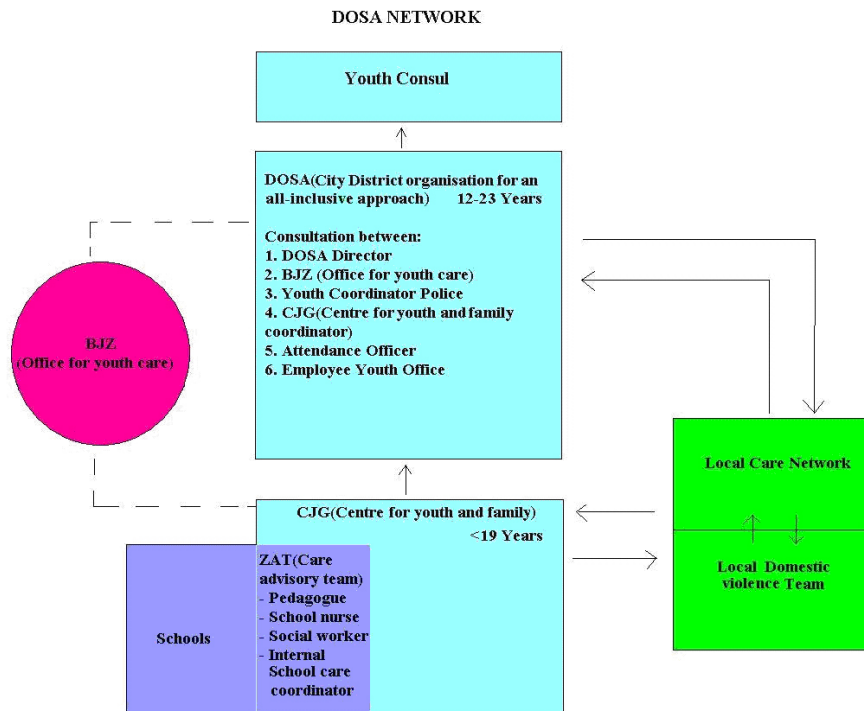


Bruto VSV = Gross early school leavers (young people 17 - 22 without a basic qualification)

Netto VSV = Net early school leavers = gross early school leavers minus young people who settled back into school during the school year in Rotterdam and minus the number of young people unlikely to ever obtain a basic qualification



2. Rotterdam's DOSA Network



DOSA Network partners:

- Youth Consul: this youth council is in direct contact with the Mayor and Vice-mayors, so that when the DOSA Network has been unable to achieve a solution to help a young person solve their problems, the Youth Consul and the Mayor will create a new plan for the young person.
- Office for Youth Care (BJZ): under the Youth Care Act of 2005, the Office for Youth Care was designated as the gateway for access to all youth services. Staff assesses each request for help, determine the care needed, and then provide guidance to young people and their parents, or refer them to other sources of assistance.
- Centre for Youth and Family (CJG): this centre works to pre-empt potential problems for young people aged up to 19 years and their families, helps them cope with existing problems, and also helps to prevent the escalation of these problems. The centre aims to help all young people with problems, not just those with multiple issues, and redirects them to the DOSA partners best able to help. The centre also works with the schools to highlight problems early on, and prevent problems from growing.
- Local domestic violence team: this DOSA partner specialises in families with problems involving domestic violence.
- Local care network: this partner works on a local district level with social workers, police and physicians to identify and prevent problems at an early stage. Many in their target group are reluctant to ask for help and pose no risk to society. As well as working with young people at risk, this partner works with anyone of any age with a significant problem.