NETWORKS OF ACCOUNT-GIVING IN LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT COLLABORATIONS IN FIVE COUNTRIES
Work Package 8 – Deliverable 8.1

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Executive summary

This report is part of the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 project TROPICO: Transforming into Open, Innovative and Collaborative Governments, which investigates how public administrations are transformed into more open, innovative and collaborative governments with a particular focus on how digitalisation and information and communication technologies (ICT) can enable this transformation. The report is part of Work Package 8 “Effects of Collaboration for Legitimacy and Accountability”, which explores the impact of collaborative governance practices on democratic legitimacy and accountability.

Like other forms of governing, collaborative governance must be accountable. Collaborative governance is subject to various types of accountability, and in this report we examine accountability effects by zooming in on the ‘wicked problem’ of long-term unemployment. A ‘wicked problem’ is a problem that is difficult to solve because of incomplete or contradictory knowledge, changing requirements, and because the problem is interconnected with other problems. Due to the inbuilt ‘wickedness’ of long-term unemployment, it encompasses a ‘system of inter-related problems’ (Ackoff 1974: 21; see also Head and Alford 2013), ranging from social and economic dynamics to a number of health and family-related matters, spanning across several sectors and levels of government and their collaborative efforts.

Across Europe, public employment services are currently experimenting with more ‘holistic’, cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations to tackle the wicked problem of long-term unemployment. In most countries these ‘holistic’ collaborative initiatives take place in a context of policies aiming at ‘activating’ the unemployed, and governance reforms seeking to strengthen the accountability of the service providers. While collaborative and more holistic forms of governance seem a promising approach, studies suggest they also pose challenges for accountability. Adding horizontal and often more informal layers of accountability leads to an even higher complexity (Byrkjeflot, Christensen and Lægreid, 2014) that may lead to ‘accountability gaps’ (Malbon, Carey and Reeders, 2019) and contradictory or competing
accountability relationships (Jantz and Jann, 2013; Grubnic and Cooper, 2019). These studies point to the importance of accountability relationships and potential tensions in between different forms of accountability.

In this report, we examine the accountability implications of collaborative governance by focusing on the services that target the long-term unemployed. Through in-depth case studies of innovative local initiatives in the Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders), Estonia, the United Kingdom (Scotland), and Denmark, we aim to explore the complex accountability relationships, the tension between them and how they are mitigated. The case studies also pay attention to whether and how ICT plays a role in the account-giving.

The D8.1 report is one of two deliverables presenting the findings from the case studies. In this report, chapter one presents the theoretical framework and the research design on which all five case studies are based on. The chapter also includes a summary of the specific collaborations in the five cases, and concludes by outlining the main accountability tensions and challenges of each case. Chapters 2 to 6 contain the five case studies of accountability networks written by the respective partners in the TROPICO Work Package 8 team. The D8.1 report is closely linked to the second Work Package 8 report, D8.2, in which we embark on a more comparative analysis of the case studies, and compare the distinct national contexts of governance, accountability relations and role of ICT in policies targeting long-term unemployed. The D8.2 also provides some key attention points for researchers and recommendations for practitioners engaged in similar activities.
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Chapter 1: Framework and summary of findings

Introduction

Governments are introducing collaborative governance practices in order to handle ‘wicked problems’, problems that cut across sectoral boundaries, and which have ambiguous causes and consequences and often unclear means-end relations (Rittel and Webber 1973; Ackoff 1974; Head and Alford 2013). These collaborative practices are challenged by changing demands for legitimacy and accountability by both the involved stakeholders and citizens.

The ‘wicked problem’ of long-term unemployment has in most countries recently been tackled by ‘holistic’ and collaborative initiatives that take place in a context of policies aiming at ‘activating’ the unemployed and governance reforms seeking to strengthen the accountability of service providers. These reforms are inspired by New Public Management (NPM) ideas and instruments of financial incentives and performance measurement. The collaborations are placed in a tension-filled space with diverging accountability demands. The collaborations are accountable to the citizen as they relate to the complex individual situation and needs, which presumes mutual trust in between all actors in the collaboration. At the same time, the collaborations must be accountable to satisfy standardized performance indicators set from above. Further, the actors providing services are often accountable to different professional standards and legal bodies. Through our in-depth qualitative case-studies of the accountability networks in five innovative collaborative initiatives in Scotland, Flanders, Estonia, Netherlands and Denmark, we aim to pinpoint the tensions and challenges and ways of mitigating the diverging accountability demands. The wicked nature of long-term unemployment, the collaborations across sectors and levels of government and the embeddedness of these practices in existing institutions makes the case of how public employment services (PES) deals with long-term unemployment an exemplary case to study the accountability tensions and challenges in collaborative governance. In the perspective of Esping-Andersen’s framework (Esping-Andersen, 1990), and subsequent extensions of it
The governance structures of long-term unemployment in the five countries are also affected by shared reform trends transforming social and labour market policies in all European countries. For several decades most European countries have gradually introduced active social policies, active labour market policies or activation policies to handle the problem of unemployment – whether short- or long-term (Bonoli, 2013; Hansen, 2019). Activation policies are aimed at getting people off benefits by encouraging unemployed to step up their job search and by making benefits conditional on participation. Looking at the labour market reforms across the European Union, this reform path is consistent regardless of the aforementioned welfare regime traditions (Turrini et al., 2015). The introduction of activation policies has substantially changed the services that are offered to unemployed persons, and the governance structures surrounding the activation schemes (Borghi and van Berkel, 2007; van Berkel, de Graaf and Sirovatkas, 2011; Lødemel and Moreira, 2014; van Berkel, 2016).

Distinguishing between three classic modes of governance – old public administration or procedural governance, New Public Management (NPM) or market-governance, and network or new public governance (Borghi, 2011) scholars find a variety of such public governance modes in different mixes in different countries (Borghi and van Berkel, 2007; Eydoux and Béraud, 2011; Brodkin and Marston, 2013; Lødemel and Moreira, 2014; Considine et al., 2015; Heidenreich and Rice, 2016).

Some general trends seem to characterize the governance reforms relating to activation and employment policies. The displacement of the logic of the services, from entitled rights and
benefits (unemployment insurance of social assistance) to rights and obligation of the unemployed to be active and re-integrate into the labour market, created a need for a ‘second wave’ of reforms (Larsen, 2013) aiming to monitor the performance of the activation carried out by front-line workers in the local agencies. Whereas the first wave of reforms was concerned with the activation of the unemployed, the second wave is concerned with the activation of the organisation responsible for delivering benefits and imposing requirements, and the activation of the frontline workers delivering the services. Governance reforms have been concerned with the two latter dimensions of ‘triple activation’ (Van Berkel, 2013).

This second wave of reforms have come with a variety of instruments from the palette of NPM, such as contracting out, performance measurement, benchmarking, and pay-for-performance systems (Larsen, 2013; van Berkel, 2016). These instruments create an additional layer of accountability, involving not only local providers of activation schemes but also more central agencies monitoring their performance. The effects of such reforms depend on the concrete design of the performance management systems as well as the local conditions and circumstances in which it is implemented (van Berkel, 2016). Some studies point to positive effects of increased efficiency, while others point to negative effects of creaming and parking (Brodkin and Marston, 2013) and tensions between performance targets and professional norms (Marston and McDonald, 2006).

Most studies of governance in activation have focused their attention on the consequences of NPM tools. Yet, a small but growing number of studies are concerned with network-based forms of governance that induces collaboration between various agencies and professionals. This is often the case with regards to groups with complex and multiple labour-market barriers (Lindsay and Dutton, 2012; Fuertes et al., 2014; Considine et al., 2015; Andersen, Caswell and Larsen, 2017). Some scholars see the network-based and collaborative mode of governance as a promising alternative to both the NPM style performance-oriented instruments and the standardized work-first oriented activation, which places emphasis on individual needs as well as the empowerment of the citizen (Bronstein, 2003; Borghi, 2011). While collaborative and more holistic forms of governance of activation services seem a promising approach, studies
suggest they also pose challenges for accountability. Adding horizontal and often more informal layers of accountability leads to an even higher complexity (Byrkjeflot, Christensen and Lægreid, 2014) that may lead to ‘accountability gaps’ (Malbon, Carey and Reeders, 2019) and contradictory or competing accountability relationships (Jantz and Jann, 2013; Grubnic and Cooper, 2019). These studies point to the importance of the accountability relationships and potential tensions in between different forms of accountability.

**Research questions and structure of the report**

In this report, we focus on the governance surrounding services targeting long-term unemployed. Through in-depth case studies of local initiatives in five different settings and national contexts we explore the complex accountability relationships, the tensions in between them, and how they may be mitigated. We do this by zooming in on the networks of account-giving in and around the collaborative initiatives targeting long-term unemployed. The initiatives are located in the Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders), Estonia, the United Kingdom (Scotland), and Denmark. The case-studies are based on interviews with key actors involved, around 10 for each case, and document studies of written account-giving and account-reception. The main research questions guiding the case-studies are:

- **How, what and to whom** do the individual actors and networks collaborating in/around the service delivery of integrating long-term unemployed give and receive accounts?
- **What are the effects** of such account-giving on the accountability of the policy-making and the service delivery targeting the long-term unemployed?

Integral to the questions above, the case studies also pay attention to whether and how ICT plays a role in the account-giving. The TROPICO project recognises that ICT may have crucial impact on legitimacy and accountability in collaborations. In the case of collaborative and holistic efforts of re-integrating long-term unemployed the role of ICT is important in at least two ways. First, many public employment services (PES) use digital platforms to manage the individual plans and cases, and thus also manage the accountability of various stakeholders,
including the citizen. Often these digital tools are based on forms of performance accountability that may or may not foster collaboration in between the stakeholders. Secondly, cross-sectoral and public-private collaborations often encounter great challenges in sharing data, where ICT can play the role of catalyst as well as barrier to collaboration. The five cases are all somehow confronted with such challenges related to ICT.

In the following four sections of chapter 1 we present the theoretical framework, the research design, and the five case studies. We conclude the chapter by outlining the accountability tensions and challenges of each case. Chapters 2-6 contain the five case studies of accountability networks written by the respective partners in the TROPICO Work Package 8 team. Building on our work in this report, a second report, deliverable D8.2, will follow. The D8.2 report will embark on a more comparative analysis of the five cases. In the D8.2, we compare the distinct national contexts of governance, accountability relations, and role of ICT in policies targeting long-term unemployed in the five countries. The D8.2 report also compares the collaboration types and accountability relations, and suggest key attention points for researchers and recommendations for practitioners.

Although the forthcoming sections of this chapter is written by the Roskilde team, it is based on a collective and collaborative effort and thus would not have been possible without the hard work and valuable input from our colleagues from the Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Antwerp, Tallinn University of Technology, Cardiff University and the University of Bergen (TROPICO Coordinator).

**Analytical framework**

Our analytical framework and mapping of the networks of account-giving is based on the existing academic literature on the accountability of collaborative governance. Over the last decades, collaborative governance has emerged as a promising supplement, if not alternative, to traditional Weberian style bureaucracy and New Public Management. The term
collaborative governance is often used interchangeably with terms like interactive governance, network governance and new public governance. Here we use the term collaborative governance in accordance with the definition by (Ansell and Gash, 2007): ‘A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.’

Like other forms of governing, collaborative governance must be accountable. Studies have shown that collaborative governance is subject to various types of accountability (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987; Bovens, Schillemans and Goodin, 2014): First, *legal* accounts stipulating requirements for what and to whom accounts of legality should be provided by the collaborative network; second, *political* accounts by collaborative network to elected politicians regarding in-/exclusion, debates, decisions and use of resources; third, *managerial* accounts for decisions, use of resources, and performance of initiatives and service delivery to public administration and politicians; fourth, *social* accounts to stakeholders regarding in-/exclusion, debates, decisions, use of resources, performance; fifth, *professional* accounts ensuring professional standards and, and, finally, *peer* accounts referring to the, often, informal reputational dynamics within the collaborations norms.

After duly noting the bewildering definitions of accountability in the social science disciplines, the editors of the Handbook on Public Accountability note that there is a certain consensus on the basic conceptual elements (Bovens, Schillemans and Goodin, 2014). Accountability is almost always understood as a relationship between two parties in which one party is obliged to provide accounts for her or his actions to another party (ibid., 6). Robert D. Behn (2001), for example, sees accountability as a relationship between two clearly separated parties: an *accountee* and an *accountability holder*. While the former is entrusted with the making of actions and decisions, the latter holds the decision-maker to account (Behn, 2001; Esmark, 2007).
To this understanding, many add the issue of responsibility and potential sanctions. That is, the collaborative network required to provide an account is responsible not only for account-giving, but also for the state of the situation accounted for. Here we find a further distinction between accounts covering the collective actions of the network and accounts for the actions of individual members of the collaboration. This distinction is important as some scholars insist that it should be possible to sanction the person or organization providing the account. This is implied, for example, by Mark Bovens’ famous definition of accountability as ‘a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences’ (Bovens, 2007). This assumes that the subject providing the account of the object/situation is also formally responsible for the state of the object. As we shall see below, this assumption does not (always) hold under collaborative governance, where those providing accounts may not be identical to those formally responsible for the state of the object/situation. Although we will not directly address legitimacy in this report, the issue of sanctions is closely related. We may see the account-giving and possibility of sanctioning by account holders as a prerequisite of legitimate governance.¹

Being a relational concept, the categorization of accountability into different types should logically reflect the different relationships between the actor providing account and the forum receiving it. Most of the existing typologies seem to reflect a combination of the relationship and the overall purpose of the accountability relationship. Despite the plurality of terms, we find six main accountability types (Hansen & Triantafillou, 2020): legal, political, managerial, social, professional, and peer accountability. Whereas the former three types are mostly related to accountability relationships that ultimately makes the collaboration accountable to the electorate and the institutions representing it, the latter three are more horizontal relationships dealing with accountability to the various stakeholders. This divide is sometimes

¹ We will address the interlinkages between accountability and legitimacy in a forthcoming literature review (Hansen and Triantafillou 2020) as well as in a forthcoming article based on the Danish case study.
described as one between vertical and horizontal accountability (e.g., Bovens, 2007; Skelcher and Torfing, 2010).

**Political (or electoral or representative) accountability** refers to the relationship between elected politicians, governments, and (at times) leading public managers who are expected and often legally obliged to provide account of their action to voters, to parliament, or to political parties. Under this general heading, studies point to the ability of citizens to hold the government to account through regular elections (Papadopoulos, 2010, 1032), and to the presence of countervailing powers or sanctions that can put limits on the power exercised by strong governments (Bovens, 2007). Political accountability is above all a form of accountability corresponding to ideals of electoral democracy, whereby citizens hold parliament to account for their decisions, and parliament, in turn, holds the government account to its implementation of new and existing laws and the use of public money for public purposes. In contrast, it sits somewhat uneasily with stakeholder conceptions of democracy according to which we may very well expect different interests and power, but where no single actor by default is endowed with more authority or legitimacy than others.

In the literature, the vertical accountability relationship between a collaboration and the public entity instigating it is sometimes termed administrative, state, top-down, or bureaucratic accountability. However, these concepts tend to conflate the substantial difference between legal and managerial accountability (Hansen & Triantafillou 2020). **Legal (or judicial) accountability** refers to the relationship between the two parties in which one is obliged to provide account for the legality of actions to the other party. It is thus a matter of how and to what extent collaborations are obliged to account for its legal compliance, to the administration and in the end to legal bodies, such as courts, prosecutors, judges and other magistrates. In the case of the public sector, the recipient of the accounts could also include ombudsmen, state auditors and regulatory agencies (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987, 228–229). This mode of accountability correlates to the Rechtstaat principle underpinning liberal democracies whereby no one, not even a parliamentary majority, can make decisions that counter existing laws and constitutions.
Managerial (or performance or output) accountability entails accounts provided by regular civil servants, frontline workers and public managers to administrative bodies and regulators, including state auditors, ombudsmen and various regulatory agencies (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). The general aim of managerial accountability is to monitor and assess the results of the public money they spend. It is often labelled performance or output accountability when focused on results, as opposed to financial, fiscal, or economic accountability when focused on expenditure. This kind of accountability has grown increasingly influential under New Public Management and under collaborative governance, though in somewhat different ways.

We now move on to describe the three horizontal types of accountability. Social (or sometimes interactive or stakeholder) accountability encompasses accounts from the collaboration to the parties directly affected by these actions (Bovens, Schillemans and Goodin, 2014). Parties directly affected could be various groups of citizens, NGOs, private companies, interest organizations, etc. If the forum receiving the account is a mixed group, so is the potential group expected to provide the account. In this perspective there are few, if any, limits to the kinds of societal actors engaged in designing, producing, and delivering policies and services. In the context of collaborative governance, Page et al. (2015, 718) take the horizontal dimension of democratic accountability include responsiveness to actors ‘who have a stake in its work’, i.e. collaborative partners and external stakeholders that do not possess any legally based authority. This lack of legal sanctions mean that actors provide account voluntarily, a fact that correlates with the frequently non-coercive nature of collaborative governance arrangements (Bovens, Schillemans and Goodin, 2014).

Like social accountability, professional accountability is a horizontal mode of account-giving pointing specifically to the accounts regarding compliance with professional standards and codes of conduct. Accounts could thus for example be given to professional associations and disciplinary tribunals (Bovens, 2007; Byrkjeflot, Christensen and Lægreid, 2014), but they could also be related to more informal accountability relations such as work-related self-control based on professional expertise (Pellinen et al., 2018).
The final accountability type, **peer (or reputational) accountability** refers to the, often, informal accountability dynamics within a collaborative network. It is also sometimes termed intra-network (Jos, 2016), mutual (Lehtonen, 2014), or internal (Mees and Driessen, 2019) accountability. The dynamic of this type of accountability functions by holding actors within a network accountable to each other by peer pressure and fear of naming and shaming (Papadopoulos, 2010).

The research literature points to three important accountability challenges in collaborative networks: **Lacking sanctions, insufficient transparency, and multiple and fuzzy accountabilities** (Hansen and Triantafillou, 2020).

The first challenge, **lacking sanctions**, refers to whether the account-holder can hold the accountees to account by means of sanctions. In general, accountability criteria regarding responsibilities, consequences regarding performance, responsiveness to other actors, and checks and balances are difficult to uphold in diffuse networked collaborative approaches (Armitage et al., 2012, 252). The result can be free-riding (Papadopoulos, 2003), blame gaming (Bache et al., 2015), blame avoidance (Papadopoulos, 2010; Pellinen et al., 2018), rent-seeking (Papadopoulos, 2010) and buck-passing (Esmark, 2007). Sometimes this is seen in a positive light where the remoteness from parliaments can make networks less responsive to short-term political concerns (Papadopoulos, 2007, 475). Other authors speak of alternative means of sanctioning such as ‘naming and shaming’ (Kersbergen and Waarden, 2004) and principal/agent steering through performance measurement and incentives (Brandsma and Schillemans, 2013).

The lack of sanctions may apply not only to the collective collaboration network, but also to its individual members. While these may represent very specific organizational interests, their members often cannot sanction their actions (Hendriks, 2008, 1012). For instance, members of particular groups may find it difficult to express or act on their dissatisfaction because of the powerful glue provided by the network of which their group is part of (Stoker, 1998, 23; Ansell and Gash, 2007). As such trust is often the result of long-term socialization processes...
(Sirianni, 2009), and it may be difficult to impose sanctions. Dissatisfaction with the accountability of elite networks can lead to search for charismatic alternatives (Papadopoulos, 2003: 489). As argued recently by Gerry Stoker (2019), collaborative networks may fuel populist critiques because of their preference for focusing on internal accountability – within the network – rather than external accountability to the citizens affected by the collaborative decisions and actions.

The second challenge, **insufficient transparency**, relates mainly to electoral democracy. Here, scholars point out how the informal deliberations and opaque processes (Papadopoulos, 2007) reduce transparency and visibility (Macdonald and Levasseur, 2014), and the possibility for public control (Dahlström, Peters and Pierre, 2011) and scrutiny (Khan, 2013). The role of the media as the ‘fourth estate’ is often seen as integral to the transparency problem. Even when networks are formally transparent by their mandate, they often lack the element of sanctions which requires media attention and threat of voter sanction (Papadopoulos, 2007, 474). Lack of media attention is underpinned by media bias towards electorally controlled actors as target of accountability (Hasler et al., 2016, 150). The ‘liberal’ forms of accountability that forces elites to give account are thus short-circuited by the networks (Papadopoulos, 2003: 493). Others point to how the lack of legal foundation of many governance networks reduces transparency (Purdy, 2012: 409), or how the voluntariness of collaborative networks and hence the lack of mechanisms of enforcement to hold actors to account lead to inaction and weak implementation (Orr et al., 2016, 367).

Several scholars, including the ones that are generally positively inclined towards collaborative governance, point to the problems of transparency (Bäckstrand, 2006, 300; Zadek and Radovich, 2006, 3). The general argument is that the informal nature of collaborative governance and its orientation towards generating results rather than accounting for the ways in which they do so, is not conducive to transparency. Some hold the position that transparency can be obtained in collaborative networks (van Meerkerk, Edelenbos and Klijn, 2015), and that stakeholder participation may even enhance transparency (Lusmen and Boswell, 2017, 473). Finally, it has been suggested that meta-governance of a collaborative
network by an appointed public manager may ensure rule-following and transparency. Yet, favouring a public manager over a politician as a meta-governor of the collaborative network may, in turn, jeopardize political accountability.

The third challenge, **multiple and fuzzy accountabilities**, relates to the tension between vertical and horizontal accountability forms. Collaborative governance often result in a multitude of the formats of account-giving (Schillemans and Bovens, 2011), which in turn may lead to ‘fuzzy’ accountability (Millar, 2013, 257). These complex multiple accountabilities lead to a problem of ‘many hands’ (Papadopoulos, 2003, 2007; Esmark, 2007; Cengiz, 2012; Bache et al., 2015) with an unclear division of labour (Pellinen et al., 2018, 627). Actors may simultaneously be both accountability holders and accountees (Esmark, 2007), as well as ‘principals’ and ‘agents’ (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). Bureaucratic actors, can for instance, end up taking the position as principals, thereby replacing the role of politicians (Skelcher, 2010; Grossi and Pianezzi, 2018) or excluding elected local councils, resulting in problems of responsiveness (Plüss, 2015, 264). This way of disjointing ‘policies and politics’ undermines the possibility of retrospective evaluation of office holders on grounds of achievement (Papadopoulos, 2007, 473).

Closely related to the problem of many actors, another theme running through most of the literature is how the absence of clearly defined (hierarchical) lines of command underpinning legal and political accountability may result in a ‘complex undergrowth’ of accountability mechanisms (Bache et al., 2015, 79) without a coherent and comprehensive accountability system (Papadopoulos, 2010). Drawing on Koppell (2005), some speak critically of a ‘multiple accountabilities disorder’ (Bache et al., 2015; Lindquist and Huse, 2017) and ‘tangled accountability relationships’ (Christensen and Lægreid, 2015) where actors are confronted with demands of both horizontal and vertical accountability (Edelenbos and Van Meerkerk, 2012; Millar, 2013). The result is tensions between performance accountability and political and social accountability (Page et al., 2015), and between competing values of efficiency, equity and democratic accountability (Lindquist and Huse, 2017). This may, in turn, diminish flexibility and performance (Christensen and Lægreid, 2015) and lead to accountability
overload (Lewis and Triantafillou, 2012). Attempts to develop a ‘dialogue-based reconciliation between accountabilities is complicated by an unclear division of different accountabilities and the stability of old hierarchical practices’ embedded in existing organizational divisions and jurisdictions (Pellinen et al., 2018).

**Research design**

The comparative case study of Work Package 8 has two components: an intensive interview-based study of a collaboration on long-term unemployment revolving around a public authority (chapters 2-6) and a document study mapping national and regional/local policies and accountability mechanisms (presented in the D8.2 report).

The first component of the study is the **in-depth case studies** of account-giving in a collaboration in and/or around service delivery in one public authority, e.g., a municipal employment centre. In cases where the responsibility for service delivery was at the state or regional level, then this level was also included. The case study interviews were based on a detailed research protocol (see Annex 2). A list of interviewees is provided in Annex 1. The aim was to map and analyse how the collaborative service delivery worked, the accountability mechanisms that were part of the collaboration, and the role of ICT systems for the collaboration and/or accountability. The aim was to grasp both formal procedures and requirements, but also on how collaboration and accountability is actually practiced. With these main aims we can uncover the question of how accounts are delivered and, more importantly, received and potentially sanctioned, as well as shed light on the more informal forms of accountability.

In selecting the case studies, five main criteria have been adopted. Firstly, the case must focus on collaboration and accountability in service delivery, which is organized, but not necessarily delivered, by a **local or regional (public) authority**. Secondly, and above all, the public authority selected should be engaged in at least one more or less elaborate collaborative
governance initiative seeking to deliver services tackling the problem of long-term unemployment. Thirdly, the case must contain a policy or service design element. The design element can involve the development of a: policy, organization, process or product of service delivery. Depending on how the collaboration initiative is organized, the design element can be on the level of national policy-making or local attempts to foster innovative services through collaboration in service delivery. Fourthly, the case should involve different types of accountability. It should contain both horizontal accounts (e.g. to other public agencies and stakeholders) and vertical accounts (either upwards to public managers/politicians or downwards to citizens or both). Finally, initiatives should contain some kind of ICT-tools or systems involved in the collaborative service design or delivery. The aim of such ICT tools can be to support either accountability or collaboration or both.

By ICT for accountability, we are referring to any ICT systems involved in the production and/or dissemination of accounts of the actions by actors engaged in collaboration (with other actors in the design or delivery of the local service for the long-term unemployed). Often such systems would be designed to be able to monitor and report on the processes and/or results of public organizations and their services to relevant authorities or stakeholders. Thus, they could have been designed to serve more traditional new public management output measurement purposes, but may perhaps also allow for wider account-giving to others than just political or administrative superiors. By ICT for collaboration, we mean any ICT systems involved in supporting collaboration among actors engaged in the design or delivery of local service for the long-term unemployed. Such systems are, to our knowledge, not very common. But any systems that provide information to actors that may support their attempts to identify other relevant actors for collaboration, or support their interactions (meetings, minutes, negotiations, decision-making).

The in-depth case-studies are based on document studies and interviews. The collected documents contribute to the description and analysis of the collaboration, accountability mechanisms and ICT tools/systems used by the selected public authority in its attempt to deliver service for the long-term unemployed. Such documents can be issued by the
local/regional unemployment authority itself, as well as by other public authorities or private stakeholders that are involved in the service delivery. The interviews (7-12) are with key actors involved in collaborative service delivery in long-term unemployment lasting around 60 minutes each. Interviewees include public officials (at least one manager and two frontline workers), one or two elected local politicians that are either part of the network or have the role of external account-receiver, and if relevant private (profit or non-profit) organization engaged in the service delivery. The interview guide is attached to the report in Annex 2.

The second component presented in report D8.2 is an extensive mapping of public policies, governance structures and accountability relations targeting the long-term unemployment by way of document studies. The aim of this mapping is to understand the national political context in which the delivery of services for long-term unemployment is taking place. We present a condensed version of this mapping in the following section.

**Brief presentation of the five case studies**

The five cases presented in the five forthcoming chapters share several commonalities. Firstly, they are all concerned with personalizing services towards long-term unemployed persons. Secondly, all five initiatives seek to bring the long-term unemployed closer to the labour market. Thirdly, all initiatives work with the presumption that bringing the long-term unemployed closer to the labour market requires some kind of collaborative effort. Fourthly, and finally, in all cases this collaboration plays out in the shadow of other forms of governance as well as other types of accountability. Whereas the five case studies all investigate initiatives targeting long-term unemployed, they differ substantially in the concrete services delivered, the levels of governance involved and, last, but not least, in the scope and content of collaboration. In the following, we provide a brief outline of the five cases.

In the Dutch case, the Municipality of Helmond is experimenting with an innovative way to tackle long-term unemployment, after the decentralization of long-term unemployment
policies to the local level in the Netherlands which encouraged municipalities to find integrated approaches for people with disability and distance from the labour market suffered from more than one problem (i.e., health and social problems). It is a pilot project which started in 2017 and will run till 2022. The project *OZO verbindingszone* tries to provide integrated assistance to clients by looking at more than one problem by introducing multidisciplinary teams that are assisted by an online platform for the coordination of their services. The pilot was acknowledged by the Dutch Ministry in 2018 as one of the most innovative practices in long-term unemployment and health.

In the *Belgian* case, the municipality of Courtrai in Flanders are working with the *Temporary Working Experience* programme. These contracts are a particular activation instrument, founded at the federal level targeting people in social assistance from long-term unemployed people to immigrants, refugees or other underprivileged groups. However, the activation of this group faces challenges. TWE aims to be holistic and offers unemployed people a trajectory that aims to reduce their distance to the regular labour market. Key to the programme are so-called ‘article 60 contracts’, where an employee is on the payroll of the local government but can be working in other workplaces as well. The collaboration for the service delivery of the TWE-trajectory is complex and involves different private and public organizations on multiple policy levels.

In *Estonia*, the focus of the study is on the case of ‘work practices’ which is a service targeted at people out of employment for a long time or with no earlier working experience. In the programme, clients benefit from learning and acting in a group, which helps them to keep up their motivation and to find out more about themselves and their opportunities at the labour market. In 2018, the provision of work practices saw a considerable systemic adjustment with the aim of increasing the impact of the service. The goal of achieving a clear outcome for every participant in the work practice was set – either moving to employment, moving to another service or into education. The success of finding the best individual solution for every participant in such a system depends on close collaboration of actors engaged in planning and
implementing the service and working with the unemployed persons – from the individual caseworkers and group facilitators to the service coordinators.

The **UK** study focuses on the Scottish case of *Fair Start Scotland* (FSS) around the city of Falkirk. FSS is the Scottish Government’s voluntary employment support programme. It aims to help people with complex and enduring health needs improve their employment opportunities. The service is primarily designed to meet the needs of those who may face a range of challenges in obtaining work (e.g., the disabled or those with caring responsibilities) and who have been unemployed for a long time (e.g., those reaching two years on Job Seekers Allowance/Universal Credit). It aims to provide a tailored, coherent range of support which can respond flexibly to meet the individual needs of people and their employers and make the best use of resources. The study focusses specifically on a contract called the Forth Valley. The contract, with an estimated value of up to £5m, was awarded to Falkirk Council who deliver the services in collaboration with Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council and NHS Forth Valley, as well as several third sector and private companies who deliver services.

The **Danish** study looks into the initiative of the *Cohesive citizen plans* (CCP), launched in 2016 in the municipality of Furesø. The CCP aims to strengthen collaboration, firstly, within the various administrations involved in services targeted citizens with complex problems (long-term unemployment, physical and mental health, substance abuse problems, parenting, etc.) and, secondly, between the municipality and the citizen. Citizens with complex problems are normally handled by several different administrations within and outside of the municipality that are based in each their legal corpora as well as administrative and professional logics without much, if any, coordination in between them. The CCP aims to strengthen collaboration mainly by means of three instruments: one individualized citizen action plan covering all activities, a team of cross-sector case workers, and so-called ‘network meetings’ between the citizen and all the professional parties involved in the life of the citizen.
Conclusion: Accountability challenges in the five case studies

As described in the framework section above, the introduction of collaborative forms of governance tends to instigate horizontal forms of accountability. Horizontal forms of accountability are mainly social accountability to affected stakeholders, professional accountability ensuring adherence to professional norms, standards and codes of conduct, and peer accountability, which describe the more tacit accountability relations based on trust and reputation. However, in the cases studied, the horizontal forms are introduced in a context of already existing accountability relations. These include legal accountability, that is compliance to national legislation, as well as political accountability relations to national, local, and sometimes also regional level as in the Scottish and Flemish cases. They also include several NPM tools underpinned by managerial account-giving, using benchmarking and performance measurement, and are tied to contractual arrangements and budget steering. Finally, apart from the UK, more traditional corporatist forms of social accountability through the representation of social partners is also present.

Table 1.1: Accountability types in the five cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helmond/OZO (Netherlands)</th>
<th>TWE (Flanders/Belgium)</th>
<th>Work practices (Estonia)</th>
<th>Fair Start (Scotland/UK)</th>
<th>CCP (Denmark)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>Alderman with implementation responsibility accountable to city council.</td>
<td>Local college approves collaboration agreement.</td>
<td>Limited engagement of politicians. Limited collaboration with local governments.</td>
<td>Limited (local) political accountability: Ensuring councils were ‘on-board’.</td>
<td>At national level, experiment is approved and evaluated. Locally, council approve accounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal</strong></td>
<td>Compliance with privacy rules (GDPR).</td>
<td>Administrative check of formal registrations. Client can defend his or her actions in front of special committee.</td>
<td>Administrative check of formal rules. Possibility of the client to submit complaint on the preach of GDPR.</td>
<td>Limited options for arbitration beyond contacting the Citizen’s Advice Bureau.</td>
<td>Mix of legal corpora raises issues of legal accountability in case the citizen wishes to file a complaint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managerial</strong></td>
<td>Performance requirements in three year</td>
<td>Quarterly report at the college of mayor and aldermen about the number of County service consultant as account-holder of performance.</td>
<td>Scottish gov. and local politicians are</td>
<td>Job centre director and steering committee as account-holder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract with IT company.</th>
<th>the TWEs. Accounts to centre and PES about personal progress.</th>
<th>account-holders of performance.</th>
<th>of performance of CCP.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>IT company engages users through caseworkers</td>
<td>Team leader in welfare centre negotiates a collaboration agreement with private workplaces.</td>
<td>Tripartite meetings between client, service consultant and provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client subscribe to personal support voluntarily.</td>
<td>Client consulted but obliged to participate. Limited formal sanctions.</td>
<td>Client collaborates in writing progress report. Limited formal sanctions.</td>
<td>Client can sanction through exit (limited arbitration or advocacy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Buddy system between professionals.</td>
<td>PES oversees that the professional standards are met by the local public welfare centre.</td>
<td>Evaluation by the colleagues in the qualifications committee. Caseworkers discussing cases with colleagues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 summarizes the ways in which the different accountability types are present in the five cases.

As chapter 2-6 will show, this results in highly complex accountability networks, mixing accountability types with different levels of government and a wide array of public and private actors. At first sight, this certainly confirms the thesis of ‘multiple and fuzzy accountabilities’ presented earlier. Accountability seem scattered around so many actors and levels of government that it is difficult to locate a centre. However, this plays out quite differently in each case, and often it is not the number or fuzziness of relations that provide the greatest challenges. Rather, there are particular tensions, certain practices, resources or institutions, or lack thereof, that pose challenges to accountability. Furthermore, it is often the informal networks and practices that seem to ensure that actors involved are in fact accountable to each other, despite the fuzziness and tensions. In the following we describe the types of accountability and address the most pertinent accountability challenges in each case.
Helmond/OZO (the Netherlands)

The Dutch case concerned a public-private collaboration set up to develop a new IT infrastructure to support the coordination of services. With regards to political accountability, it is the alderman who has implementation responsibility and is accountable to the city council. Whereas the city council is updated, in practice it is mainly concerned with meeting the budget and key performance indicators. Nevertheless, some members of the local council did criticize parts of the collaboration and thereby indicated a certain level of engagement, even if these criticisms had little effect.

In the Dutch case, legal accountability is mainly a matter of ensuring compliance with privacy rules (i.e., GDPR), which continue to challenge the functionality (data-sharing) of the platform. Legal accountability is thus in tension with attempts to confront ICT-related problems of professionals using different registration systems and having different work routines by developing shared digital platforms. Managerial accountability is a key to holding the private IT company accountable through performance requirements in three year contracts. One of the challenges identified was related to how to receive accounts from users in the test phase. Here, the use of a strict protocol (and questions to answer in the test phase) was found to only allow for restricted and very structured reactions and feedback. The result was that changes were mainly made between the project leaders who translated the daily routines into the transition process.

Finally, with regards to horizontal accountability the most important actors are the caseworkers and the clients, i.e., the long-term unemployed. Clients are involved in the development phases but only indirectly providing feedback through caseworkers. Other stakeholders, i.e., the various professional groups, are formally engaged through general meetings. However, the general meetings are just one ‘vehicle’ of the management and interaction in the innovation processes. Many of the managerial activities also take place in informal bilateral contacts with the manager, and foremost between stakeholders themselves without any intervention from the network manager.
In the Flemish case, a municipality collaborates with several actors around the activation instrument of temporary work contracts for the long-term unemployed. Beginning with political accountability, it is the local college that approves collaboration agreements with the private workplaces. Usually, the local college of the mayor and the aldermen approves the collaboration agreement without many problems and with little feedback. Legal accountability is ensured by administrative checks of formal registrations and the possibility of the client to defend his or her actions in front of special committee.

In the Flemish case, managerial accountability is less pertinent than in the other cases. It is the county service consultant who acts as account-holder of performance, but s/he rarely uses sanctions. Rather, the lack of sanction powers to ensure managerial accountability enabled open discussion and mutual trust. The loose and informal accountability relations thus supported the collaboration because it created trust between the people collaborating. Further, the overseeing of the Flemish public employment services (PES) was concerned with professional standards rather than performance.

Another matter that seems to push the collaboration towards more informal relations is related to ICT. An ICT tool that aimed to bundle information about clients and their counselling resulted in double registration, substantially increased the workload and, ultimately, resulted in counsellors only registering the minimum of information necessary. Also, some information is intentionally not recorded, and counsellors of the public welfare centre have limited access to the client profile because of privacy issues. Finally, counsellors would like to evaluate more often and more thoroughly, but lack the capacity to do so. An example is the audits, where the PES visits the public welfare centres and assesses the quality of the ‘pathway guidance’. While the initial goal is to evaluate the quality of the personal counselling, in practice, the assessment is rather administratively complicated and formal, due to limited resources.
Work practices (Estonia)

The Estonian case study focuses on a service provided by private procurers targeted at people who have been out of employment for a long time, or with no earlier working experience. In terms of political accountability, there is quite limited engagement of politicians as well as quite limited collaboration with local governments. Politicians seem to act rather passively as approvers of numbers and budgets, that is upholding managerial accountability, but at a rather superficial level. Limited role of local governments is mainly due to the fact the state is accountable for the employment services. A comprehensive local government reform in 2017 whereby the number of local governments decreased from 213 to 79 aimed to increase the role and capacity of local governments.

In the Estonian case legal accountability is a matter of an administrative check of formal rules, and includes a possibility for the client to submit a complaint on a breach of GDPR. Managerial accountability plays a substantial role in the contractual relationship between the PES and the private procurers. The performance measurement related to this has had some significant effects. First, the contractual relationships and quantitative measurement form barriers to collaboration since requirements were rather strict and focused on the price rather than the quality of service. Second, the expectation of measurable results and impact of the work practices has constricted the circle of clients suitable to the service and has left out the clients with durable social problems.

With regards to horizontal accountability types, the social accountability of stakeholders is mainly managed through tripartite meetings between client, service consultant and provider. Also, the client is involved in the writing of progress reports. Professional accountability is strengthened through evaluation by colleagues in the qualifications committee and ongoing discussions of case among caseworkers. Furthermore, horizontal accountability is challenged by scarce resources. An example is the reporting to PES, which has proved to be a challenge in practice, where the arriving reports have been brief, descriptive, and mostly copy-pasting information. Also, the lack of ICT platforms to properly share data provides a challenge to the communication between stakeholders. The communication with the service providers still
relies on exchanging e-mails at this point, and the group facilitators cannot access the information on the clients that they are working with in the digital platform due to the concerns with privacy and the potential of revealing sensitive personal data.

**Fair Start (Scotland, UK)**

In the Scottish case, the collaboration studied is a support programme for voluntary employment funded by the Scottish government, but implemented by city councils in collaboration with private service providers. **Political** accountability is rather limited, in practice to ensuring acceptance from councils. Case managers had to ensure that politicians across the three councils participating were ‘on-board’ and that they attended the launch of the programme, but that was the extent of the engagement.

**Legal** accountability results in limited options for arbitration, beyond contacting the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (a charity providing free, confidential information and advice to people with money, legal, and consumer problems). Legal accountability is also a barrier in relation to overcome the challenge of ICT systems, which are currently only accessible by council employees who are involved in the specific programme, and not by NHS employees or third sector organizations taking part in the programme as this would be considered a breach of data governance. This means that whilst there will be documentary evidence of clients’ progress through the programme, the systems are not able to communicate with each other easily.

Concerning **managerial** accountability, it is the Scottish government as well as the local politicians that are account-holders of performance of the private procurers. The quantitative measuring of performance provides some challenges. First, the quantitative indicators seem to neglect important qualitative dimensions that are difficult to measure in quantitative terms. The more qualitative aspect to service provision was not immediately apparent to the public, since statistical measures did not capture the qualitative nature of some of the work carried out. Furthermore, those who were involved in the delivery of services expressed limited awareness of the quantified measures taken to evaluate services. Second, and related to the
first challenge, one of the key hindrances identified concerning ICT was the inability of the software to accurately express the complexity of some of the work that was being undertaken. For instance, because the software would allow to record a contact with a client, but not whether it had taken several attempts to make that contact, the nature of the information required by the systems failed to accurately reflect some of the more qualitative experiences of both service providers and clients. Finally, network members expressed that their workload sometimes precluded them from engaging fully with the account-receiving procedures.

Concerning the horizontal forms of accountability, stakeholders (professionals, not the clients) are engaged through operational meetings. Clients have limited means to arbitration and advocacy, but can sanction through exit since participation is voluntary. Professional accountability plays a role through codes of conduct, in particular for the health professionals involved. The Scottish case also illustrates the fragility of, often, informal structures underpinning horizontal accountability. For instance, the collaboration was affected by a recent changeover of staff at a strategic level in the collaboration, leading to either cancellations of meetings or meetings being held informally. Another issue is that the informal forms of peer accountability may result in opaque accountability relations in which it is not clear what are the requirements to be in- or excluded as stakeholder. Finally, the lack of a uniform ICT system across all three councils, proved to be a hindrance to the sharing of information and accountability between providers.

CCP (Denmark)

The Danish case looks into a municipal initiative aiming to strengthen collaboration within the various administrations involved in services targeted towards citizens with complex problems, as well as between the municipality and the citizen. Since the initiative is both local and part of a larger network of municipalities experimenting with similar initiatives, political accountability concerns accountability to national politicians (approving the experiment), but also importantly to the local level, where city council approve accounts. Similar to most of the other cases in this report, politicians have a rather passive role, although they have been involved in setting the overall goals of employment and budget for the initiative.
Legal accountability plays an important role since the various legal corpora (concerning the employment, health, and social sphere) that the caseworkers are accountable to raises issues, for instance in cases when the citizen wishes to file a complaint, but also more generally with regards to registering. This issue also poses ICT challenges since the ICT systems for the filing of cases and decisions are based on legal and organizational compartmentalization and are thus not able to communicate with each other. Since there is no overarching ICT system in which the personal plan can be registered, the same plan is registered in all the sub-ICT-systems. Another legal accountability issue concerns the legal clauses on data protection and sharing, such as GDPR, and seems to have inhibited data sharing to an extent that the ambition of developing a unified system has been dropped.

Regarding managerial accountability, the job centre director and steering committee is the account-holder of performance of the CCP. The way managerial accountability is managed has had important effects for the collaboration. The demands for measurable employment effects from the political level, and difficulties measuring health effects, reduced the target group to only those who were deemed employable. In addition, a target of increasing numbers of internships resulted in short-term interests, whereby placing clients as quick as possible in internships became a priority.

Furthermore, the case points to a rather paradoxical relation between political and managerial accountability. While the council and steering group is mainly concerned with meeting key performance indicators, the politicians and municipality have a very different way of giving accounts to the public, that is, citizens or other municipalities. Here, what matters is narratives about individual citizens, presented for instance in videos at the website of the municipality. There is thus an unsettled tension in between the political accountability and legitimacy of the council members who tell good stories, and the managerial accountability of the employees who provide politicians with good numbers.

With regards to horizontal accountability types, the coordination meetings with all involved caseworkers and professionals are crucial. These meetings, along with training in the ‘holistic’
practice, has created a strong **professional** code of conduct. This professional accountability, however, is fragile. The initiative was highly dependent on the passionate engagement and competences of key managers and caseworkers. Hence, when some of these people left the municipality for other career opportunities, the support from management would be less univocal and the strong professional spirit around the initiative would diminish.

Concerning the **social** accountability to the client, the client has the ability to sanction the plan supported by citizen consultant. The Danish case may therefore give some insights to what it takes to make the client an equal stakeholder in collaborations. In addition to the possibility of exit, the collaboration around the personal plan is meant to ensure that the voice of the client is taken into account. For instance, it is the client that decides the agenda of the joint coordination meetings with the involved caseworkers and professionals. Furthermore, the client has a personal ‘citizen consultant’ whose role is to support the client in voicing concerns and wishes.
Chapter 2: The ‘Helmond and OZO verbindzorg’ project – tackling long-term unemployment in the Netherlands

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Introduction

After the decentralization of long-term unemployment policies to the local level in the Netherlands, the municipality of Helmond is currently experimenting with an innovative digital tool. This is done through a pilot project which started in 2017 and will run till 2022: the Helmond and OZO verbindzorg project. The pilot was acknowledged by the Dutch Ministry in 2018 as one of the most innovative practices in long-term unemployment and health (Publiek Denken, 2019).

In this case study chapter, we present, first, the characteristics of this pilot initiative, second, the way in which the stakeholders provide account to one another, and third, the value of ICT systems in the pilot. The case study draws upon thirteen interviews and several (policy) documents and newspaper articles.

Decentralization of unemployment policy

The space for experimentation at the local level and the pilot project was made possible with the decentralization of long-term unemployment policies in the Netherlands in 2015. Throughout the last two decades, responsibility for unemployment policies in the Netherlands has shifted almost entirely from state level to municipal level (Bannink, 2014). The Participation Act of 2015 made the municipalities responsible for the reintegration of people with a work disability or who had a distance to the labour market. Until then the UWV (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen), a national public organization/agency that

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is responsible for implementing unemployment benefit scheme and other schemes of employment insurances, was responsible for this.

After the decentralization, the municipalities started to look for new ways to deal with unemployment. Some municipalities, mainly small ones, decided to increase the level of regional collaboration to align the nexus between jobs and job seekers in their region (Witkamp et al., 2015). This regional collaboration generally aims for more integrated service delivery, notably in terms of job placement. The municipalities are also encouraged to find integrated approaches because most people with disabilities and who are distanced from the labour market suffer from more than one problem (e.g., health and social problems). Thus, integrated services are needed. The *Helmond and OZO verbindzorg* project tries to provide such integrated assistance by looking at more than one problem via multidisciplinary teams that are assisted by an online platform and an app facilitating the coordination of services.

**Aim of the pilot project: Increased citizen self-sustainability**

The *Helmond and OZO verbindzorg* pilot project is focused on empowering citizens’ self-reliant abilities and participation. It does so by helping citizens to make their own plan and integrate several domains (e.g., work and healthcare) with each other. The project started in January 2018. In the project, multidisciplinary teams set up a personalized support plan for the client that focuses on abilities rather than disabilities. The success of the support plan builds upon the close collaboration between various public stakeholders, such as insurance companies and social workers. Yet the client decides what is important, with whom to work with, and on what.

To implement this idea several very concrete aims in the short term were formulated, such as:

1. Implementing a tool to support social neighbourhood teams.
2. Creating a neighbourhood team structure.
3. Combining different legislative obligations into one system.

Following from this, an ICT tool – a digital platform between clients and consultants – was created. The platform was developed together with the non-profit organization/company...
**OZO-verbindzorg**, with an aim to help long-term unemployed citizens to find a new job based on their skills and on a permanent contract and for a chosen duration (Gemeente Helmond, 2017). *OZO verbindzorg* is a non-profit organization/company that has as its main goal to facilitate digital interactions between health care professionals, unemployment experts, civil servants, and citizens of a municipality. With the platform and the assistance of so-called ‘neighbourhood professional teams’ the municipality tries to help unemployed citizens achieve better living conditions. Roughly 5% of the families in Helmond have been a part of the pilot. The pilot started in 2017 and will run for four years, ending in 2021.

**The Helmond and OZO verbindzorg smart, long-term unemployment initiative**

The pilot initiative of the municipality of Helmond uses mobile technology to help the long-term unemployed. In the Netherlands, there is an increasing market for using mobile devices, apps or ICT tools to facilitate local government to citizen interactions in the long-term unemployment and health care sector (ICT magazine, 2017). One of the most frequently used apps in the Netherlands is provided by the organization *OZO-verbindzorg*. Figure 2.1 gives an overview of the municipalities in the Netherlands that uses apps provided by *OZO verbindzorg*.

There is an increasing interest in digital apps among local governments in the Netherlands. Many are convinced that the use of such apps can lead to more effective data-sharing and interaction, resulting in
significant reductions in expenditure (ICT magazine, 2017). In the Helmond case, politicians and civil servants believe that apps for self-management purposes, like the one they use, enable citizens to keep in touch with the municipality and neighbourhood teams independent of location and time (Publiek Denken, 2019). Moreover, such apps are frequently seen to have additional value since citizen data can be made directly accessible to professionals and can be shared among organizations instantly (ICT magazine, 2017).

Central drivers in the development of the pilot

The municipality of Helmond decided to look for new and innovative ways to assist the long-term unemployed citizens in their region. The goal was to establish neighbourhood teams that would offer them integral social support (Publiek Denken, 2019). This implies that when a person is unemployed, the municipality keeps track of his or her employment situation, health situation, as well as the financial, family, and social situation. The neighbourhood teams consist of multiple professionals with different backgrounds who participate in the pilot to offer integral policy services. A new digital infrastructure was seen as necessary to provide citizens with a self-management system to map their well-being and financial situation, and to communicate between the involved professionals (ICT magazine, 2017). In addition, the digital infrastructure had to ensure communication between different external organizations (such as Senser, an organization responsible for the long-term unemployment policy in Helmond). Thus, in the pilot, the ICT tool was important for facilitating the interactions between the client and various professionals, as well as between the participating professionals.

The municipality looked for different ICT partners to set-up their new digital infrastructure. According to our interviews, the most important criterion was that the vision of the company had to align with the vision of the politicians in the municipality (that is supporting clients, integrating various services etc.). In addition, respondents in the municipality indicated that it was important that profit was not the main goal of the ICT partner. These criteria limited the number of potential ICT partners. According to our interviews, with OZO verbindzorg, the municipality found a decent and trustworthy partner. OZO verbindzorg had previous
experience in the field of elderly care (OZO verbindzorg, 2019). The organization was, according to the owners, founded on the premise that innovation in the healthcare sector depends too much on private companies that barely know the client population. The owners of OZO verbindzorg had experienced first-hand that many IT projects and innovations in the healthcare sector had failed. Therefore, they established their own ICT company as a non-profit association. This made OZO verbindzorg an interesting partner for the municipality of Helmond to collaborate with. As such, for both partners (the Helmond municipality and OZO verbindzorg) there was something to gain from the collaboration. The municipality could (for a reasonable price) get a new digital infrastructure that supported their new policy plan for establishing neighbourhood teams and self-management services for unemployed citizens, and OZO verbindzorg could use the Helmond case as a pilot to enlarge their ICT portfolio on the field of long-term employment where they had not so much experience.

Creating a support plan

A so-called support plan is central for the digital infrastructure of the service offered in Helmond (Helmond, 2017). A support plan is an initial mapping of the personal situation of the citizen which is initiated when he or she gets unemployed. A professional from the Helmond municipality maps, together with the client, in what way the municipality can support him or her. Different types of help are available. A person can, for example, get help in writing letters for new jobs, or do a training to be able to look for different jobs. In other situations, psychological support can be necessary. The initial mapping is based on a questionnaire of 30 questions, and on the basis of the outcomes of this mapping the client decides what actions will be defined to ensure that he or she gets a new job in one year. Based on these actions, professionals are selected to help the client achieve his or her goals. The digital support (the platform and the app) facilitates the support plan in the sense that 1) all information is only filled out once (by the client), 2) the client can manage the information herself/himself, and can indicate his/her main ambition, and 3) the digital tools facilitates communication and coordination between the involved professionals and forces them to develop an integral approach rather than a single approach from one profession.
The actions and the digital portfolio in the support plan defines the planned actions, provides three-month goals, expectations from the client, and provides a monthly progress report. It thus serves as a self-management system where the citizen is responsible for his or her own trajectory, while the professionals provide their feedback in their meetings with the client. The digital portfolio with all the information of the client and service providers can also be monitored to measure the success of the policy actions of civil servants and services of the professionals, which mostly come from organizations outside the administration of Helmond municipality.

The use of a personal support plan and the use of the ICT tool and the support team is voluntary. This means that a citizen first needs to telephone the municipality before it takes action to establish such a plan (Helmond, 2017). When online, the citizen can decide whether he or she wants new professionals if he or she is not satisfied with the services and support that is offered.

**Governance structure of the pilot and the collaborative process**

Figure 2.2 shows the governance relationships between the five different stakeholders in the pilot case of Helmond. In relation to local unemployment policy, the city council is the main actor in decision-making. Following the decentralization, municipalities have acquired much more freedom in how they shape their long-term unemployment policy, most notably in the field of activation and reintegration of the unemployed. Based on the decision-making in the city council, the ‘assigned’ alderman will implement the policy. The alderman can be considered as the manager of the administrative organization.
Figure 2.2: Governance structure pilot Helmond

The Municipality of Helmond (The Administrative organization)

City Council

Evaluation and budget

The Alderman

OZO - Verbindzorg

The ICT-platform

Personal support plan

Neighborhood teams

Finance
Health
Social
Unemployment

professional

The citizen

Feedback

Feedback

Technical accounts
The administrative organization as such is the second stakeholder in the pilot. In the municipality of Helmond, the Social Domain department is responsible for the execution of labour market and unemployment policies. For the pilot, this means that the civil servants within the administrative organization are responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the individual support plans of unemployed citizens. The third stakeholder is OZO verbindzorg. As the ICT partner in the pilot project, they were responsible for setting up the digital infrastructure, training professionals to work with the system, maintenance of the digital platform, and to look for bugs in the system when necessary. The client’s personal support plan is, as mentioned, central in the whole digital infrastructure of OZO verbindzorg. Based on this plan, OZO verbindzorg platform links each citizen with the professional (see figure 2.3). OZO verbindzorg is also responsible for all (online) communication between the stakeholders and for storage of communication about the clients.

**Figure 2.3: Digital infrastructure OZO verbindzorg**

The fourth stakeholder group are the ‘social workers’, i.e. professionals who are a part of the neighbourhood teams and who assist the citizens in formulating their goals and the set-up of the social support plan. For them, the pilot project might cause some extra work. They have to work with two systems: OZO verbindzorg for the client, and another system called Suite4sociaal Domein for business operations. The latter is filled with information on
caseloads, delivery-time and turnaround numbers, etc. Lastly, *the citizens* (who decided to join the pilot) are also a part of the governance process. Each of the stakeholders, in their own way, contribute to development and implementation of the ICT system and digital infrastructure in Helmond. Next, we elaborate on the different phases of the collaborative process.

**Developing the new approach: the collaboration process**

The formal goals of the Helmond initiative were simple, according to the interviewed respondents: To develop a new digital infrastructure that would allow the municipality to support the newly established neighbourhood teams, to foster interaction between professionals, and most of all create a more ‘citizen-oriented’ self-management system. The collaborative process to design and test the new digital infrastructure and the new way of working with clients can be divided in four different phases (see figure 2.4), each with its own distinctive features in terms of management and involved actors.

*Figure 2.4: Phases of the collaborative process*  

- **Idea generation**
  - Informal face-to-face meetings manager and ICT expert;
  - No minutes of meetings;
  - Free cross-fertilization of ideas & learning;
  - **Collaborative outcome**: Process agreement and contract.

- **Product development**
  - Expert meeting to think of necessary functionalities;
  - Developing minimum viable product;
  - User preferences tests
  - Modular programming of ICT tool;
  - **Collaborative outcome**: Instrument testing and evaluation

- **Pilot-testing**
  - Clear protocols of how the tool has to be used;
  - Training of ICT ambassadors;
  - Setting up a buddy system;
  - ‘Selection’ of citizens;
  - Freedom for trial and error;
  - Instrument evaluation;
  - **Collaborative outcome**: Transition plan

- **Implementation**
  - Training for all professionals;
  - Personal development plan for employees;
  - Monitoring of professionals performance, citizen satisfaction, and ICT infrastructure;
  - Trial period without changes for three years.
  - **Collaborative outcome**: Getting acquainted with digital infrastructure
In the first phase, the ‘idea generation phase’, the ICT provider (OZO verbindzorg) and the manager of the project had several one-to-one meetings in which they exchanged ideas about the value of a ICT tool, potential users of the ICT tool, citizens’ online and offline behaviour, their need to interact with the neighbourhood teams and professionals, and the ways in which civil servants would normally have contact with clients and citizens (i.e. normal work routines). The informal meetings led to a clear process agreement between the ICT provider and the manager, which stated:

- how the tool would be developed,
- how users would be incorporated in the design process,
- the division of responsibilities and tasks,
- the financing of the digital project (Municipality of Helmond funds the project for 9 euro per citizen),
- the ownership rights, GDPR demands and the sustainability of the project after its development (i.e. OZO verbindzorg would after development still be involved in the maintenance, monitoring and evaluation of the tool and project).

The second phase of the pilot, the ‘product development phase’, included a variation of stakeholders. Not only the manager of the project and the ICT provider were involved, but also representatives of different departments, external organizations, and members of the neighbourhood teams that would eventually work with the tool. The phase started with mapping the different users of the tool. These were: (1) Professionals in the neighbourhood teams, (2) civil servants, (3) citizens who wanted to have a look at their personal data, (4) citizens that were familiar with similar digital tools and would use the tool as a new means of interaction with professionals, and (5) citizens defined as ‘digital illiterates’.

Through investigative (e.g. surveys and interviews) and generative interview methods (i.e. brainstorming sessions), the ICT developers engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to find out about the specific user needs. Following the outcomes of this user-centred design, a so-called ‘minimum viable product’ was developed. A minimum viable product can be regarded
as the most simplistic version of the digital infrastructure, having just enough functions to be launched and to provide feedback for future product development.

During the product development phase, there were few political pushbacks or attempts to delegitimize the initiative (Eindhovens Dagblad, 2017). However, some members of the municipal council asked critical questions in the newspapers, and these were also voiced in a debate in the Municipal council. According to our respondents, however, in the city council and administration there was a strong coalition of influential people (i.e. the alderman, the majority of the neighbourhood council, and several high level civil servants) who wanted to bring the development of the ICT tool to a good end. Consequently, the developers had enough time to fine-tune a tool which could be incorporated in the administration’s apparatus. OZO verbindzorg decided to program the tool modularly. The value of modular programming was seen to be ‘like Lego-cubes’, whereas such new tools with different functionalities can be made more rapidly by the developers of the digital participation tools in this way. After the product design phase, most of the developer’s time was dedicated to making ad hoc fixes and repairs in the ICT infrastructure and keeping it online.

In the pilot-testing phase, the collaboration received more structure. A secretary was established to support the activities of the manager, protocols for how to use the tool and digital infrastructure were written, and trainings for professionals were developed to get more acquainted to the use of the tool. In this phase, citizens were selected which could be used to test the system. The selection was based on whether professionals believed that their client would be open to be a part of the pilot or not, and whether the case was not too complex (in terms of how much support a client needed). To assist the professionals and civil servants, a ‘buddy system’ was established, with a goal to spread the knowledge and personal experiences with the new tool. The ‘buddies’ in the buddy system were used as ambassadors and coaches to make a bigger group of professionals more acquainted with the software and digital infrastructure. In this way, the buddies would become the first responders for the ICT partner to help professionals with their basic problems, which they might encounter when using the system.
The pilot testing went on for six months and gave space for necessary trial and error. Every three weeks, professionals would come together to discuss their progress. After the trial period, the ICT ambassadors came together to discuss the digital instrument. This resulted in changes in the functionalities and the platform’s interface.

Together with the project leader and representatives of OZO verbindzorg, the ‘buddies’ developed a transition plan for how the new digital infrastructure could, incrementally, become the norm in the neighbourhood teams and the administrative organization of the municipality of Helmond. The transition plan became the main document for the implementation phase. A big part of the plan was providing training for all professionals who would work with the system. This was obligatory. Following an initial assessment, a personal development plan would be made for each individual professional and civil servant to see in what way the ‘representative of the municipality of Helmond’ could improve their skills.

A monitoring system was also developed to register the performance of the service delivery of the professionals, the satisfaction of the user of the system (the client), and the quality of the digital infrastructure. It was decided that there would be a trial period ‘without changes’ for the next three years (i.e., until the term of the alderman ends). The project leader argued that for a proper evaluation of the success the pilot would need to be operative for at least 10 years, however, in three years the professionals and the citizens of Helmond can adapt themselves to the new policy vision and digital infrastructure of the municipality.

To sum up, the last phase can be considered as quite a ‘top-down’ form of collaboration. The closer form of interacting between citizen and professional in a neighbourhood team is also quite clearly an example of an interactive collaboration between local government and citizens.
**Accountability structures**

Below, we first elaborate on the most important accountability forms and how they were organised in the case of Helmond and OZO verbindzorg. After that, we discuss some important elements in the decision-making process of the case and how the account relations were activated.

**Accountability structure**

Accountability structures are in this chapter interpreted as relationships where *accounters* (those rendering accounts) are held accountable for their behaviour and performance by certain *accountees* (those to whom account is rendered (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2015).

Following the governance structure presented in the previous section of this chapter, different account giving activities can be distilled. Some account giving relations are well organized, but others are more limited. The account-giving structure clearly follows the patterns of interaction relating to the tasks of each of the involved stakeholder as set out in the governance structure of the project. Table 2.1 provides a short overview of the most important accountability relations.

The accounts differ in terms of who communicates with who, and with what consequences. There are no specific sanctions apart from the normal political sanctions (for the alderman) and legal sanctions (such as contractual sanctions if agreed performance are not met).

The sanctions that create the strongest accountability issues relates to the legal accountability obligations laid down in the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which regulates data protection and storage, and the political accountability resulting from the political consequences the project can have if the pilot fails. The contract between the municipality and OZO verbindzorg also creates a strong accountability structure. If, after three years, it is proven that what was promised in the contract has not been delivered, the contract can be
terminated. So far, however, the partners in the collaboration (especially the municipality, the political office holder, and the ICT partner) are quite satisfied with the project.

Table 2.2: Overview of the accountability in the case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To whom</th>
<th>Arrangement</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political accountability</strong></td>
<td>Elected politicians (alderman and municipal council)</td>
<td>Important in the sense that the alderman is involved. The council’s role is more limited (but kept updated by progress reports).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional arrangement: The alderman is responsible for initiating the process The council monitors the process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal accountability</strong></td>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>Very important, especially in that rules regarding privacy of information had to be met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional arrangement: Legal requirements must be met (especially privacy rules in this case)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder accountability</strong></td>
<td>To all involved stakeholders</td>
<td>Reasonably important. Partners had to collaborate and decide together on the pilot and how to organize it. Informal accountability giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed forms, like contracts between partners (municipality and OZO), informal relations, process rules stated at the start of the process etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional accountability</strong></td>
<td>Professional standards in organisations</td>
<td>Not very important. Professional accountability played minor role (but of course played out in care and help each organization provides for clients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional arrangement: Each professional had to comply to normal professional codes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client/consumer accountability</strong></td>
<td>To clients</td>
<td>Not very important. Clients were used for feedback, but process was organized fairly rigid and did not leave space for extensive accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the pilot, clients are involved and asked for feedback on the system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Societal accountability</strong></td>
<td>To the general public and the media</td>
<td>Not very important. Project attracted some media attention but not much. So, accountability to general public and media was limited Media attention was mainly positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The pilot was more a professional technical project than a very societally visible project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Little information of the account giving process is provided to the public. Progress reports of the pilot are discussed in the city council and are therefore also available to the media, citizens, or organizations. But these have attracted only limited attention. The way of account-giving clearly follows the patterns of interaction regarding the tasks of each of the involved stakeholder in the governance structure of the project.
Accountability issues in the pilot project

Several elements contributed to the activation of account relations observed in table 2.1. A first discussion concerned the usefulness of the support plan, the digital infrastructure and the way that citizens can access the tool. The account giving process here related to functional deficiencies, e.g., a lack of certain important functions, unnecessary tools, options and functions, or a lack of customization. The discussions also concerned technical issues like the complexity of the use of the app, ‘small screen size on your mobile phone’, and the amount of battery consumption that is necessary to use the app.

Citizens provide feedback to the tool, often through the professionals in the neighbourhood teams, to the ICT partner. This is another moment in the process where account is being given. The ICT partner reports back to the project leader monthly what they did with the accounts, and what was changed in the ICT tool as a result. Larger changes to the digital infrastructure are communicated over the email to all users (both professionals and citizens). Some users indicated that the possibilities for reactions where restricted and very structured because of the strict interview protocol and the questions used for feedback in the test phase. According to them, most changes were made by the project leaders who were taking care of the daily routines and were responsible for the whole implementation process (and incorporating daily routines and problems occurring there in the implementation). However, the possibilities for suggesting different ideas where a bit limited. The new approach and the app was nevertheless seen to be a lot more interactive and collaborative than the previous (traditional) method because the client has more control over the information and his or her ambitions, and can communicate more intensively with the professionals from care, work and other organizations during the process.

Another trigger for account giving concerns security and privacy. In the pilot, it was important that all data traffic and communication followed the procedures laid down in the GDPR. The ICT partner and the municipality had to submit documentation to the Inspection. Although the pilot has been running for nearly 2 years, the Inspection has not officially approved it yet (but accept it as it is now only an exception/pilot). This is important since the municipality of
Helmond must make sure that they have all the necessary documentation and approvals from the Inspection if they want to make the pilot into a lasting practice in the municipality.

In the development of the pilot a lot of discussion emerged about issue of interoperability. This resulted in account giving processes between the professional organizations that are responsible for the social care of the clients. The professionals in the neighbourhood teams are from different organizations that all have different registration systems, which follow another protocol and work routine than the new tool demands. Much of the feedback that professionals gave to the ICT provider, related to the compatibility of the ICT infrastructure with the existing registration systems and work processes in their ‘home organizations’. Feedback was also given regarding a lack of interoperability with other devices, apps, web portals, or other forms of ICT access systems.

A last issue, that mainly triggered political accountability, relates to financial and political barriers. This mostly concerns the interaction between alderman and the city council. As in similar political systems, the city council checks e.g., whether the alderman delivers what he has promised, whether service delivery is not arbitrary, if the budget holds, and whether there are also other ways to optimize policy. The political accountability related to the pilot follows the budget year cycle (at the end of the year one secures budgets for the next year) and the accountability meeting (usually held in May). Over the last years, the alderman mostly had to provide accounts concerning whether the development of the digital infrastructure remained within budget limits, and an evaluation concerning the goals of the policy and the mid-term report of the pilot. Another interesting possible accountability instrument for the city council is that they can ask an independent research board of the council (the Rekenkamer) to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy and service delivery. This mostly happens when there are severe notions of malpractices. This instrument has not been used by the city council for this pilot so far.
**The role of ICT**

ICT was a central element in the development of the Helmond and OZO verbindzorg pilot. Personal information of the clients was digitized, so that professionals that were granted access to the information by the client quickly could provide the requested support. What is unique about the ICT use in this case, is that the client and the professional collaboratively work on the support plan (Helmond, 2017). The client is in charge of deciding what kind of help is important to him or her. The ICT solution also allows the practitioners/users/professionals to easily gain access and information about their own support and the unemployment situation more in general, while also respecting the confidentiality of the client’s dossier. According to our interviewees, the ICT tool supports the client in achieving better and faster support. Furthermore, the information collected with the ICT tool are also used by the municipality to monitor the quality of the service delivery (Publiek Denken, 2017). In this way, ICT supports the collaboration, and is used to check the efficiency and effectiveness of the municipal service delivery.
Chapter 3: Temporary working experience in Courtrai, Belgium

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Introduction

Long-term unemployed people are often supported by social welfare systems. Many have to overcome substantial barriers to become employed, and face a significant distance to the labour market. Examples of such barriers are a lack of working competences, language problems, and other psychological and personal problems that do not allow them to focus on getting or keeping a job. The activation of long-term unemployed people is a complex and multifaceted challenge for policy makers and practitioners and is at the heart of social policies on different policy levels. Many actors, both public and private, are involved in the process of policy design and service delivery within this policy area, aiming at the activation of the long-term unemployed. In this chapter, we first look into the effects of this collaborative approach on accountability mechanisms and vice versa, and then investigate the influence of ICT on collaboration and accountability.

In Belgium, most employment activation competences have been at the regional level since the sixth state reform was completed in 2014. The temporary working experience (TWE) in Flanders is an example of a policy instrument introduced to activate long-term unemployed people. Activation instruments in Flanders are mainly coordinated by the Flemish public employment service (PES), which is also responsible for the TWE service design. After the sixth state reform shifted more competences to the regional level, the Flemish government started on a reform of the article 60 instrument that had been created in the 1970s. This reform of the article 60 instrument resulted in the creation of the TWE. The Flemish PES collaborated with the Flemish Association of Cities and Municipalities to design the TWE.

3 The term ‘article 60’ refers to Law on Public Welfare Centres of the 8th of July 1976 (Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 1976, 13). More context can also be found in the mapping in report D8.2.
Compared to the old article, which is still the legal basis of this policy instrument, the TWE aims to be more holistic, and provided unemployed people receiving social assistance with a trajectory that aims to reduce their distance to the regular labour market. In this trajectory, unemployed people can gather experience and competencies. The TWE has been effective since the first of January 2017.

The so-called ‘article 60 contracts’ are at the heart of the TWE. These contracts are a particular activation instrument founded at the federal level that initially targeted people in social assistance. These are not always long-term unemployed people, the article 60 contracts can also concern immigrants, refugees, or other underprivileged groups. However, the activation of such groups faces similar challenges. While they often have some capacity to work, they encounter additional barriers that make it difficult for them to get an employment. In an article 60 contract, an employee is on the payroll of the local government but can work at other workplaces as well. The employee’s salary is paid by the local government. This cost is partially funded by subsidies from both the Flemish PES and the federal government. While working under an article 60 contract, the employee builds up the right to unemployment benefits. When the employee has fully built up the right to an employment benefit, the article 60 contract ends (De Coen et al., 2018).

Since the creation of article 60 contracts in the 1970s, the labour market has changed thoroughly, and more emphasis has been placed on developing new competencies and learning through experience. The article 60 instrument was not really adapted to these new developments and people employed in this model often did not go on to the regular economic circuit (De Coen et al., 2018). In response to that, the Flemish PES designed the TWE where article 60 contracts were only to be used as part of a trajectory towards the regular economic circuit (Interview 1; 2; 3). In the TWE, the maximum duration of article 60 employment is limited and can be preceded by courses, education, and internships. Every six months, there has to be a rotation in the employment which means that an employee has to switch to another workplace or do a different job in the same workplace (De Coen et al., 2018).
The TWE in Courtrai

For this case study, we focused our analysis on the collaboration and accountability mechanisms in the design of the TWE-trajectory in the city of Courtrai in Flanders, Belgium. With 77,076 inhabitants on the first of January 2020, Courtrai has the twentieth largest population in Belgium and the ninth largest in Flanders (STATBEL, 2020). It is therefore registered in the regional zoning plan of Flanders as one of thirteen central cities. The employment rate in 2016 in Courtrai was 72.7%, which is above the average among central cities (68.7%). In 2016, the average annual income per inhabitant of Courtrai was €18,632, which is roughly the average among the thirteen central cities and ranks sixth among these thirteen cities (STATBEL, 2017).

Courtrai has a very strong reputation in the activation of people receiving social assistance. According to the coalition agreement of Courtrai, the public welfare centre activated 2000 people under the previous legislature (2012-2019). This is the highest number of people activated by the public welfare centres in all the Flemish central cities. In the last legislature, Courtrai achieved an activation rate of 80% among recipients of welfare support. Roughly 56% of people employed in a TWE-trajectory are employed in an organization outside the local government: 7% in private organizations, 35% in the social economy and 14% in external public entities. The rest of the people employed in the TWE are thus employed in the social welfare centre or the local government itself (e.g. as maintenance team members in public schools, or gardeners of public parks). As mentioned, more than half of the TWE-clients are employed in a large variety of private and quasi-public organizations, ranging from hospitals to bike shops in the social economy and for-profit companies.

The case study is based on data gathered through seven interviews with respondents representing relevant actors connected to the TWE, and the analysis of policy documents and research reports about the instrument.
The collaboration for the service delivery of the TWE-trajectory is complex and involves different private and public organizations on multiple policy levels. A graphic representation of the involved actors can also be found in figure 3.2. First the Flemish PES is an important collaborating actor. As the meta-governor of the Flemish labour market, the PES coordinates many activation instruments, including the TWE. They are also responsible for the service design of the TWE, in collaboration with the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities, and take on part of the funding. Secondly, the local public welfare centre\(^4\) of Courtrai is involved as well. Public welfare centres are a part of the local government and are tasked with providing social assistance to the inhabitants. Since activation is seen as a cornerstone of any social policy, public welfare centres closely collaborate with the Flemish PES for the service delivery of various activation instruments, including the TWE (Interview 1). Thirdly, the private workplaces are participating in the collaboration as well. While it is possible to employ article 60 workers in the local government itself, Courtrai tries to employ such workers in private organizations as much as possible. As Courtrai’s experience shows, the distance to the regular labour market is smaller this way (Interview 1; 7). Moreover, the private sector offers a larger variety of jobs, as opposed to internal jobs in the public welfare centre. This allows for a more tailor-made trajectory (Interview 5). Throughout the years, Courtrai has established a network of private organizations willing to take on and support article 60 clients (Interview 1). Organizations sometimes send vacancies to the public welfare centre first, before using other channels to fill job openings (Interview 4; 5; 6).

Now that the most important actors are delineated, we will explain the roles of these actors, along with outlining the formal and actual collaboration practices. To provide clarity and

\(^4\) In Belgium, every municipality has a public welfare centre. Their task is to assure the societal wellbeing of every citizen of a municipality. Among many services that public welfare centres provide are financial support, housing, medical support, societal and professional activation, language courses, etc. Before 2017, these public welfare centres were a separate structure, led by a politically composed public welfare council. Since 2017, the public welfare centres are integrated in the local governments. Public welfare centres are thought of as the last safety net of Belgian social security.
structure of the case study, we will follow a client through his or her TWE. In so doing, we delineate the different steps every TWE-client goes through on his or her trajectory. This trajectory will also be presented graphically in figure 3.1. The Flemish PES developed a framework based on agreements with the Federation of Flemish Cities and Municipalities. As will become clear in this section, public welfare centres, especially their front-line civil servants, are granted a large discretionary power in the way they want to implement the TWE.

Figure 3.5: The TWE-trajectory

- Registration for social assistance
- Potential for regular labour market?
- Start TWE
- Max. 24 months
  1) Explorative internship / course / education (optional)
     (Max 2 months)
  2) Article 60 employment
     - New work(place) every 6 months
     - Evaluation every six months
     → Full right to unemployment benefits
  3) Follow-up
- End TWE
- Ready for regular labour market?
- (Search for) employment in regular labour market
  accompanied by Flemish PES
- Service delivery by public welfare centre
- Other instruments of public welfare centre
- Employment in (private) workplace
- Further support by Flemish PES (or public welfare centre)
- Service delivery by Flemish PES
The process of an eventual TWE-trajectory starts when a person presents him or herself at the public welfare centre in his or her municipality to receive social assistance. A civil servant, often a social worker then assesses if the new client is ready for an employment in a TWE-trajectory. This is a complicated assessment of a client’s social and psychological situation. This step is crucial, as the civil servant has to make an estimation of the client’s potential and needs to decide if the client is perceived to be ready to be employed in the TWE-trajectory that should end with an employment in the regular economic circuit (Interview 1; 2; 4; 5; 6). The civil servant screening the client is in a position with substantial discretionary power. This is necessary due to complexity of such assessment - a decision needs to be tailor-made, and take the social situation of the client into account (Interview 1). In Courtrai, a team of civil servants decides jointly on the client’s potential to work and on the actions that need to be taken.

When the actual TWE-trajectory starts, one personal counsellor is tasked with the guidance and support of the client throughout the whole trajectory (Doucet, 2020). This is to build trust between client and counsellor (Interview 1; 3). Based on the client’s interests, competencies, and experiences, a workplace is then chosen by the personal counsellor. The trajectory often starts with an internship that precedes the actual employment (Interview 1; 3; 4; 5; 6).

In the next step, the client is employed in a workplace under an article 60 contract. During this time, personal counsellors of the local public welfare centres closely supports the client. This can be the same person as the civil servant deciding on the start of a TWE, which is often the case in small municipalities. However, the decision to start a trajectory often involves social workers as well (Interview 1; 2; 3). Ideally, one personal counsellor supports the client throughout the whole employment with the private partner (Interview 2). When problems occur during the employment, it is the personal counsellor who mediates between the client and the workplace (Interview 4). When there is a conflict between the client and the local welfare centre, the Flemish PES will mediate between the two (Interview 3).
The collaboration between the local welfare centre and the private workplace thus mainly revolves around the guidance of the same client. The personal counsellor of the local welfare centre chooses the workplace, the client is then employed and supported by the private workplace. The personal counsellor of the local welfare centre and the private workplace then remain in close contact to follow-up on the progress and behaviour of the client.

When the client has built up the right to full unemployment benefits, the article 60 contract ends, and the follow-up phase of the TWE-trajectory starts. In this follow-up phase, civil servants at the public welfare centres, this time together with civil servants of the Flemish PES, assess the client’s progress and his or her readiness for the regular labour market (Interview 3). The support and guidance of the client is now transferred to the PES, which is responsible for the activation of unemployed people. The client now has the statute of a job-seeker, as he or she now receives a full unemployment benefit. In the TWE the client had the statute of a recipient of social welfare. The PES will decide on the next step in the clients’ trajectory to sustainable employment.

Local politicians have some influence as well, but on a strategic, policy level (Interview 1; 7). The local public welfare centres are part of the local government. In Courtrai, the TWE is a part of the city council’s broader policy on professional and social activation and pathway guidance in the service delivery of social assistance (Interview 7). Courtrai has a strong reputation in the activation of people on social assistance (Interview 2; 3). It is a policy objective of the city council to invest in the activation of the citizens receiving social assistance, and a cornerstone of its general social policy (Interview 7) (Stad Kortrijk, 2019b). Courtrai is not a unique case, but the municipalities who achieve strong results in the activation of this group often have public welfare centres with a substantial capacity (Interview 2; 3). Current policy efforts of Courtrai include an increased emphasis on the TWE in private organizations. It is Courtrai’s experience that these employments have a smaller distance to the regular labour market than employment in the local government. To implement this, the alderman of activation and social policy wants to add more people with a ‘private profile’ to the team of personal counsellors who can approach organizations and suggest article 60 employment
(Interview 7). The latter is an example of the influence that politicians have on the TWE. Operationally it is quite small, but policy objectives and plans can be implemented in a more strategic way that has an impact on use and implementation of the TWE.

The Flemish PES is also an important actor that is not directly involved in the guidance of the client but has a large influence on the collaboration as the designer of the TWE as an activation instrument. This design is quite restrictive on the personal counselling of the client including prescriptions on the evaluation of the client (once every three months), task rotation at the workplace (once every six months) and the overall duration of the trajectory (max. 24 months) (Interview 2; 3; 5; 6) (De Coen et al., 2018). To make sure that the instrument is used and executed correctly, the Flemish PES places scenarios and instruction documents at the disposal of the local welfare centres (Interview 4) (De Coen et al., 2018). Further, when the personal counsellors have questions, they can contact a representative of the Flemish PES who is responsible for that region (Interview 5).

The funding behind the TWE is quite complicated. First, important to note is that the employee receives a salary for the article 60 contract only, which is a part of the entire TWE. As mentioned, this is paid by the local government. The Federal Ministry of Societal Integration gives local governments a fixed wage subsidy for every article 60 contract\(^5\). Second, local governments are compensated for the support and guidance of the client. This is paid by the Flemish PES in three parts, by 1) a fixed compensation for every month in the TWE-trajectory, 2) a ‘result compensation’ when the client is employed after the trajectory, and 3) an additional compensation for the support of the client during the article 60 employment.

Before the creation of the TWE, article 60 contracts were merely compensated with the fixed wage subsidy and discount in social security contributions (De Coen et al., 2018, 13). With the

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\(^5\) This compensation from the Ministry of Societal Integration is calculated based on the registration of the article 60 employees. This calculation is automated and is thus not really an accountability mechanism, as there is no possibility for feedback. It also doesn’t concern the conduct of the actor (Bovens, 2007). This mechanism is nonetheless depicted in the accountability map in annex 2, but it is not discussed in the text.
creation of TWE, the funding of the article 60 contract was reformed as well. The goal is to provide an incentive to public welfare centres to make sure the TWE results in employment. In practice, a maximum compensation for one TWE is almost always achieved, unless the TWE is stopped prematurely (Interview 1) (De Coen et al., 2018, 13). This means public welfare centres often receive the maximum compensation regardless of the success of the TWE.

Due to the maximum on the compensation, the incentivizing nature of the funding does not work in practice. However, another mechanism does make it favourable for municipalities to activate people in social assistance, for which TWE is the proposed instrument. Social benefits are funded out of the local budget, with an allowance from the federal budget that accounts for roughly 55% of living wages (Coppens et al., 2018, 41-42). The salary of an article 60 contract is also paid by the municipality, with the compensations from the federal budget and the Flemish PES. After the TWE however, the client receives unemployment benefits and these are paid by registered labour unions or by the Employment Benefit Fund, a federal agency. In other words, every TWE takes the cost of an unemployed person from the local budget and moves it to the federal budget (Interview 3). An important remark made by several respondents is that the compensations for the guidance and support of a TWE generally do not cover the entire cost.

The public welfare centres are the last safety net of Belgian social security. The group of people applying for social assistance is very diverse and they face complex problems. The TWE has the objective to lead people to the regular labour market with a trajectory of at most 24 months. The clients of public welfare centres often have some capacity to work but require thorough and continuing social guidance to overcome significant social, psychological, and cognitive barriers. Most of the respondents perceived that the collaboration is rather successful and that the TWE does have a more activating effect than just the article 60 employment. However, they also mentioned that the framework of the TWE is too rigid and often is not suited for the complex situation of the clients. A TWE-trajectory can only be started when a client has the potential to move up to the regular labour market, but often this
is not feasible in 24 months. Consequentially, a large part of the social assistance is not funded by the TWE subsidies.

The main reason for the reform of the article 60-employment to the TWE-trajectory was that it would be more integrated with other activation instruments provided by the Flemish PES and the local social welfare centres. Most respondents indicate that the creation of TWE is a step forward in a holistic activation policy that targets all jobseekers in various stages of their lives and careers. Again, the local welfare centre is the last safety net of Belgian social assistance. The TWE clients have therefore a substantial distance to the labour market. As mentioned, the respondents think the TWE is a step in the right direction towards a holistic activation compared to the article 60. However, some work still needs to be done. After a client has finished a TWE-trajectory, his or her newly gathered experience and competencies should be immediately further developed or used through another activation instrument. These other instruments are the competence of the Flemish PES and the philosophy is that step by step, the distance to the regular labour market will diminish, eventually resulting in a sustainable employment in the regular economy.

However, this transfer from the local welfare centre’s personal guidance to the Flemish PES’ instruments does not always work well. This has two main reasons. First, the personal counsellors of the local welfare centres are not very familiar with the instruments that the Flemish PES offers to those who have finished their TWE. Second, there is insufficient information exchange between the Flemish PES and the local social welfare centres (Interview 4).

An evaluation of the new TWE instrument in 2018 has similar conclusions, stating that the local welfare centres have problems with understanding and using the instruments of the Flemish PES and that there are some troubles with the exchange of information and instructions on these instruments (De Coen et al., 2018, 56-62). The same study also concludes that, while the TWE instrument is more rigid than the old article 60-employment and is not suitable for a large share of local welfare centres’ clients, the instrument is seen as an
important lever for the personal counselling and professionalization of local welfare centres (De Coen et al., 2018, 71-72).

In conclusion, most respondents and the early evaluation of the instrument indicate that it is a step in the right direction. In order to provide a truly holistic service that activates people on social assistance, TWE still has some problems with integrating the services of the local welfare centre and the instruments of the Flemish PES.

**Accountability**

The service delivery of the TWE involves multiple actors and different funding streams from multiple policy levels. Therefore, there are plenty diverse accountability mechanisms and relations. For clarity, we add a graphic presentation of the accountability and funding streams in the collaboration in figure 3.2 In this next section, we discuss every important accountability relation, and we explain how accounts are given and received. As explained earlier, the local public welfare centres have significant discretionary power in the delivery of the TWE. Accountability relations are therefore centred around the public welfare centres. Very few accounts are given across the whole network. The network is rather made up of dyadic accountability relations between the involved actors on the one hand, and the public welfare centre of Courtrai on the other.

The first dyadic accountability relation is between the workplace where the client is employed and the public welfare centre. The team leader of the activation counsellors at the public welfare centre negotiates a collaboration agreement with the private workplaces to make mutual expectations and restrictions clear to both parties. This is depicted in figure 3.2 as accountability mechanism (1). This agreement is a framework for the formal accounts that the workplace needs to give to the public welfare centre (Interview 1; 4; 6). For example, when a client is not on time, or when he or she is absent without a warning, the collaboration agreement states that this must be communicated directly to the public welfare centre.
Procedures to evaluate the client and the financial compensation for the salary paid by the public welfare centre are also part of the agreement. An article 60 employment in a TWE trajectory is less expensive for the employer than a regular employment, but also requires providing the client with more support and guidance than in the case of a regular employee (Interview 1; 4; 5; 6). The public welfare centre is not hierarchically superior to the private workplace, and the accountability relation between these two actors is horizontal.

The activation counsellor of the public welfare centre is in close contact with both the client and the workplace. This is the public welfare centre’s main source of information about the quality of the guidance and support in the workplace (Interview 1; 5; 6). This is accountability mechanism (2) in the graphic presentation in figure 3.2. The accounts given by the workplace to the public welfare centre mainly concern the progress made by the client in terms of working attitudes and competencies (Interview 6). Since there are no direct accounts given about the guidance and support offered by the workplace, the quality of the client support is assessed indirectly as well. Problems or misconduct by the workplace reported by the client can be communicated to the team leader by the activation counsellor. The team leader can decide to break up the collaboration if the counselling of the client is not fulfilling. It is also Courtrai’s policy to break up the collaboration whenever the workplace fails to pay the bills for the TWE-employment. As these accounts are given to the civil servants at the local welfare centre and they mainly concern the guidance of the client, they can be qualified as professional accounts (ensuring that the professional guidance meets the professional standards that the local public welfare centre expects).

Besides this informal accountability relation, the personal progress of the client is formally evaluated by both the personal counsellor of the public welfare centre and the manager of the workplace. This is accountability mechanism (3) in figure 3.2. The Flemish PES requires every TWE-employee to be evaluated every six months, however, respondents noted that they do this more often. The employee’s technical competencies are evaluated according to criteria chosen by the workplace. More generic working competences and general attitudes are evaluated using an evaluation framework that was developed by the PES and a network
of public welfare centres of nearby municipalities (Interview 7). These evaluations are more formal and are administrative accounts given by the workplace to the public welfare centre and, as will be explained in the next few paragraphs, to the PES (Interview 2; 5).

The second accountability relation is where the public welfare centre gives accounts to the Flemish PES. As mentioned, part of the compensation for the TWE is covered by the Flemish PES. Furthermore, the TWE is designed by the PES as a stepping-stone to the labour market, where the PES is the ‘meta-governor’. The PES thus benefits from a good service delivery of the TWE. Sound accountability mechanisms between the PES and the public welfare centres are therefore important for the outcomes of the TWE as a part of an integrated, collaborative activation trajectory to sustainable employment.

Public welfare centres give accounts to the PES in several ways. First, a rather administrative check of formal registrations is done to make sure the funding streams from the PES to the public welfare centre are correct. ICT plays a big role in this, as every TWE-employment is registered in an ICT-platform developed by the PES called myCareer. Each client of the Flemish PES has a personal profile on the myCareer platform, where the information on every course, working experience, activation instrument, gathered competencies and other relevant topics is stored and brought together. The PES gathers all this information and checks how many TWE’s are currently running, and in which phase they are. This is accountability mechanism (4) in figure 3.2. The Flemish PES uses this information mainly to decide on the financial compensation each public welfare centre is entitled to (Interview 1; 2; 3). This first account given from the public welfare centre to the PES could therefore be described as a legal account. Because the financial propriety of the conduct is evaluated, this account can also be called a financial account (Bovens, 2007).

As mentioned, the TWE is a trajectory towards sustainable employment in the regular economic circuit. At the beginning of the trajectory, the personal activation counsellor of the client assesses the progress that needs to be made and defines actions that need to be taken in ‘personal development plan’ (Interview 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6). This is a framework designed by the
Flemish PES to evaluate the progress of clients and is also used in other activation instruments. The personal development plan has to be uploaded to client’s myCareer profile (Interview 2; 3) (Doucet, 2020). If something is not registered in myCareer, the assigned official of the Flemish PES reminds the public welfare centre to add the concerned documents or information to the myCareer profile of the client (Interview 3). Respondents representing both the PES and the public welfare centre mention that the quality of the support and guidance is not really assessed by the Flemish PES, but rather the registration of all necessary information to determine the right payment that needs to be made to the public welfare centre (Interview 2; 3). The procedures of the conduct are assessed by the account-receiver, in this case the PES, and the account can therefore be described as a procedural account (Bovens, 2007).

Another accountability mechanism between the public welfare centre and the PES is the so-called ‘qualitative monitoring’, depicted as accountability mechanism (5) in figure 3.2. This is an audit where the PES visits the public welfare centres and assesses the quality of the ‘pathway guidance’. This is done by a review of the personal development plans and other evaluation sheets created by the PES (Interview 2; 3). The initial goal is to evaluate the quality of the personal counselling of the client and provide professional accountability. However, most respondents noted that this assessment is rather administrative and formal (Interview 2; 3). ‘Personal development plans’ and evaluations of clients are assessed more in terms of comprehensiveness than in terms of content and quality. The account is therefore also procedural in the interpretation of Mark Bovens (2007).

This is primarily an issue of capacity, according to most respondents (Interview 2; 3). The PES counsellors would like to do evaluations more often and more thoroughly, but they lack the capacity to do so (Interview 3). When the qualitative monitoring is completed, feedback is given to the personal counsellors of the public welfare centre and extra questions can be asked for clarification (Interview 3). The results of the qualitative monitoring are then sent to the Flemish PES experts, who operate on a regional level. The case study respondents stated that the experts from that level do not provide any feedback (Interview 2; 3).
All respondents note that there are hardly any formal consequences attached to a negative evaluation in a qualitative monitoring. Feedback is given to the public welfare centre and their personal counsellors. This is done informally and more in a coaching and supporting manner, rather than sanctioning. Most respondents did not see this as a problem, and they pointed out that such approach has had a rather positive impact on the trust between actors. Activation counsellors feel no restriction to ask for advice from the PES or to discuss problems with them, as there is no risk of negative consequences (Interview 3).

Concerning political accountability, a quarterly report gives an update about the number of currently active TWEs and their progress. The quarterly report is put together from the administrative registration of article 60-employsments. This report is discussed at the college of mayor and aldermen (this is depicted as accountability mechanism (6) in figure 3.2). Some figures about the activation policy in general are made public in the annual account of the city (Interview 7) (Stad Kortrijk, 2019a). The quarterly report is only available for the team leaders of the activation and social assistance teams of the public welfare centre, the college of mayor and aldermen and their personal political staff (Interview 1; 7). This report is also discussed every quarter on a senior management meeting of the city’s administration where a member of the aldermen of activation’s political staff is present as well (Interview 7). Furthermore, the alderman has monthly meetings with the senior social policy manager and the team leader of the activation team. Through these meetings, the aldermen and his personal political staff is informed about the progress and implementation of his policy initiatives (Interview 7). These meetings are depicted as accountability mechanism (7) in figure 3.2

Lastly, the PES negotiates a collaboration agreement directly with the college of mayor and aldermen. This is accountability mechanism (8) in figure 3.2 These negotiations are thoroughly prepared by the activation teams of the public welfare centre. Often a new collaboration agreement is primarily a continuation of the existing agreement and the college approves it without problems. When there are significant changes, for example in the event of severe budget cuts, there can be a discussion in the college (Interview 7). The final agreement has to be approved by the college of mayor and alderman. It is important to note
that the TWE is just a small part of this collaboration agreement. The Flemish PES is responsible for almost the entire activation policy in the Flemish region, the TWE is just one instrument therein. This is also a political account (Bovens, 2007).

There is also an accountability structure directly between the client and the political level. If the TWE-clients are not active on the labour market, for example if they refuse too many jobs, or if they don’t show up to their work, they can get penalized by a suspension of their social allowance. This decision can only be made by a political body: the special committee of social assistance (Interview 1). This procedure is rather uncommon, but a decision on an individual dossier is made based on the advice formulated by the personal counsellors of the client. The client always has the opportunity to defend his or her actions in front of the special committee (Interview 1; 7). This is depicted as accountability mechanism (9) in figure 3.2.
Figure 3.6: Accountability map
Table 3.3: Types of accountability mechanism

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<th>Accountability mechanism</th>
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<td>(1)</td>
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<td>(2)</td>
<td>Professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
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<td>(5)</td>
<td>Professional</td>
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Relationship between accountability mechanisms and collaboration

The TWE is an activation instrument designed and partly funded by the Flemish PES. However, the PES does not have much leverage to influence the employment in TWE and the counselling of the client. This is primarily caused by the complexity of offering social assistance. The TWE targets the clients of public welfare centres who face complex and substantial social, psychological, economic, and other barriers connected to work. The public welfare centres’ assistance goes beyond activation and involves several other services like debt mediation, psychological support, or language training. To provide a comprehensive and holistic social assistance, of which activation is an important part, the personal counsellors of public welfare centres have been granted a large discretionary power in the service delivery of TWE. The accounts rendered to the PES are primarily targeted on administrative criteria like the propriety of subsidy payments and the comprehensiveness of registration. This has some consequences for the collaboration.

First, counsellors of the public welfare centres are tasked with the assessment of the potential of the client before they can start a TWE-trajectory. This is a crucial task, but there are no real accounts given to the Flemish PES about this. The PES did formulate criteria to assess the
clients’ readiness for the labour market, but public welfare centres are free to make this decision on their own. This may be considered illogical as the Flemish PES is the meta-governor of the entire Flemish labour market and has knowledge and expertise that would be very useful in making this decision. Several respondents indicated that, when they are in doubt, they opt to start the TWE trajectory because it is a way in which they can gather a lot of information about the potential and attitudes of the client. Also, the local welfare centre is the last safety net of Belgian social assistance. There are not many activation instruments left when one is ineligible for TWE, therefore, the local welfare centre of Courtrai opts to give clients the benefit of the doubt.

Another consequence of the large discretionary power combined with primarily quantitative and administrative accountability mechanisms is that there is a large difference between the service delivery of the TWE in different municipalities. This is indicated by several respondents, and is already concluded in a research on the implementation of the TWE as well (De Coen et al., 2018). Courtrai is a municipality with a large expertise and capacity for an integrated, well-functioning activation policy where the TWE is used well (Interview 1; 2; 3; 6; 7). In this kind of situation, respondents note that the loose accountability relations support the collaboration as it raises trust between individuals engaged in the collaboration. Activation counsellors of the public welfare centre in Courtrai are not afraid to ask people of the Flemish PES questions about the use of the activation instruments. They can be honest about the actions they take in delivering the service. Respondents indicate that the service is designed in a rather rigid way. However, smaller public welfare centres tend to have problems with a thorough implementation of the TWE (De Coen et al., 2018). In these cases, the (lack of) accountability and collaboration mechanisms could inhibit the activation of the target group.

**The role of ICT**

ICT plays an important role in the collaboration and the accountability mechanisms, primarily for accounts given from public welfare centres to the PES. Two separate platforms are used
by the public welfare centre: 1) the *myCareer*-platform, designed by the Flemish PES, and 2) a platform for internal communication and collaboration called *New Horizon*.

The ICT-platform *myCareer* plays an important role in the service delivery of all Flemish PES’ services and activation instruments. It is a platform of the Flemish PES where everything concerning a client’s quest for a stable employment is brought together in a personal profile: experience, education, followed courses, competencies, etc. This streamlines the Flemish PES’s service delivery across the many instruments they endorse. This ICT-tool should enhance collaboration as services delivered by other organizations, like the TWE, are registered in the personal profile of the client. This enhances an integrated service delivery of the ‘meta-governor’ of the Flemish labour market that is centred around ‘pathway guidance’ through every step in the path to sustainable employment.

Collaboration between the Flemish PES and the public welfare centre is influenced by the use of the *myCareer*-platform. Throughout the TWE-trajectory, the progress and activities of the client are registered in the platform. When the trajectory starts with an internship, or a specific education, the personal counsellor of the local welfare centre adds this to the client’s *MyCareer*-profile and counsellors of the PES can find this information in the platform. Furthermore, working competencies and experiences gathered by the client through the trajectory are bundled in the platform. When the TWE ends, the counselling of the client on his or her quest to a stable employment is taken over by the PES. Because all information about the client is bundled in his or her *myCareer*-profile, an integrated approach that builds on the counselling the client received from the public welfare centre can be offered.

However, in some cases collaboration between the PES and the public welfare centre can be hampered by *myCareer*. First, privacy issues prevent counsellors of the public welfare centre to communicate about, for example, psychological or legal issues. Respondents mentioned that some information is intentionally not written in *myCareer* because of privacy issues (Interview 2; 4). These issues could then be communicated orally, but when the dossier is passed on to another counsellor the information is often gone.
Another issue is the access to the platform granted to counsellors of the public welfare centre. A *myCareer*-profile is built up of several tabs to which access can be given or denied. Counsellors of the public welfare centre have limited access to their clients’ *myCareer*-profiles, furthermore, when the TWE-trajectory ends, the access is denied for them completely. It is very difficult for the public welfare centre to follow clients beyond the TWE (Interview 1; 4). This makes evaluation or measurements of their counselling effectiveness very difficult.

The Flemish PES primarily relies on *myCareer* for the accounts they receive from the public welfare centre. As mentioned, these accounts are mainly procedural accounts (Bovens, 2007), and are rather administrative and formal. The PES can check *myCareer* to follow the currently active TWE-trajectories and their status. This is an important factor that the PES looks into while deciding on the right subsidy payment for the public welfare centres. The ‘*personal development plans*’ that the counsellors of the public welfare centres put together for their clients are also uploaded to the *myCareer*-platform. These are checked when the PES performs a qualitative monitoring.

Because of the above-mentioned problems with *myCareer*, the public welfare centre feels like the platform does not serve their needs (Interview 1; 3; 4). They have therefore adopted another ICT-platform called *New Horizon*. This is a basic platform with personal profiles on the clients of the public welfare centre which is used to bundle information about clients and their counselling. Primarily, minutes of meetings between counsellors are put together for every client so there is one place to find all the important information. According to the respondents, this double registration (both in *myCareer* and in *New Horizon*) substantially increases the workload. As a result, personal counsellors only register the minimum of information necessary in *myCareer* (Interview 4).

While *myCareer* is a very elaborate and renowned platform, the issues seem to inhibit collaboration between the PES and the public welfare centre of Courtrai. Because TWE is designed to offer an integrated trajectory that reduces the distance to the labour market, it is important that the counselling of the client after the TWE delivered by the PES builds on the
client’s experiences and the competencies gathered during the TWE. The transition of the client’s counselling from the public welfare centre to the PES is therefore crucial for an integrated and holistic counselling trajectory for the client. The initial objective of the myCareer-platform is to smoothen this transition and make sure that the many activation instruments of the PES that are delivered by various private and public partners can be used in a synergetic way. However, the public welfare centre experiences problems with myCareer which hampers the collaboration and the quality of the service delivery.

The counselling of a TWE client is very complex and many-sided and requires a tailor-made service with a large discretionary power for the activation counsellor of the public welfare centre. While the myCareer-platform is sophisticated, it does have limitations in capturing the complexity of the counselling of a TWE client. Bovens and Zouridis (2002) describe how ICT can turn the administrative discretion of street-level bureaucrats into more screen-level and even system-level bureaucracy. In screen-level bureaucracy, the discretionary power of civil servants is mediated by an ICT system, which is always present in contacts of civil servants with their clients. System-level bureaucracy goes even further and here, the ICT system takes over the entire execution and control of the production process (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002, 177; 180). The practice of the counselling of TWE-clients requires a large discretionary power for the personal counsellors to build trust and to tackle the complex issues and obstacles on their path to sustainable employment. The ICT system supporting the personal counselling is not able to sufficiently reflect the complex reality of counselling a TWE trajectory (Interview 1; 3; 4; 5). In the case of the TWE, and the counselling of the clients of the public welfare centre in general, the discretionary power is still in the hands of street-level bureaucrats where ICT plays a supporting role rather than a leading or a decisive role (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002, 180).
Chapter 4: Collaboration around ‘work practices’ in Estonia

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Background

The focus of the study is on the case of ‘work practices’ in Estonia. Work practice (tööharjutus) is a service targeted at people out of employment for a long time or with no earlier working experience, allowing them to benefit from learning and acting in a group, and helping the long-term unemployed to keep up their motivation, and to find out more about themselves and their opportunities at the labour market (Töötukassa, 2020). In 2018, the provision of work practices saw a considerable systemic adjustment with the aim of increasing the impact of the service. The goal of achieving a clear outcome (moving to employment, moving to another service or into education) for every participant in the work practice was set. The success of finding the best individual solution for every participant in such a system depends on close collaboration of actors engaged in planning and implementing the service, and working with the unemployed persons – from the individual caseworkers and group facilitators to the service coordinators.

The service of work practice is provided by Töötukassa, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF). Employment policy is a responsibility of the national government and led by the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs. Töötukassa operates in the Ministry’s area of governance as a statutory state agency. Töötukassa was established with the Unemployment Insurance Act in 2002. While its initial tasks were related only to maintaining the unemployment insurance system, in 2009 the activities of the then Labour Market Board were terminated, and its functions transferred to Töötukassa. With this reform, a single integrated central government labour-market agency was born with a range of functions much wider

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6 See: https://www.tootukassa.ee/
than reflected in the original name. Töötukassa offers active labour market services to the unemployed, administers unemployment insurance and unemployment allowances as well as provides other types of financial support to the unemployed and to the employers. Structurally, Töötukassa consists of the Central Office and 15 County Offices covering the whole territory of Estonia. Although employment policy and provision of active labour market services is the responsibility of the national level, local governments have a significant role in dealing with the long-term unemployed through their supporting social services and benefits. The study at hand focuses on collaboration around the delivery of the work practice service. The study is based on document analysis and eleven interviews conducted from February to April 2020 in the Töötukassa region of Tallinn and Harju County. The list of interviewees comprised representatives of the main counterparts engaged in the collaboration around work practices. Whereas some of the interviewees were engaged in implementing the service specifically in Tallinn and Harju County (caseworkers, service consultants), others (service coordinator, providers, group facilitators) had experience with the service also from other regions of Estonia. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Work practice as a labour market service has existed since 2006 in Estonia when the current Labour Market Services and Benefits Act came into force. It was an important step in the development of the Estonian labour market policy that had evolved gradually after the country regained independence in 1991. Implementation of the new Act brought several significant changes to the system of providing labour market services – a personalised approach towards employment-seekers, an explicit list of services provided in the Act, and enlarged opportunities for long-term unemployed to participate in the services (Marksoo and Tammaru, 2011; Tööturuteenuste ja –toetuste seadus, 2005). A personalised approach introduced in 2006 means that Töötukassa assigns every registered unemployed a personal consultant whose role is to help the person to find suitable job opportunities and support services. The focus is on the needs of the individual and the consultant’s function is to address all the issues related to the person’s employability. The activities and support services revolve mostly around the needs and reasons behind unemployment, and not so much the length of
unemployment (i.e. for example, focusing on overcoming addiction or mental health problems that hamper staying in employment).

However, of the many active labour market services provided, the work practice is the one most clearly oriented towards long-term unemployed. It is preoccupied with supporting the unemployed individuals to learn about their capabilities and skills, change their daily routines and habits, and socialize them in the group (Interviews 4, 5; Töötukassa, 2020). It is not a ‘work placement’ in terms of on-the-job practice and it is not a ‘job club’ as a soft form of keeping the long-term unemployed socially active. The ‘work practice’ is a more demanding group-based format (up to 13 participants), taking place at weekdays (5-6 hours every day) for 40-60 days (potentially longer, if needed), incentivising participants to come out of the home and to participate in the activities (Töötukassa, 2020; Interview 5). Attendance is ensured by the requirement to be present as well as motivated by the provision of lunch and commuting and accommodation benefits. During the days at the work practice, the participants listen to the lectures, solve various practical tasks, socialize with other participants, share experiences, learn about applying to the jobs, practice a job interview, and visit employers (Töötukassa, 2020; Interview 4).

The current format of work practice was introduced with the reconceptualization of the service in 2018, piloted in the first half of 2019 and implemented since the second half of 2019 (Interviews 4, 5). Although established in 2006, the content and implementation of the service has altered in time and has reflected changes in the institutional context and in the labour market (Jürgenson, Kirss and Nurmela, 2010; Villsaar et al., 2012). While in the years of 2008-2009 economic crisis and after, the service was more oriented at keeping unemployed motivated and active, by 2018 understanding had grown within Töötukassa that the service needed a change, mostly towards more concrete outcomes and impact (Interview 4). The interviewees mentioned a number of reasons for revising the service. The reasons indicated most often by the respondents were connected to demand for higher value for money, the need to tackle previously high drop-out rates from the service, accumulation of experience, increasing professionalism of caseworkers, closer cooperation with service providers from the
private sector, very low unemployment rate allowing more individualised approach towards unemployed, and change in the profile of long-term unemployed registered in Töötukassa. The last factor – the changing profile of long-term unemployed – has been related both to the developments in the labour market as well as to the so-called ‘ability to work reform’ launched in 2016. The aim of the reform was to bring people with reduced working ability to the labour market and to provide them with a necessary support system and services (Sotsiaalministeerium, 2018). The reform moved disability issues from the area of social security to the realm of employment. While disability allowances were a part of the pension system and not related to the additional requirements, after the reform, people with partial working ability are required to fulfil the activity criteria to receive the working ability allowance (for example look for work, participate in the active labour market programmes, study etc.). The reform also introduced a new methodology for assessing the work ability and made assessment of ability the responsibility of Töötukassa. As a result of the reform, the share of unemployed disabled people who are registered as unemployed or job seekers has increased as well as the their participation in different active labour market services (Masso et al., 2019). Work practice was the third most popular service provided to the target group of the reform next to labour market training and work rehabilitation (Ibid., 54).

Finally, in the last decade, the provision of work practice as well as other labour market services have been influenced by declining unemployment rate in Estonia. The general unemployment was falling from 2010 to 2019. In 2018, the rate of long-term unemployment was 1.3% (9400 people altogether) (Statistikaamet, 2019). The rate of general unemployment was 5.4% in 2018, and 4.4% in 2019, at its lowest since 2000 (Statistikaamet, 2019, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its emergency measures introduced in the spring of 2020 will have an impact on the labour market on the scale which is not yet known during the writing of the report. According to the estimation of the Bank of Estonia, a fall of GDP from 6% to 14% can be expected, depending on the length of the crisis (Eesti Pank, 2020). I.e. the context of the labour market will change considerably in Estonia compared to the circumstances during the initiation of the study.
Collaboration

Collaboration around work practices can evolve in two ways depending on how the work practice is organized. These two types of organizing a work practice differ substantially when it comes to the role played by local governments in the process. The first type is a procurement-based provision of work practices. In this case, Töötukassa analyses the need for establishing work practice groups based on the information inserted to the uniform IT system by caseworkers and procures provision of specific groups in the national electronic Public Procurement Register\(^7\). The chosen best bidder provides the service based on a contract. The second type is called ‘self-made work practice’ and in this case, work practice groups are organised in cooperation with the local governments. The groups are financed by Töötukassa, but co-designed with local governments. Such groups operate usually in smaller local governments, allow for a more flexible interpretation of the concept of the work practice and target clients with higher needs for supporting social services (for example, because of very long-term unemployment, individuals’ alcohol consumption, the need to care for family members or often a combination of reasons) (Interviews 4, 5).

The case study at hand focuses on the first type of collaboration (procurement-based) as this was the main type experienced by all the interviewees. Organisation of the procurement-based groups relies on ‘the technical description’ of work practices providing the concept of the service and its formal outline. The technical description divides the service into three consecutive steps and emphasizes the importance of ongoing collaboration between the service provider and Töötukassa’s County Office in every step on the way in order to assure the best individual result for every participant (Töötukassa, 2019a). Collaboration with local governments, if involved in the procurement-based work practice, is usually initiated by the caseworkers, and revolves around the needs and characteristics of individual clients (not the work practice group). In the following sections, the key actors in the collaboration are introduced.

\(^7\) See: [https://riigihanked.riik.ee/rhr-web/#/]
Based on the personalised approach towards employment-seekers, the client is in the centre of the work practice concept. Work practice as a service is oriented at unemployed people who have been seeking employment for more than a year or whose previous working experience has already taken place a while ago. Compared to the other Töötukassa services, work practice has tended to have a higher share of participants with low level of formal education (secondary education), with no preceding work experience and with other native language than Estonian (i.e. mostly Russian; Villsaar et al. 2012; Pohla et al., 2017). Very often, the clients have multiple problems that keep them away from the labour market. For example, the interviewees recurrently mentioned the need to care for family members, alcohol consumption, transport problems, reduced ability to work due to mental health problems or physical health problems. There is a significant overlap between long-term unemployment and belonging to the target group of the ability to work reform (estimated at 40-45%; Interview 5). As brought out by the caseworkers and group facilitators, there is a considerable share of clients who are motivated to be registered as unemployed, but who are actually not ready to take up a job (Interviews 1, 3, 10, 11). There are several incentives that bring long-term unemployed out of home and to the realm of Töötukassa. In addition to the ability to work reform, already since 2007 all the registered unemployed are covered by health insurance. Furthermore, according to the Social Welfare Act, local governments have the right to refuse granting subsistence benefits or to reduce them in case the applicant or a family member is not working, not registered in Töötukassa or not actively seeking work (Social Welfare Act, § 134). Both the health insurance as well as the activity requirement for the subsistence benefits have proved to be strong incentives for the unemployed and for the local governments who direct their clients to register in Töötukassa. However, the institutional logic of Töötukassa presumes active contact with the caseworkers and participation in the labour market services for fulfilling the activity requirement and a mere registration as unemployed or a job seeker is not enough (see Trumm and Kasearu, 2011, 57-64).

The need for the specific service is decided in cooperation between the client and his/her caseworker. The relationship between the client and the caseworker is in the centre of Töötukassa’s approach to helping the unemployed to reach the labour market. There are
different types of specialists working with the unemployed in Töötukassa. The target group of work practices is usually handled by caseworkers who work with unemployed in long-time unemployment, complex needs and/or limited ability to work. Caseworkers meet regularly with the clients, estimate their need for support and services, and help them in setting goals for further actions and activities. With regard to the work practice, the role of the caseworker is to introduce the service to the client (the process, expected results, the requirement of participation, benefits etc.), discuss the suitability of the service for his/her needs and, in case the client decides to participate in the service, to insert the ‘service necessity’ to the information system of Töötukassa (Interviews 1-3). The latter information is used to form work practice groups.

The service is managed by a cascade of service consultants within Töötukassa who are located at the Central Office in Tallinn, 15 County Offices in the regions and their local bureaus. A unit in the Central Office coordinates the service, gathers information on its implementation and plans service development (Interviews 5, 6). A service consultant in the County Office monitors the demand for the service and its implementation in the region (Interviews 4, 6). He or she is the main contact point for different counterparts in collaboration around the work practices. The County Office service consultant communicates with coordinators in the Central Office and service consultants in the local bureaus, whose main role is to exchange information and to work with the individual caseworkers (Interviews 1, 3). Importantly, the County Office service consultant serves as the main contact point for the service providers (Interviews 4-7, 8-11). The latter task includes preparatory meetings with the service provider and group facilitators, checking the physical premises of the service provision, monitoring the implementation of the contract, carrying out on-the-site checks during work practices, and solving problems that emerge during the process.

As for many other Töötukassa services, the work practice service is implemented by private and non-profit providers based on the contract. The providers propose the format and contents of the practice according to the conditions foreseen in the procurement call and based on the technical description of the service. Some providers have a more regional focus,
while others provide work practice and other labour market services all over Estonia (Interviews 5, 8, 11). Some providers are more institutionalised, while the others rely on individual professionals in their operation. Consequently, the providers may be represented in the relations with Töötukassa by managerial staff, but very often the provider is represented by one of the group facilitators who also implements the service in practice (Interviews 6, 8, 11). It is common that service providers hire group facilitators for the specific procurement as many of the facilitators are free-lance professionals, providing several labour market services, and working with different providers on the market. It means that there are contractual relations also between service providers and group facilitators, based either on a written or an oral agreement (Interviews 4-6, 8-11). According to the estimation, there are about 24 organisations providing the work practice service and about 40 individuals who act as group facilitators (Interview 5).

According to the renewed concept of work practice, every client who completes the service must have a clear outcome for him/herself (Töötukassa, 2019a). The most preferred outcome is finding a suitable job by the client. However, as the target group is very complex and faces various problems hindering employment, agreement on the further services needed or moving into formal education are expected results as well. In order to arrive at such an outcome, the service presumes collaboration of different actors so that the client can make it to the service, and conclude it with the best possible individual effect. To achieve that, the renewed system relies on more clearly outlined accountability of different actors with regard to both the service process as well as the results.

**Accountability relations**

The interviews revealed that accountability relations engaged in the collaboration around work practices represent mostly internal accountability relations between the actors engaged in delivering the service. The interviews exposed only limited external accountability to the account holders outside of the collaboration such as politicians, stakeholders, and the public.
Regarding the direction of relations, most of the internal accountability relations tend to be horizontal in their nature. Regarding the types of accountability, *performance/administrative accountability* and *professional accountability* dominate the scene. Below, all the accountability relations are described in detail. For a graphic outline of accountability relations in a procurement-based delivery of work practices see Figure 4.1.

The key vertical relationship in the collaboration is between the County Office service consultant and the provider. The relationship focuses on performance accountability of the *provider* and delivering the service according to the expectations. The expectations are fixed in the contract (including the technical description), in template documents for reporting, and in the meeting notes (Interviews 5, 6, 7). A preparatory meeting between the provider, group facilitators and the service consultant is organised before a new group starts. The notes of the meeting are sent to the provider after the gathering. According to the interviewees, sometimes there is also a follow-up meeting with the provider, after the group has finished, but this does not seem to be a regular practice. In case the meeting takes place, again, notes are taken and sent to the provider (Interview 6).

The technical description of the service divides the process of work practices into three phases – (1) socialization, (2) activation and (3) matching with the employers (Töötukassa 2019a). The technical description has a central role in prescribing the performance accountability of service provider and group facilitators. According to the document, every phase comprises both group work and individual counselling, and ends with the submission of a phase report to the County Office service consultant. The first report focuses on the individual goals, aims and hindrances of the client. The second phase report indicates specific activities to be undertaken and the third must describe what is the concrete result of the service for the client (employment or the next steps towards employment). The phase reports are written in cooperation with the clients in the format provided by Töötukassa (Interviews 8-11).

Among other requirements, the provider must assure a simultaneous presence of two professional group facilitators working full time with the group (Interviews 4, 5).
requirement of two facilitators was introduced with the renewed concept of the service (previously one facilitator) and has been a key reason of infringement procedures (Interviews 5, 6). The provider must report on the presence of the facilitators. The fact of a facilitator missing without the approval of the County Office occasionally becomes apparent from the feedback of clients but is often discovered during the site visits (Interview 6). The County Office service consultant inspects the service process, premises, technical equipment, proper communication of EU support etc. during the site visits without notice. The breach of the contract leads to a note and, in case of a repeated offence, to a fine (has been used in practice) or possibly a termination of the contract (has not been used lately in Tallinn and Harju County) (Interviews 4, 5, 6). The requirement of two facilitators was approved by the providers and the facilitators. However, its strictness was challenged in the interviews as too harsh (seven days of absence allowed), wasteful (for example, when only two clients attend the practice) or stringent (for example, when a facilitator is leaving earlier in the end of the day, but the whole day is counted as absence) (Interviews 8-11).

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8 Work practices for individuals with decreased working ability are co-financed by the European Social Fund.
Figure 4.7: Collaboration and accountability relations around work practices
To ensure implementation of the service according to the expectations, the system relies on the professional accountability of group facilitators. According to the prerequisites, the providers must guarantee service facilitation with individuals who possess at least level six occupational qualification of social worker, adult educator, vocational teacher, or a career specialist (Töötukassa, 2019b; altogether there are eight levels in the occupational qualification system). In the words of an interviewee, introducing the requirement of a formal occupational qualification draw on the preceding experience with facilitation, relies on the professional evaluation by the colleagues in the qualifications committee, and gives Töötukassa confidence that the individuals have sufficient knowledge and experience to work with complex clients (Interview 5). In a situation where the formal responsibility for the service is on providers, but substantial responsibility is on the group facilitators, the autonomy of the latter is high, and relationships with the providers are often based on oral agreements, reliance on the professionalism and trust is a way to go for the providers too (Interviews 7, 8, 11). The interviewees (5, 8-11) agreed that the landscape of service provision is fragmented and volatile in its relationships and this causes the problem of uncertainty for all the counterparts.

The performance accountability of group facilitators is delineated in the technical description of the service that prescribes the three phases of service implementation as well as lists 13 points on the role and responsibilities of the facilitators, including the need to ‘collaborate with the Töötukassa County Office in the whole period of the service implementation’ (Töötukassa, 2019a). The latter means collaboration with both the service consultant as well as the caseworkers in practice. A key element in the group facilitators’ performance accountability are the phase reports submitted on every client three times during the service – two interim reports and the final report. Technically, the reports are sent by e-mail to the County Office service consultant who inserts them to EMPIS, the Employment Information System of Töötukassa and notifies case workers of the arrival of their clients’ reports. The content and purpose of the reports has been a central issue in the renewed system of work practices.
The phase reports are the main instrument of information exchange and the means for setting further goals to be achieved by the client and Töötukassa working with the client. They are especially important in a situation where the two core actors focused on the clients’ needs – the caseworkers and the group facilitators – do not have regular meetings, but communicate only in the initiative of either of them or in case of concrete problems with the clients. As the service of work practice lasts for at least 40 days and comprises both active group work and individual counselling, the outcome of these exercises should be fixed in the phase reports summarizing the work done and formulating the clients’ aims, strengths, problems, and prospects forward. The caseworkers are expected to discuss the reports with their clients and initiate new activities based on the needs revealed during the work practice. To fulfil this function, the phase reports have to be substantial, individualized, and with sufficient detail. The perspectives of interviewees differed on the question of the reports. In the view of the Töötukassa interviewees, reporting has proved to be a challenge in practice, where the arriving reports have been brief, descriptive, copy-pasting information from one report to another (Interviews 1, 2, 6) or providing suggestions on the further activities that have limited relevance or use (Interviews 1, 3). The interviewees from the side of service provision (Interviews 7-11) tended to be happy with the new format of the reports and did not find it to be a challenging element in the service provision process.

With regard to making the providers accountable for the quality of the reports, it is difficult for the consultant who is not working with the clients him/herself to evaluate the substantial quality of the reports and this is something that is expected from the caseworkers (Interview 6). The reports are anticipated to provide an input to the caseworkers’ communication with the clients, but caseworkers are also expected to provide feedback on the reports. Caseworkers receive the reports through Töötukassa Employment Information System EMPIS and mark them ‘Done’ after the reading (Interviews 1-3). Taking the further actions is upon themselves. They may decide to give feedback on the quality of the reports to the service consultants, most of all, the County Office service consultant, but the latter is usually done only when there are substantial problems with the reports.
The caseworkers may also contact the group facilitators to discuss the content of the reports after receiving them. According to the service consultants, the caseworkers are encouraged to communicate directly with the group facilitators both during the service as well as in its conclusion in order to discuss the progress of their clients and maintain a working contact with the facilitators (Interviews 4, 6). However, the practice that caseworkers and group facilitators reported on collaboration, though varying, tended to revolve around problem situations demanding reaction (for example, clients not showing up for the service; contradictory information in the reports; clients disturbing group processes or being drunk etc.) rather than proactive interest taking. Both sides tended to see themselves more active than the other in making the contact. However, group facilitators agreed that communication with the caseworkers had intensified under the revised system of work practices.

The accountability of caseworkers is mostly administrative and professional, towards the superior(s) in the local unit and other caseworker colleagues. For caseworkers, work practice is only one service of many provided to their clients with complex needs. The performance of caseworkers is monitored by different indicators running in EMPIS, for example by the rate of clients moving to the employment, or the rate of referring clients to the services, and by the satisfaction surveys of clients (Interviews 1, 2). With regard to the professional accountability, caseworkers discuss their cases in the weekly case meetings where colleagues share their experiences and give recommendations on approaching the needs of complex clients as well as have a possibility of co-vision with a colleague (Interviews 1, 2).

The operation of individual services is monitored by unit service consultants who often also act as caseworkers themselves (Interviews 2, 3) therefore being on a double position and accountable both for the casework as well as monitoring the specific service. Regarding the service-related function, the key accountee is the County Office service consultant. The unit service consultants and the County Office service consultant meet every three months and discuss the state of affairs with regard to the work practice service (Interview 3). The County Office service consultant is mostly a system administrator (Interview 5) and his/her accountability is of administrative type, first of all towards the superiors in the County Office (service coordinator; head of the Office) and secondly to the Central Office, where there are
specialists working on different aspects of the work practice service. As the indicators on the service arrive to the Central Office automatically through the EMPIS information system, the direct communication concerns mostly street-level feedback on the implementation of the service and discussion of breaches and infringement procedures towards the providers (Interviews 4, 6).

There is no hierarchical relationship between the County Office service consultant and the caseworkers (Interview 6). Regarding the work practice as a specific service, accountability of caseworkers revolves around their relationship and communication with the client. Most of all, they are expected to identify clients who could benefit from the service, communicate the value, nature and requirements of the service to the clients and, in case the clients opt for the service and commit to full participation, refer them to the service in the EMPIS information system. As the renewed concept of work practices puts strong emphasis on the impact of the service, expects concrete results with regard to every client, and has delineated more specifically who is eligible for the service, the caseworkers feel an increased pressure to consider carefully whom to refer to the service and whom not (Interviews 1-3). As indicators on the services run in EMPIS and allow making caseworkers accountable for misjudgement (even if not made explicitly), referral of a client who is probable not to show up or likely not to complete the service is considerably discouraged.

Consequently, also the clients are expected to take more responsibility in the renewed system. The clients are accountable for their performance to the caseworker and the group facilitators (for showing up to the service, working in the group, collaborating with the group facilitator, completing every phase of the service). The relationships are horizontal, and the clients are expected to be on the driving seat with regard to their life and steps towards employment (Interviews 1-6, 8, 10-11). If they do not show up for the service, disturb the group processes or quit during the service, the caseworkers are expected to get in contact with their clients and address the problems (Interviews 5, 6). If the problems concern participation in the group or collaboration with the group facilitators, the issues should be addressed in a tri-partite meeting between the client, caseworker, and the group facilitator(s) (Interview 6). Clients are also expected to take an active role in formulating the outcomes of
different phases of work practice in the phase reports (Interviews 8-11). How it materializes in practice, depends on the individual clients and facilitators. Group facilitators reported different practices of writing the phase reports, but the process generally started with an attempt to induce the clients to formulate their personal position and opinion first.

The role of ICT

ICT systems have an important role to play in the case, both from the perspective of collaboration as well as in making the actors accountable. The procurements take place through the electronic Public Procurement Register. The key information system and an electronic working environment for the officials in Töötukassa is the Employment Information System EMPIS (officially the Register of Unemployed Persons, Employment Seekers and Labour Market Services; EMPIS2). EMPIS covers the whole organization of Töötukassa, all its structural units dispersed over Estonia, and allows it to function as a single integrated organization. EMPIS enables the Central Office in Tallinn to have an in-time overview of operation of services and eliminates the need for local units to provide reports on how many clients have been referred to the services, how many have shown up, how many clients have interrupted the service etc. (Interview 4). EMPIS is linked with other information systems like TETRIS/REDIS for working ability assessments and allowances, and STAR, the Social Services and Benefits Registry for the local governments.

EMPIS is the main work setting both for the service consultants as well as the caseworkers. All the notes of meetings with the clients, observations and agreements are inserted to the system by the caseworkers. Regarding the work practices, the system notifies caseworkers of the arrival of phase reports submitted by the service provider and inserted to the system by the County Office service consultant. The regular exchange of information between the County Office service consultant and the caseworkers takes also place in EMPIS (Interview 6). Similarly, other information on the activities related to the service is inserted to the

9 https://riigihanked.riik.ee/rhr-web/#/
information system where there are specific templates, for example, for the site visit reports. Accumulation of service information in a single unified information system allows to check data also in retrospect, for example when disputes arise (Interview 6).

Unemployed persons, employment-seekers and employers can communicate with Töötukassa through e-Töötukassa – a self-service interface where it is possible to search for trainings and vacant positions on offer. e-Töötukassa makes it possible for unemployed persons to follow the activities agreed with their personal consultant, to submit grant applications, register to trainings and inform Töötukassa of becoming employed. As argued by the caseworkers, the client group engaged in the work practices is often lacking the basic digital skills, but this is not the general rule (Interviews 1-3). Sometimes, the clients take pleasure in discovering digital options of communicating with Töötukassa and get a feeling of success when they are able to complete necessary procedures electronically (Interview 1). The employers can use e-Töötukassa to insert job openings, look at the CVs of job seekers, follow the proceeding of their applications (e.g. wage subsidy applications) and to register to a consultation.

The communication with the service providers still relies on exchanging e-mails at this point. The group facilitators do not have an assigned function connected to work practice service in e-Töötukassa and they cannot access the information on the clients that they are working with. The issue has been discussed and a proposal of granting group facilitators access to the basic information on the clients (for example, their expectations towards the work practice service inserted to EMPIS by the caseworkers) has been made by the caseworkers, but it has not materialized due to the concerns with privacy and the risk of revealing sensitive personal data (Interview 3). However, according to the interviewees, IT developments are under way that will allow the service providers to submit all the information pertaining to the process of work practices (for example, daily information on participation, phase reports etc.) through e-Töötukassa and will thus further the technical aspect of the collaboration (Interviews 5, 6).
Issues related to collaboration and accountability

While the internal accountability relations of actors collaborating around work practices are quite clear and set, there are two external actors whose role still seems to be controversial or developing. First, the third phase of work practices where the clients are expected to visit potential employers was added to the service in the renewed system. Although evaluated to be an improvement in the concept of work practices, it was also perceived as a challenge in several interviews. Nevertheless, the perspectives differed when it comes to the nature of the challenge and seemed to come together from a puzzle of factors. For the service providers, it was mostly a general challenge of finding suitable employers, especially in smaller places outside of Tallinn where there were fewer companies, fewer vacancies, people already knew the clients and were not interested in their visits, or the wages were not motivating for the clients (Interviews 8-11). While the group facilitators reported reliance on their own initiative, personal contacts and information published electronically by Töötukassa (both on vacancies and employment trends) in finding the employers, the caseworkers and consultants emphasized the potential of tighter collaboration with caseworkers and Töötukassa employers’ consultants to identify companies most advantageous for the specific clients.

From the perspective of caseworkers, there was a measure of discontent because of the limited number, impact and usefulness of the visits undertaken with their clients (Interviews 1-3). At the same time, the modest readiness of employers and the labour market to embrace employees with special needs or distinct character (including looks) was brought out both by caseworkers (e.g. the lack of flexible part-time positions) as well as service providers. These arguments resonated with the recent study on the implementation of the ‘ability to work reform’ that emphasized the need to incentivise employers and to help them to acquire the expertise of managing disabilities for the further success of the reform (Masso et al. 2019, 74). The caseworkers saw one avenue for overcoming the problems in linking the third phase of work practices better with the following services. For example, helping the clients to start
working by internships or work with a support person after identification of suitable employers during the final phase of the work practice.

Secondly, the role of local governments appeared as a major overarching issue as many clients of Töötkassa and the target group of work practices have very complex needs. In addition to being registered as unemployed or job seekers in Töötkassa, they are usually the target group of local government support services and benefits. Often, they are directed to Töötkassa by their local governments to acquire health insurance or as a standard requirement to qualify for subsistence benefits (the activity criteria). As argued by interviewees, there are many among them who ‘will never go to work’, but once in the realm of Töötkassa they need to participate in active labour market services and are expected to move towards employment. The topic was raised both by the group facilitators and caseworkers but creates tensions especially for the latter.

In the case of procurement-based work practices, local governments are outside of counterparts formally collaborating. The communication with the local governments is usually initiated case-by-case by the caseworkers to discuss pertinent issues and the clients must have given their approval for the caseworkers to contact local government (Interviews 1, 2). However, it is not the most effective way to address the needs of complex clients. In the context of the renewed system of work practices, the issue of local government responsibility has become even sharper than before as the expectation of results and impact has constricted the circle of clients suitable to the service and has left out the clients with durable social problems (for example, substance consumption) (Interviews 1, 3). However, the caseworkers still need to guide them towards employment.

The topic is nothing new – the differing capabilities and willingness of local governments to collaborate with Töötkassa has been an issue for a long time (for example, Jürgenson, Kirss and Nurmela, 2010, 106; Masso et al., 2019, 79-80; Trumm and Kasearu, 2011). Before 2017, the scene of local governments was very fragmented and comprised a high number of very small municipalities with limited resources. After 2017, when a comprehensive reform was undertaken and the number of local units decreased from 213 to 79, the local level has been
recovering from the reform and extensive mergers. One of the hopes put on the reform was that the birth of larger local governments will result in an increased administrative capacity and a higher competence in managing the local matters. Its actual realization is still to be seen. Nevertheless, as mentioned by the service coordinator, in the last year, the reformed local governments have started to come along and take more initiative (Interview 5).

Altogether, the renewed system of work practices was characterized as more meaningful and more functional by counterparts participating in the collaboration. They also had a shared understanding of the goals of the work practice service. However, the interviews revealed several tensions in the current system limiting the extent of collaboration. These seemed to relate to three factors – the procurement-based system reliant on price, path-dependency or inertia in the routines of different actors, and an expectation of a clear outcome for every client while the client group is extremely complicated and with accompanying social needs.
Chapter 5: ‘Fair Start Scotland’ in the Forth Valley, the United Kingdom

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This chapter has been written using the results from seven interviews conducted between February and March 2020 and a documentary analysis. The details of the interviews are reported in Annex 1. These documents are predominantly on Fair Start Scotland as there were limited documents on the Forth Valley case study.

Background

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is the Scottish Government’s voluntary employment support programme that aims to help people with complex and enduring health needs improve their employment opportunities. The service is primarily designed to meet the needs of those who may face a range of challenges in obtaining work (e.g. the disabled or those with caring responsibilities) and who have been unemployed for a long time (e.g. those reaching two years on Job Seekers Allowance/Universal Credit). It aims to provide a tailored, coherent range of support which can respond flexibly to meet the individual needs of people and their employers and make the best use of resources. The programme began accepting referrals in April 2018 and aims to deliver support to a minimum of 38,000 people over a three-year period (Scottish Government, 2019a).

The origins of the programme can be traced back to the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014 (see section 1.4). At time of implementation, Scotland’s unemployment level was low at 4% (Scottish Government 2019b), but there was a need to engage specifically with those whose access to the labour market was impaired by long-term health problems. Furthermore, there was impetus within the Scottish Government to embed an approach to tackling long-term unemployment that was discernibly different from that of the Westminster Government which was seen as being somewhat punitive, with an emphasis on fair work practices and
long-term sustained assistance (Interview 1). Fair Start Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative that is implemented by local councils across the country. Many of the policy areas that are covered by the initiative are devolved matters, for example education and training, health and social services, and local government. However, it should be noted that employment remains a reserved matter that is legislated from the UK parliament in Westminster. The majority party in Scottish Government is the Scottish National Party (SNP), who hold 61 out of a possible 129 seats. In this way, there exists a political tension between the SNP-led Scottish Government, in which a great deal of political rhetoric revolves around the matter of Scottish independence against the more Unionist emphasis of the UK Parliament in Westminster. The overall aim of this project was to create a Scottish approach to employability that was distinguishable from the UK Government (Scottish Government, 2016).

Following the passing of the Scotland Act in 2016 (an act of the Parliament of the UK that sets out amendments to the Scotland Act 1998 and devolves further powers to Scotland), there was a transitional period in which an interim employment services programme was implemented. Two programmes called Work First Scotland and Work Able Scotland commenced in April 2017 and aimed to provide continuity of support for people with disabilities and health conditions. These programmes were directly overseen by the Scottish Government. The design and delivery of FSS was formed through a formal consultation and the bidding process was facilitated by the Public Contracts Scotland Forum. In October 2017, nine contracts with a value of up to £96m to deliver FSS were awarded. This case study focusses specifically on contract area 4, which is called the Forth Valley. The contract, with an estimated value of up to £5m, was awarded to Falkirk Council who deliver the services in collaboration with Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council and NHS Forth Valley, as well as several third sector and private companies who deliver services. Five bids were received

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10 https://www.parliament.scot/msps/12450.aspx
11 Public Contracts Scotland Forum is the electronic portal where suppliers can access essential information about opportunities to offer services and bid for contracts for the supply of goods to the Public Sector in Scotland. More details are available from: https://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/AboutUs/AboutUs_Main.aspx
for this contract by the Scottish Government. This was the only one awarded to a local council as the lead organisation.

According to Falkirk Council, the Fair Start Scotland in Forth Valley aims to do the following for recipients:

- Help to break down barriers that might be stopping people from working
- Develop a programme of support, built around people
- Keep in regular contact and agree their ongoing help and support
- Remain in touch with people when they find employment, making sure your questions are answered.

The implementation of services is guided by a number of key performance indicators. Providers are expected to ensure delivery in the following areas:

- Job outcomes: a minimum of 16 hours per week paid at National Minimum Wage for 13 weeks within a 16-week period.
- Sustained job outcomes: a minimum of 16 hours per week paid at National Minimum Wage, lasting for 26 weeks within a 30-week period.
- Sustained job outcomes: a minimum of 16 hours per week paid at National Minimum Wage, lasting for 52 weeks in a 60-week period.

Partners are also expected to deliver against a series of qualitative measures pertaining to the client’s user journey, retention rate, and sustainable outcomes. These include measures governing the start date and service induction, intervention, participant engagement, segmentation tools, in-work support plans, procedures for disengagement, exit and leaver plans, complaints procedures and specialist support providers.

Whilst there are a number of tangible aims and objectives that oversee the collaboration, it also has several guiding principles that underpin the design and delivery of the service. Key
guiding principles include a principle of dignity and respect, a commitment to fairness and equality, and an obligation to the continuous improvement of services. Interviewees reported that these principles meant that as well as supporting clients into employment, the service can strengthen the social support mechanisms available to clients who experience multiple and complex needs, and significant barriers into employment (Interview 4).

The collaboration

The service is primarily targeted towards those people who are furthest removed from the labour market. The majority have health-related problems or disabilities, but it is also meant to tackle long-term unemployment. This will include people that have been unemployed for at least two years, but some may have been outside of the job market for ten, 15, 20 years or more (Interview 6).

Informal collaborative structures have existed in Scotland since the devolving of employability services to the Scottish Government (Interview 2). These include Community Planning Partnerships which bring together public officials from health, housing, and employability. Whilst there are some examples of councils collaborating on a regional basis in the Forth Valley for smaller scale projects, this was the first time such an agreement had been reached regarding employability (Interview 4).

The background to the formal collaboration was the Scottish Local Authority Economic Development Group (SLAED), which brought together all 32 local authorities in Scotland in a discussion forum designed to enhance collaboration. The partnership between Scottish Government and local authorities was formalised through the governing body called the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) (Hepburn and Parry, 2018)\textsuperscript{12}. The Scottish Government’s ‘No One Left Behind’ strategy brought together COSLA, with third and private

\textsuperscript{12} Shared ambitions between Scottish Government and Scottish Local Government were set out in the National Performance Framework, published by Scottish Government and available from: https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/resources
sector service providers to collectively agree to a Partnership Working Agreement in Employability designed to deliver services collaboratively (The Scottish Government, 2018). The interviewees suggested that the Scottish Government consulted widely through focus groups with unemployed people and contacted different providers across the country to inform the design of the FSS service (Interview 1).

In the Forth Valley, FSS is delivered through a partnership that consists primarily of three local authority areas, those of Falkirk Council, Clackmannanshire Council and Stirling Council. Falkirk Council is the lead partner who prepared the funding bid and designed the model for the delivery of services. They undertake the lead accountable tasks, co-ordinate communications and act as a central point for providing resources, support, or clarification.

Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils, working with third sector and private enterprises, deliver against the requirements of the contract, including the service guarantee, customer journey and key delivery indicators in their respective areas (Interview 4). Despite the collaboration taking place across three different councils, each organisation is responsible for the ‘user journey’ of their own clients, so a service user referred in the Falkirk area and accessing Fair Start in that region would not be expected to travel to Stirling or Clackmannanshire for services. However, while the three services sit separately, operationally, interviewees reported benefit in working together strategically as well as sharing learning and skills. For example, Stirling has experience in running Individual Placement and Support services (IPS) which Falkirk identified as being helpful in understanding how to implement IPS services in their area. Ultimately, full accountability for the collaboration lies with Falkirk Council.

The way in which services are structured means that different services or organisations play different roles depending on the assessed needs, the availability of the service, and their ability to meet those needs in the three areas. For example, in Clackmannanshire Council, the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (a charity providing free, confidential information and advice to people with money, legal, and consumer problems) plays a much more active role than it does in Falkirk or Stirling Councils (Interview 4).
There is no formal secretariat overseeing the collaboration (Interview 2). The relationship between the councils is formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which sets out the formal requirements and guidelines for the collaboration. The MoU was drawn up by Falkirk Council. This document is not in the public domain, but we were able to procure a copy through a Freedom of Information request. The partners meet monthly, but the minutes are only available on the intranet and not publicly available. According to the MoU, the obligations for service delivery are shared on a 5:3:2 basis (50% Falkirk Council, 30% Stirling and 20% Clackmannanshire Council) in response to the allocated number of starts and strands of support needed (core, advanced or intense).

One of the key aspects of delivery in the Forth Valley area is the role of key workers, who personally oversee clients who engage with the programme, and work with them intensively on a one-to-one basis. The contract stipulates that clients are entitled to a minimum of three hours pre-employability support a week for 12 months. If they are successfully placed in work, they are entitled to a further 12-month in-work support. Delivery staff identify the needs via means of assessment with the individual on a one-to-one basis. In doing so, Forth Valley demonstrate a commitment to the key deliverables and the guiding principles that oversee the Fair Start programme.

The funding model for the collaboration is related to the sustainability of outcomes on the programme, and payments are made based on the intensity of work required with an individual. This means that rather than providing a standardised payment for every client, individual packages are drawn up to meet each client’s specific needs. This is determined through an assessment procedure that consists of a questionnaire completed with the client that examines the complexity of the intervention needed (Interview 3). Funding is then allocated depending on whether they are regarded as requiring ‘core’ ‘advanced’ or ‘intense’ intervention (McCrindle et al., 2017). This system was one that was integral to the development of the policy and used as a way to recognise that people need ongoing support, but also that the funding model needed to be fit for businesses to be able to deliver the programme (Interview 1).
The National Health Service (NHS) plays a key role in the collaboration as it provides most health-based interventions required to assist people into work. It was acknowledged early in the process that addressing complex or enduring health problems that posed a barrier to people getting into the workplace was key to the success of the initiative (Interview 5). It was assumed that services such as musculoskeletal disorder services would play the biggest role in delivering the service, but the programme has made more use of mental health services (Interview 5). Clients receive a full biopsychosocial assessment by the Vocational Rehabilitation Nurse Specialist who provides this service for FSS (Interview 7). The network of healthcare professionals involved in delivering services is wide and includes Registered General Nurses, Registered Mental Health Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and General Practitioners. FSS is discussed in meetings outside of the operational meetings held by collaborators, such as case conferences for patients with enduring mental health problems which are held with members of their multi-disciplinary teams to monitor their mental health (Interview 7).

Other key collaborators include Skills Development Scotland (the national skills training body), the Scottish Association for Mental Health (Scottish mental health charity) and Forth Valley College who provide education and skills training. Although these organisations work together to deliver the programme, and meet regularly, they do not necessarily consider themselves a ‘team’. The nature of their relationship was described by interviewees as a ‘partnership’ (Interviews 4, 5) or a ‘collaboration’ (Interview 3). Local politicians are not significantly involved in the collaboration. Managers had to ensure that politicians across the three councils were ‘on-board’ and they attended the launch of the programme, but that’s the extent of the engagement (Interview 4). A councillor explained that they want to reduce the number of people claiming unemployment benefits and support people to take on employment where they can. She said that:

“...We're very, very privileged to be chosen as the host for Fair Start. My role is to actually ensure that we spread – as is other elected members' – the word as far as possible to encourage people to come forward to engage with the programme, to identify people who have the ability to work, but need support to do so, particularly
as we have a benefits system that doesn't really support those out of work for any length of time” (Interview 6).

Statistics on the performance of the programme are produced at the national level and Falkirk council undertake monthly performance reviews to ensure quality standards\(^{13}\). The Scottish Employability Tracking System (SETS) collates data collected during the assessment procedure. Information is collected via a combination of face-to-face interviews and Scottish Government equalities monitoring forms which cover the demographics of clients who engage with the process. Demographics can vary considerably across areas. For example, 64% of clients across the whole programme have a disability or some form of health condition. But in Clackmannanshire, one of the areas covered in the Forth Valley collaboration, the equivalent figure is 76% and the vast majority of these people said it affected their ability to work\(^ {14}\). There is not yet a published evaluation of Forth Valley, but a recent evaluation of a few case studies of the Fair Start initiative concluded that there were a wide range of factors that can help to determine success including the local reputation of FSS staff, the prior roles of staff and the reputation of previous services, range of other existing services available in the area, relationship between FSS provider staff and work coaches, and the range and scale of local job opportunities (Scottish Government, 2019c).

In the first year of FSS in the Forth Valley area, 420 people across the Falkirk Council area have taken part in the Fair Start employability programme. They have found new opportunities in both volunteering and employment in several different areas such as hospitality, construction, retail, administration, marketing, IT, childcare and social care. Local employers who have participated in the scheme include MacDonald Hotels, Marshall Construction, Falkirk Council, NHS Forth Valley and Impact Solutions. Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn, Leader of Falkirk Council said: “The Fair Start programme has helped hundreds of individuals boost their

\(^{13}\) [https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-devolved-employment-services-statistical-summary-4/pages/2/]

confidence and believe that they can now progress towards finding a job, something that previously seemed unachievable”\(^{15}\).

**Accountability relations**

Accountability relations are determined through the performance indicators and the number of clients who take part in the programme (Interview 5). These figures are fed back to Scottish Government and to stakeholders and are used to assess the success of the programme. The Employment Training Service, which is part of Falkirk council, is responsible for delivering these targets. Further accountability is then sustained through the IT systems and the monthly organisational meetings. However, this is problematic because, as will be discussed later, communication between the IT systems has been slow, and for the first two years of the programme, not all the councils had the required software. As a result, Clackmannanshire Council were not able to update case notes for their clients on a daily basis, instead sending their notes to Falkirk Council for them to update the case notes (Interview 5).

Crucially, the IT systems are only accessible by council employees who are involved in the Fair Start programme. They are not available to NHS employees (Interview 6) nor third sector organisations who are delivering services as part of the programme (Interview 3), as this would be considered a breach of data governance. In real terms, this means that whilst there will be documentary evidence of clients’ progress through the programme, the systems are not able to communicate with each other easily. In this way, organisational meetings are crucial as they are a forum in which issues can be discussed, information can be exchanged, and collaboration can take place. The responsibility for communicating between all professionals and stakeholders seems to fall on the manager of the Employment and Training Unit (Interview 4). She is responsible for arranging the organisational meetings that enable communication between partners, but also for communicating with Scottish Government.

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Each programme is delivered on an individual basis, leading one interviewee to refer to it as a ‘customer journey’ (Interview 1). Clients are given a personal service, on a one-to-one basis, which aims to identify their personal needs and matches them to services. Crucially, the programme is voluntary, so the client has to agree to the proposed plan, which is then documented through their personal plans. Services are not allowed to begin until the client agrees to take part. Once started, there is a minimum service guarantee for each client which they agree to once they agree to start the programme. The accountability relation with the client is further compounded by the joint-up nature of the service, which prevents clients engaging unsuccessfully with several different organisations without further investigation as to why interventions are not helping them. Accountability is thus provided through a team-like approach. However, where relations have deteriorated irreparably between the client and FSS, there is very little in the way of arbitration or advocacy to intervene (Interview 3). Short of contacting the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, the client has little opportunity to formally sanction decisions, but instead would simply withdraw from the programme. This does not result in any punitive action being taken towards the client and would not affect their right to claim for Universal Credit.

Within the Forth Valley collaboration, accountability is achieved through formal procedures such as operational meetings for which an agenda and minutes are provided. These meetings, which are chaired by Falkirk Council, allow the organisations involved to have a formalised discussion about the progress in their area and assess their needs or potential risks for the future. The nature of the collaboration means that this is the optimal type of horizontal account giving and allows a forum for discussion on the progress of the overall project.

The collaboration was built on pre-existing relationships that were felt to be solid (Interview 2), but a few difficulties were identified. For example, some service providers felt that the communication process could be clearer, and report that operational meetings did not always fulfil all their obligations to accountability procedures, such as distributing agendas or taking adequate minutes (Interview 3). One of our interviewees reported that:
“They basically do an agenda and there are no minutes. We take our own notes. I think it’s a very resource-intensive programme, and I think they have so much reporting to do to Scottish Government, that’s it...it seems to work okay. I think we have a good working relationship, and we come together in other forums as well as a wider, kind of, network across all the local authorities. All the employability leads meet on a monthly basis. So, we know each other quite well and we work well together” (Interview 4).

There were also some recent managerial changes made which meant that some of the operational forms of account giving were temporarily disrupted, resulting in some frustration. Most of this seemed to stem from a key managers’ secondment to Scottish Government, which some participants felt had not been managed efficiently leading to information about meetings going astray (Interview 3).

As the lead accountable body for the contract, Falkirk Council, and specifically the Employment and Training Unit Manager, takes the lead in the vertical accountability mechanisms with Scottish Government (Interview 2) (Figure 5.1). Falkirk Council provides a contract management and administration service to the other local authorities which includes a single point of contact for referrals, coordination, management, etc. As lead contractor, it receives all referrals from the Scottish Government via the SETS and sends them to the other local authorities, disaggregated by geography. Stirling and Clackmannanshire councils email all documentation and updates to Falkirk within an agreed timescale. Moreover, Falkirk Council manages the supply chain on behalf of all three authorities, manages all commissioning and payments with third sector providers and oversees contracts, compliance, and assurance. It is also responsible for the collation of reports and/or data for Scottish Government for the Forth Valley area. The point of contact in Scottish Government is the Senior Performance Manager, who oversee formal communications between the two bodies, conduct strategic reviews and statistical progress reports. The performance of the programme is held to account on a yearly basis and feedback is provided back to Forth Valley. A formal summative evaluation of the project is due to report in 2021, three years after its commencement. The continuation of the programme is dependent upon its ability to deliver
on its aims and objectives. It was felt by some interviewees that there was a more qualitative aspect to service provision that was not immediately apparent to the public. As mentioned above, minutes to the operational meetings are not in the public domain.

At a service provision level, account is held through formal procedures in which those present at the meeting can discuss any concerns that they may have. Within the organisations providing the service, there are further account-giving exercises that take place that are governed by that organisations professional practice standards. For example, nurses providing mental health assessments are governed by the Nursing and Midwifery Council’s Code of Professional Conduct and are required to give detailed account through patient progress notes, multi-disciplinary team meetings, and case conferences. However, this process can be complicated by professional restrictions surrounding patient confidentiality, and if it is deemed to violate professional practice codes protecting the patient’s confidentiality, then information is not shared in its entirety.

Accounts are received primarily through the formal meeting structures. Meetings are organised and chaired by the Employment and Training Unit Manager at Falkirk Council, who is the Employability Lead in the area. When she is unavailable, the responsibility is passed to their equivalent in Stirling Council or Clackmannanshire Council. Service providers such as the NHS and Skills Development Scotland are invited to the meetings, are asked to contribute to the agenda and given the opportunity to raise any issues arising from the minutes. Minutes are then distributed to all partners for verification purposes. Some interviewees (e.g. Interview 6) expressed a wish for the process to not become too bureaucratic and suggested that the multiple partnership structure could only work if it could function in the way that it needs to. They suggested that the current structure allows for all those who are invested in the partnership to adhere to the formal requirements for account giving and receiving whilst also providing a smooth and seamless service to clients.

One interviewee, however, who was involved in service delivery suggested that there had been a disruption to this usual functioning during a recent changeover of staff at a strategic level in the collaboration, leading to either cancellations of meetings or meetings being held
informally. Network members also expressed that their workload sometimes precluded them from engaging fully with the account-receiving procedures. For example, they were not always able to acquaint themselves fully with an account prior to a meeting. There were no situations identified where a network member would not routinely receive these accounts even if they were expected, apart from the disruption to service identified by one network member above.

The results of the ongoing statistical evaluation of the service appear to be distributed at a governmental and strategic level but do not seem to be filtered to network members beyond the Employability Leads in each council (Interview 2), although the reports are available online. Interviewees who were involved in the delivery of services expressed limited awareness of the quantified measures taken to evaluate services, although there appeared to be a general awareness of the need for statistical data to be gathered. For elected politicians who are stakeholders in the project, the primary source of political account-giving is through the quantification of clients who have successfully completed the programme and gone on to gain some form of paid employment. However, some concerns were expressed that the focus on statistical accountability did not capture the qualitative nature of some of the work that is carried out by those delivering the programme (Interview 2). Some of the long-term problems faced by clients included issues such as loneliness and isolation, which were effectively dealt with by the interpersonal nature of the programme, and the requirement of clients to attend the various courses being delivered. This was identified by some respondents as a way in which the programme was beneficial to clients in ways that is not currently accurately captured by accountability procedures (Interview 3).

The accountability structures are formalised in the MoU, and it was agreed from the start of the programme that Falkirk Council would take the lead in the management of the service. The formalised structure of this agreement means that network members have a clear idea of the formal account giving mechanisms, and their roles and responsibilities within that. Collaborative work takes place on an informal basis and interviewees report a good working relationship with their colleagues within the network.
Many interviewees expressed a good awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the key partners. However, those with a more detailed service provision role had a lesser understanding of how the collaboration was structured. It was suggested that the detailed and nuanced nature of the work they provided meant that it was harder for network members to have an accurate overview of all the work undertaken. The collaborative working amongst partners was often related to the key guiding principles which were set out at the start of Fair Start Scotland. These principles were agreed upon as a shared aim and normative idea of what the service should be. For example, some participants talked extensively about some referrals being received, particularly at the beginning of the programme, that were inappropriate because achieving sustained employment was not a viable outcome. However, they expressed the belief that participants benefitted from taking part in the programme because it helped them in areas such as interpersonal communication, confidence, and time management (Interviews 4, 7).

Fair Start Scotland’s first annual report identifies the strengthening of relationships between FSS providers and partner groups such as DWP, local authorities, NHS Scotland and third-party referral organisations. It acknowledges a specific emphasis on the health needs of clients and the need for a personalised approach. The need for more flexibility in service delivery and for greater communication between partners was also identified (Scottish Government 2019a).
Figure 5.8: Service structures for Fair Start Scotland Lot Area 4: Forth Valley

Policy Design

- **UK Government**
  - Department for Work and Pensions
    - Reserved Matters: Employment
  - Scottish Government
    - Devolved matters
      - Education and Training
      - Health and Social Care
      - Local Government
  - COSLA
  - SLAED

Service Delivery

- **National Health Service (NHS)**
  - GPs
  - Registered General Nurses
  - Registered Mental Health Nurses
  - Occupational Therapists
  - Physiotherapists

- **Clackmannanshire Council**
- **Falkirk Council**
  - Lead partner
- **Stirling Council**

- Employment Training Unit
- Individual Case Workers

- **Skills Development**
- **Scotland Association for Mental Health**
- **Forth Valley**
- **CVS**
The role of ICT

ICT systems were generally regarded as helpful in the delivery of services, although several operational issues were identified. The key issue identified during the interviews was that there was not a uniform ICT system across all three councils, which was proving to be a hindrance to the sharing of information and accountability horizontally between providers. Whilst Stirling and Clackmannanshire worked from the same system, Falkirk Council’s ICT was delivered by a different provider. This led to problems in areas such as record keeping including case notes and progress reports. Interviewees noted that they had been unable to provide evidence that they had completed an intervention in certain circumstances because the information could not be shared. This impacted the overall speed of delivery of the project and generally led to frustrations. One interviewee explained the problem of different ICT systems for those working on the ground:

"Well, they’re not compatible. They’re different systems. So, we have to send information over to Falkirk Council twice weekly. We have to download all the notes that are on our management information system, and they go over as well, and it means that somebody at their end has to actually go into their different system and manually enter activities and cut and paste notes" (Interview 4).

According to the MoU, Falkirk Council operates a comprehensive management information system (MAYTAS) but, at the time of the fieldwork, Falkirk Council had just installed a new ICT system and were waiting for staff training to be completed. Once this is complete, interviewees believed that information sharing and accountability through record keeping would be greatly improved as it would allow network members across all three councils to access information from the same database. The system in question is called Hanlon and was described a mixture of a management information system and a caseload reporting system (Interview 2). The impetus for Falkirk Council installing Hanlon to replace their existing system was not only a need to integrate communication systems with partners, but also in response to the need to comply with data privacy laws.
One of the key hindrances identified of ICT was the inability of the software to accurately express the complexity of some of the work that was being undertaken. One interviewee explained that the software would allow her to record that she had contacted a client, but it had no way of recording the fact that it could have taken several attempts to make that contact. In this way, the quantified nature of the information required by the systems failed to accurately reflect some of the more qualitative experiences of both service providers and clients.
Chapter 6: ‘Cohesive citizen plans’ in the municipality of Furesø, Denmark

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Background

The ‘Cohesive citizen plans’ (sammenhængende borgerforløb, henceforth the CCP) initiative was launched in 2016 in Furesø, a municipality of around 41,000 inhabitants located 20 km north-west of Copenhagen. In brief, the CCP aims to strengthen collaboration, firstly, within the various administrations involved in services that target citizens with complex problems (long-term unemployment, physical and mental health, substance abuse problems, parenting, etc.) and, secondly, between the municipality and the citizen. Citizens with complex problems are normally the responsibility of several different administrations within and outside of the municipality. These administrations are based in different legal corpora as well as administrative and professional logics, but without much, if any, coordination. The CCP aims to strengthen collaboration mainly by three instruments: A individualized citizen action plan covering all activities, a team of cross-sector case workers, and so-called ‘network meetings’ in between the citizen and all professional parties involved in the life of the citizen. This might entail up to 12-14 different actors – many of them actors that the citizen was unaware of before the meeting (Interview 4).

The CCP has its origins in two earlier projects within the municipality – ‘The future of the family’ (Familiens fremtid) and ‘Self-supporting citizens and strong communities’ (Selvhjulpne borgere og stærke fællesskaber). These projects involve cross-sector collaboration between the health, employment and social sector, and aims to achieve a more coherent and less restrictive administration. In 2015, a consultant company conducted an evaluation on the potentials and the challenges for the municipality of Furesø to carry out the project ‘Self-supporting citizens and strong communities’ (Mussmann, 2015). The evaluation found that Furesø could reduce costs by focusing on cross-sector collaboration on the most complicated and expensive citizen cases, but also stated that cross-sectoral collaboration was inhibited by inadequate knowledge of casework as well of
services offered in other sectors. The consultancy report thus called for stronger management and more communication, as well as for better mutual understanding between the different sectors within the administration (Mussmann, 2015: 6-7).

Furesø was one among several Danish municipalities initiating projects pursuing a more ‘holistic effort’ towards citizens with complex problems in the second decade of 2000 (see mapping in report D8.2). At the same time, Furesø received an invitation from a group of municipalities to join a second round of experiments with so-called ‘networks of free municipalities’, which would run from 2016-2020. The ‘free municipalities experiments’ were initiated in 2011 by the then center-right government and encouraged municipalities to form networks to test so-called ‘de-bureaucratization’ initiatives. To support this, the government granted temporary exemptions from a limited set of existing rules and documentation requirements, in particular residing in the employment legislation.16

In May 2016, two weeks before the deadline for applications to the experiment, the Finance Committee in the city council approved the application, which was prepared by the municipal administration (The Finance Committee, 18. Maj 2016). Furesø applied alongside eight other municipalities located in the Northern Zealand region, under the heading ‘One plan for cohesive action with the citizen’. This was a network coordinated by the municipality of Ballerup (Allerød Kommune et al., 2016). As the network gained the status of a ‘free municipality network’, Furesø started applying for specific legal paragraphs to be exempted from (The Employment and Business Committee, 2016a). The exemptions concerned the role of the Jobcentre and the Law of active employment policy. The intent was to loosen legal process requirements such as frequency of meetings and activation offers (Holm-Pedersen et al., 2019). Hence, the aim was also to gain flexibility in the procedural demands and planning, as well as ensuring a coordination of concrete

16 The procedures for the ‘free municipalities’ were specified in ‘Law on free municipalities’ (Lov om frikommuner), LBK nr 587 af 27/05/2013. https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=142477. The law was renewed in 2016 as ‘Law on networks of free municipalities’ (Lov om frikommunenetværk), LOV nr 1570 af 19/12/2017. https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=191785
actions and initiatives, with a focus on adults and families to begin with (Ibid.). Since Furesø’s application was based on the work and processes already introduced in earlier projects, many actors in the collaboration articulate that the ‘free municipalities’ initiative came at a convenient time, because it allowed them to legally carry out their wishes of cross-sector collaboration (Interview 5; 4).

In 2017, an evaluation of the project called ‘The future of the family’ was carried out. The evaluation concluded that while citizens’ trust in the collaboration with the municipality had increased, the initiatives had no measurable effect on employment (Hjelmar et al., 2017). The evaluation highlighted that similar issues were identified in a ‘Self-supporting citizens and strong communities’ project, and emphasised that instruments to increase collaboration between case workers from different sectors were not properly implemented. This was, according to the evaluation, due to legal constraints, leading to an unclear division of responsibilities and to case work that was not properly coordinated between sectors, among other things (Hjelmar, 2018).

The critical evaluation led the city council to aim for more attention towards employment and financial independence of the citizens in the CCP (The Employment and Business Committee, 2017b, Interview 5). With one cohesive plan, all actors would thus work towards the same goal as the highest priority: Getting citizens into employment or education. Based on the evaluation, the success of the collaboration would be measured according to the increase in education or employment, decrease in hospitalizations, increase in activation (especially activation within companies), and decreasing costs (The Employment and Business Committee, 2017a). The collaboration should have been established between the municipal service areas of employment, social services, and health. However, due to inefficient IT-systems, it proved impossible to track and measure the costs per citizen in the health sector, and therefore none of the caseworkers from this sector joined the CCP (Interview 5). The CCP was formally initiated in 2017, and started with training (by a consultancy) of the involved employees in the procedures and instruments of CCP.

At the time of conducting our interviews, the CCP was half-way into the free municipalities experiment. In general, all interviewees, despite also registering a number of challenges, saw it as a
great success. Some, however, were concerned whether the activities would persist when the experiment expires (Interview 7). Whereas the final evaluation of the ‘One plan for cohesive action with the citizen’ experiment (expected at the end of 2020) will include several indicators, the quantitative measurable results are so far sparse. However, the municipality estimated that the municipal expenses for the 144 citizens participating in the CCP had been reduced by 5.1 million DKK (0.7 million €) (Employment and Business Committee, 2019). Results from the free municipalities network also shows a substantial reduction in complaints from citizens enrolled in the experiments (Interview 1).

To sum up, the collaboration in the CCP has a service delivery dimension and includes at least two collaborations that concern policy design, both at the municipal level and at the level of the ‘free municipalities network’. The ‘free municipalities network’ has instigated collaborations at the national level, and has been an important inspiration to the so-called ‘Main law’ (Hovedlov) of the employment sector that was approved by Parliament in 2018 but whose content is still in the making (Interview 1, see also mapping in the D8.2 report). The Main law aims to provide the legal basis for the right to one action plan spanning across several legal corpora. Both the city manager (kommunaldirektør) and the team coordinator of the CCP unit participated in various working groups giving advice to the central administration on the Main law (Interview 5; 7; 9).

The collaboration

The target group of the CCP are, firstly, unemployed adults receiving social assistance benefits (kontanthjælp) who, next to their case at the jobcentre (that sets rights and obligations related to activation and job search), have cases in other administrative centres in the social or health areas, receiving services, such as mentors, rehabilitaion, nursing, or home care (up to 120 citizens at a time). The second target group are families in which both the parents and children have cases in the

17 Mentors (bostøtte), in these cases, support citizens that are having difficulties carrying out the daily tasks such as shopping and cleaning because of a disability, substance abuse problems or mental illness.
Jobcentre as well as in other centres in the municipality (up to 24 families at a time) (Employment and Business Committee, 2016b; Holm-Petersen et al., 2019).

The professionals working with the CCP operates with two roles that are unique to the collaboration. The first is the so-called ‘coordinating caseworker’. The coordinating caseworker coordinates the documentation and orchestration of actions across sectors within the municipality (e.g. the jobcentre, social and health areas) and outside of the municipality (e.g. businesses, psychiatry) (Lange, 2019). The coordinating caseworker has authority within both the Employment law and the Service law (covering the social areas), and is responsible for the cross-sector collaboration for ensuring that the actions taken have a legal basis. In practice this means that all communication between the citizen and the municipality goes through the coordinating caseworker. The CCP has four coordinating caseworkers in the team and three ‘company consultants’ working with integrating the citizens in the local businesses.

The second role is the so-called ‘citizen consultant’. Whereas the ‘coordinating caseworker’ represents and holds the administrative responsibility (myndighedsansvar) in the municipality, the ‘citizen consultant’ works closely together in a highly trust-based relation with the citizen in estimating the need for support, and considering whether it is necessary to revise goals and actions set in the plan of the citizen (Interview 2). Usually the ‘citizen consultant’ would be the citizen’s mentor, nurse, or company consultant.

The collaboration between the citizen, the citizen consultant, the coordinating consultant, and other caseworkers and actors involved, is organized in so-called ‘network meetings’. The goal of the meeting is to form or discuss the progress of the citizen’s plan. Before these meetings, the citizen formulates an agenda and calls for a meeting together with the citizen consultant (Lange, 2019). In preparing the first ‘network meeting’, the coordination caseworker collaborates closely with the citizen consultant and the citizen through tripartite meetings (Interview 2). The coordinating caseworker then invites all relevant actors to the network meeting, which is held at the municipality.
The output of the network meeting is the citizen’s plan, in which all participants, including the citizen, agrees upon. The aim is that the citizen’s plan is based on the wishes of the citizen, making him/her an active participant within the collaboration. The intention is that network meetings are not held to ‘satisfy the system’ but because there is a belief in the citizen’s capacity ‘to work on him-/herself’ (Interview 7). Furthermore, the plan should ensure coherence and alignment of goals between the different activities and aid provided from different sectors (Lange, 2019: 1). The coherence of the plan is secured through so-called ‘plan meetings’, where all the involved actors with administrative responsibility partake and discuss the priorities, their common approach, and how to present the plan to the citizen (Interview 3). In cases that entail deeper problems and conflicts between the actors, the head of sections join the plan meetings. Plan meetings thus also function as a place where the case workers can ‘practice’ collaborating without the citizen listening in (Interview 7).

A third actor in these meetings is what is called a ‘company consultant’. A company consultant is introduced to the citizen early on. The main goal of the plan is eventually employment or further education, and there is a belief that connecting the citizen somehow to the labour market (e.g. through an internship) is key to achieve this goal (Interview 4 and 5). The company consultant is thus seen as being a linkage between the citizen and his or her future employment or education, who works both to test the work competences and challenges of the citizen and to match him/her with potential employers (Interview 8).

Other actors can attend, depending on the complexity of the citizen’s problems. This can be caseworkers dealing with children, families, and health, as well as people from the citizen’s own family. Sometimes a representative from the psychiatry sector (based at the regional level) also joins in. The companies in the collaboration who facilitate internships, part-time work etc., are not a part of these meetings – their representative is the company consultant. However, there are many formal meetings with the companies (Interview 8 and 4).
The governance of the collaboration

The core of the CCP consists of a team of four caseworkers and three company consultants. The team has a team coordinator that instigates the professional back-and-forth within the team and oversees the casework (Interview 7). The team is placed within the Jobcentre and is led by a head of section, which in turn reports to the director of the Jobcentre. The four coordinating caseworkers are employed by different centres within the municipality. Two of them are employed by the Jobcentre, one is employed at the Centre of adult disability, and the last one is employed by the Centre for Children and Adults. This means that all coordinating caseworkers within the team hold authority from the Service and Employment law, making it easier to implement different steps in the citizen’s plan. The three company consultants differ regarding their employment and ties to the team. Only one of them works for the team full-time, whereas the other two are ‘borrowed’ from the company team of the Jobcentre. The progress of the CCP is monitored by a steering group consisting of the heads of the affiliated administrative centres within the municipality and the project owner (who is also the municipality’s city manager) (Interview 5).

The team coordinator reports to the ‘free municipalities network’ in regular meetings between the municipalities in the network. The network is coordinated by a project leader in the municipality of Ballerup working fulltime for the network. The ‘free municipalities network’ has a steering group composed of three of the nine ‘reference’ directors (in the case of Furesø, this is the director of the Jobcentre). The network also collaborates on joint training programmes of employees as well as annual conferences for mutual and external knowledge sharing.

Some of the interviewees highlighted that the CCP was highly dependent on the passionate engagement and competences of key managers and caseworkers, and expressed concern about that. Hence, as some of these key actors were leaving the municipality for other career opportunities, the support from management could become less univocal and the strong professional spirit around the initiative would be lost. Some of these concerns seem to have had real effects, resulting in reduced resources for the CCP, increasing the client/caseworker ratio, a lack
of training for new employees, and little everyday awareness from the management and politicians of what is going on.

**Accountability relations**

In this section, we describe the accountability relations in both the service delivery and the policy design phases of the CCP. We discuss the **internal accountability** between the actors directly interacting and the **external accountability** relations to account holders outside of the collaboration, such as politicians, stakeholders, and the public. We also point to the **direction** of relations, whether they are vertical/hierarchical or horizontal, between the involved actors. Finally, we pay attention to the **type of accountability**. We distinguish between performance/administrative accountability (monitoring and assessing the results of collaboration), professional (professional norms), political (control and accountability by/of elected politicians), legal (redress mechanisms to ensure legal compliance of the collaboration), and stakeholder accountability (accounts to parties outside of the collaboration but more or less directly affected by its actions).

The accountability relations are illustrated in Figure 6.1 below and indicated with numbers in both the figure and the following text. We begin with the accountability relations in the service delivery of the CCP. As mentioned, this is orchestrated around the ‘citizen’s plan’, which is created or modified during the ‘network meetings’ in which all relevant actors, including the citizen and the citizen consultant participate (1 and 2). The citizen’s plan basically holds all actors that are involved to account by stating future actions and goals (3). The core of plan is thus to ensure performance accountability.

The coordinating caseworker has an important role in ensuring that municipal, and other public actors, comply with and have the same understanding of actions and goals of the plan (4). This is also shown through the caseworker’s responsibility to write up a memorandum after the plan meetings (5) (Interview 3). This is a challenging task since the citizen’s plan often compromise with
standard procedures and professional norms of the various caseworkers partaking in the citizen’s plan, something they try to manage within the network and plan meetings as well (6) (Interview 7).

At the network meeting the coordinating caseworker actively attempts to ensure accountability of all actors by letting all actors speak, stimulate dialogue and mutual curiosity and identify synergies in between the various activities, for instance between family issues related to children and employment activities of the citizen (Interview 3). The citizen consultant, who is the chairperson at the meetings, also has an important role in preparing the agenda and making sure that the goals and tasks in the plan are palpable, and thus hold actors to account (Interview 2).
Figure 6.9: Accountability relations
At the plan meetings (where the citizen and citizen consultant does not participate) the mutual understanding of responsibilities is enhanced, and potential misunderstandings and conflicts are prevented or dealt with. A successful network meeting resulting in joint action and clear responsibilities is thus highly dependent on the preparation ahead of the meeting, in the plan meetings, and the coordination between the citizen consultant and the coordinating consultant (Interview 2).

The multiple activities from various sectors also entails that the ‘citizen’s plan’ is a composite mix of different legal frameworks that sometimes conflict with each other (7). This mix has raised issues of legal accountability in case the citizen wishes to file a complaint (Interview 1). Since several frameworks are present in the same plan, it may be unclear under what framework the complaint is filed.

Four elements seem to underpin the ability of the coordinating caseworker to ensure the accountability of all actors. First, it is important that politicians and the top management has clearly stated that the long-term goal of every plan is always either employment or education. In this way, potential conflicts around different understandings of what is the goal of the activities are aligned and eased. Second, the actors that are collaborating are required to work from the premise that the plan is the plan of the citizen. Thus, they must compromise on their own sectoral logics and interests to work towards these shared goals and wishes of the citizen. Third, although not all interviewees agree on this, many point to the importance of the legal exemptions that allows the CCP to put some of the process requirements, such as frequency of meetings and obligation to partake in activation offers, on hold. Finally, the potential tension between the horizontal accountability between the actors and each caseworker’s vertical accountability to the centre can be addressed in the steering group of the CCP that all centre directors are part of (Interview 5).

With regards to the accountability of the citizen, the ‘citizen consultant’, as well as the ‘company consultant’ play a key role (8). It is their challenging task to transform the needs, wishes and dreams of the citizen into a plan that is both realistic and manageable within the
system, and still acceptable to the citizen. The company consultant is using similar competences when matching the citizen with local employers. While the aforementioned legal exemption limits the possibility of sanctioning the citizen in case of non-compliance, it is the regular meetings, close contact and trust-based relationship with the citizen that holds the citizen to account to the ‘citizen’s plan’. With regard to the citizen’s plan, the citizen consultant plays a role in the network meetings to ensure that not only the professional actors but also the citizen is an active, and thus accountable, actor in the plan (Interview 2).

The citizen and company consultants often have to strike a delicate balance between being flexible, supporting and understanding, while reminding the citizen of his or her responsibility to adhere to the plan (Interview 2; 8). A key to hold the citizen to account is a trust-based relationship, maintained by insisting on regular contact and communication with the citizen consultant and sometimes the company consultant. Often this is simply a matter of explaining the rule and procedures of the system (Interview 2). There can be tensions between ensuring trust-based relationship in which the citizen can speak freely about his or her concerns and having to report the citizen’s (lack of) progress or adherence to the plan. The citizen consultants and company consultants give accounts to the coordinating caseworker on the citizen’s progress (9), and the coordinating caseworker can meet the citizen as an authority figure in case of conflict (Interview 3).

With regards to policy design, the CCP entails several accountability relations. Internally, in the municipality the CCP reports monthly to the steering group on the progress of citizens in the CCP (10). This amounts to performance accountability. The accounts provided concern mainly the number of citizens in the CCP that have taken part in educational or work activities and cost estimates (Interview 5). The measurable goals are for instance that 60 percent of the citizens should be in internships within a year, and only 10 percent granted an early retirement pension (Interview 7). Some concerns have been raised that this way of evaluating the service

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18 The citizen is free to opt out of the CCP collaboration at any time and instead enroll in normal case-handling at the municipality.
delivery is neglecting the ‘soft values’ (Interview 4) and the question of professional development, and exemplifies a lack of linkages between the steering group and the team (Interview 7). From the point of view of the management the simple indicators exemplify on the one hand that they trust the competences of the actors involved, and that there is a need for having some numbers to show the politicians (Interview 9). On the other hand, the focus on such simple indicators, for example increasing the number of internships, has put pressure on the team to favour short-term interests of putting clients as quickly as possible to work in internships, rather than spending more time on a personalized employment plan. A similar effect can be seen in the choice of excluding health from the CCP because eventual cost reductions in health could not be measured.

The steering group is **politically accountable** to the City council and to the members of the Employment and Business Committee (11). The City council has not been actively involved in the developing the CCP or the other former projects mentioned earlier. Instead, the approval and support is based on trust in the local administration and on short status updates based on the aforementioned performance indicators (Interview 6).

Meanwhile, the politicians partake actively in the **political account-giving** to the local constituency as well as in **stakeholder accounts** to other professionals and municipalities (12). Rather than documenting numbers, these accounts take form as storytelling or narrative accounts. The chairman of the Employment and Business committee as well as the city manager share particular citizens’ success stories, in order to provide the project with legitimacy and support (Interview 6 and 9). These narrative accounts are given to the city council (in which the opposition have occasionally raised minor criticisms of the CCP) (Interview 6), other municipalities in the experiment, professional organizations, etc. The CCP has also made videos of these success stories, providing the collaboration with more transparency to politicians, the external actors, and the population in general. The local media has also covered the CCP (Interview 6). It is worth noticing that whereas the unemployed participate actively in the collaboration around the service delivery, they are not included as stakeholders in the policy design. Nor are the employers or the regional public actors (e.g.,
psychiatry, substance abuse). This challenge is also illustrated in the concern that the team, by being cross-disciplinary, might risk ‘turn in on itself’ and neglect the collaboration with other actors (Interview 4).

The CCP team also provides accounts of progress to the steering committee of the ‘free municipalities network’ (13). However, these seem to function mostly as knowledge sharing and collaboration on the development of external accounts, provided to other stakeholders, professionals, and national media (14). For instance, the nine mayors of the nine cities in the network, representing both center-left and center-right parties, have co-authored several feature articles promoting the initiative (Interview 1, Kiær et al., 2018). Meanwhile the CCP along with the other eight municipalities part of the network are evaluated by VIVE – a national research centre for social science research – for the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior who orchestrates the free municipalities experiments (15). The progress accounts are used to measure and compare the progress of the free municipalities in the experiment. VIVE made a midway analysis (Holm-Petersen et al., 2019) and will make a final in-depth evaluation of the experiment of the free municipalities (Interview 4). Furthermore, the CPP and practitioners from the municipality have been invited to share their experiences at practitioner panels concerned with the Main Law. Here, practitioners from all the municipalities are invited share their experiences (16) (Interview 7; 1). However, there are no sanctions pending in case of poor performance, apart from ‘naming and shaming’. The evaluation is mainly qualitative and focuses on the citizens’ own views on personal progression and thriving (Interview 1).

**The role of ICT**

The role of ICT systems in the casework plays an important role in the CCP. However, according to the interviewees the ICT systems serve mainly as a hindrance to the aim of designing and using a holistic and cohesive plan for the individual citizen. The focus is too often on what the existing ICT systems can handle rather than on what the citizen needs (Interview 1). Thus,
there are initiatives (at a very early stage) to develop new systems both in Furesø and at the national level as part of the Main law. The barriers reside in the national rules and procedures for documenting casework, and the legal basis of decisions. Even though the caseworkers that are involved in a collaboration in the CCP work in the same municipality, they refer to different and separate legal frameworks and articles. The ICT systems for the filing of cases and decisions are based on the logic of the specific (legal) framework and are not able to communicate with each other.

This inadequate communication creates problems at mainly two levels. Firstly, since there is no overarching ICT system in which the ‘citizen’s plan’ can be registered, the same plan is registered in all the sub-ICT-systems (Interview 1). The coordinating caseworker thus analogically keeps track of the plan in a word document and has to manually cut and paste the relevant parts into the various systems (Interview 5). In Furesø they are planning to develop a digital platform in which all activities of the citizen are listed and which, unlike the existing systems, will potentially allow the citizen to check the plan and future activities as well as add main and partial goals (Interview 3; 7). Yet, it is a major challenge to make a system, or an app, that citizens will appreciate and use (Interview 1; 7). The same challenges have proved relevant in the current planning of the Main law, which grants each citizen the right to one holistic and cohesive plan. A working group has been established with participants from the network with the aim of developing an overarching system. This also has legal implications since it implies that decisions can have their legal basis in the Main law rather than in the various sector laws (Interview 1).

Secondly, the multiple ICT-systems, as well as the legal clauses on data protection and sharing, such as GDPR, inhibits data sharing between the actors involved in CCP. The citizens participating in the CCP are supposed to sign a clause allowing the municipality to gather data across sectors, even if the existing ICT systems are not directly accessible across sectors in the municipal administration. However, some citizens have refused to grant the municipality access to their personal information, but have been accepted in the CCP anyway. Their refusal was seen as a legitimate outcome of lack of trust due to past experiences with the public
authorities (Interview 7). Further, the digital sharing of data is secondary to whether the actors involved in fact coordinate their actions and share knowledge at the network meetings (Interview 7). The issue of data sharing is a concern with regards to documenting progress of citizens and of CCP as such. For instance, one of the reasons for not making health a central part of CCP was that it was impossible to track the development costs for individual citizens in health ICT system (Interview 5).
Bibliography


Annex 1: Interviews

The Netherlands

1. Partner. 16th of September from 10:15-11:30. (Interview 1)
2. Partner. 16th of September from 11:30-13:00. (Interview 2)
3. Partner. 16th of September from 11:30-13:00. (Interview 3)
4. Partner. 16th of September from 13:30-15:30. (Interview 4)
5. Partner. 17th of September from 10:15-11:30. (Interview 5)
6. User. 17th of September from 11:30-13:00. (Interview 6)
7. User. 17th of September from 13:30-15:00. (Interview 7)
8. User. 17th of September from 15:00-16:30. (Interview 8)
9. User. 17th of September from 15:00-16:30. (Interview 9)
10. Coordinator. 18th of September from 11:30-13:00. (Interview 10)
11. Coordinator. 18th of September from 13:30-15:00. (Interview 11)
12. Coordinator. 18th of September from 15:00-16:30. (Interview 12)

Belgium

1. Team leader with the local welfare centre of Courtrai and Project coordinator with the local welfare centre of Courtrai. 11th of February 2020 (Interview 1)
2. Project manager with the Flemish PES. 21st of January 2020 (Interview 2)
3. Team leader with the Flemish PES. 21st of January 2020 (Interview 3)
4. Personal activation counsellor with the local welfare centre of Courtrai. 11th of February 2020 (Interview 4)
5. Personal activation counsellor with the local welfare centre of Courtrai. 11th of February 2020 (Interview 5)
6. HR Director of ‘Kringwinkel’, a private workplace employing TWE-clients. 12th of February 2020 (Interview 6)
7. Personal staff of the alderman of activation of Courtrai. 26th of February 2020 (by phone) (Interview 7)
**Estonia**

1. Case worker, Töötukassa Tallinn and Harjumaa department (Interview 1)
2. Case worker, Töötukassa Tallinn and Harjumaa department (Interview 2)
3. Case worker, Töötukassa Tallinn and Harjumaa department (Interview 3)
4. Service coordinator, Töötukassa Tallinn and Harjumaa department (Interview 4)
5. Service coordinator, Töötukassa Central Office (Interview 5)
6. Service consultant, Töötukassa Tallinn and Harjumaa department (Interview 6)
7. Training manager, private company providing the service (Interview 7)
8. Service provider/group facilitator (Interview 8)
9. Group facilitator (Interview 9)
10. Group facilitator (Interview 10)
11. Service provider/group facilitator (Interview 11)

**The United Kingdom**

1. Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Training Federation (Interview 1)
2. Employment and Training Unit Manager, Falkirk Council (Interview 2)
3. Chief Executive, CVS Falkirk and District (Interview 3)
4. Policy Officer (Economic Development), Clackmannanshire Council (Interview 4)
5. Public Health Specialist, NHS Forth Valley (Interview 5)
6. Councillor, Falkirk Council (Interview 6)
7. Vocational Rehabilitation Nurse Specialist, NHS Forth Valley (Interview 7)
Denmark

1. Consultant at ‘One plan for cohesive action with the citizen’ (Interview 1)
2. Citizen consultant, Municipality of Furesø (Interview 2)
3. Caseworker, Municipality of Furesø (Interview 3)
4. Section leader at Jobcenter, Municipality of Furesø (Interview 4)
5. Director of Jobcenter, Municipality of Furesø (Interview 5)
6. Member of City council and Chairman of Employment and Business Committee, Municipality of Furesø (Interview 6)
7. Team coordinator, Municipality of Furesø (Interview 7)
8. Company consultant, Municipality of Furesø (Interview 8)
9. Former city manager of Municipality of Furesø (Interview 9)
Annex 2: Research protocol

WP8 (task 8.2) will focus on the attempts to include long-term unemployed persons with health and/or social problems in the labour market. The overall rationale is to try to understand and possibly explain the effects of collaborative policymaking on accountability and legitimacy by having (more or less) identical cases in five (more or less) different national polities.

Long-term unemployed persons are usually not part of the unemployment insurance system, but are rather enrolled in the system of social assistance. They are, moreover, considered to have some degree of work capacity but with a number of additional barriers to become employable.

In its often complex and multi-causal nature long-term unemployment may be regarded as a ‘wicked’ problem that continues to challenge policy makers and practitioners. Further the rise of the policy goals of activation and inclusion have accentuated calls for collaboration between various public actors (job centre, health care, regional networks, rehabilitation services, etc.) and possibly private and civil society actors (companies, business organisations, social enterprises, housing sector, local community, etc.). An interesting example of such collaboration is the rise of so-called WISE (work integration social enterprises) since they contain a mix of regular private sector activities combined with social work, up-skilling, and community enhancing activities, often in close collaboration with local public authorities. Please note that while we prefer cases involving private actors, this is not a necessary criteria.

In general, the case study must focus collaboration and accountability in the service delivery organized, but not necessarily delivered, by a local or regional (public) authority. There are four more specific criteria for the case selection:

Firstly, and above all, the public authority should be engaged in at least one more or less elaborate collaborative governance initiative seeking to deliver services tackling the problem
of long-term unemployment. If the authority is engaged in other forms of employment services, this is fine.

Secondly, the case **must contain a policy or service design element**. The design element could involve the development of a: policy, organization, process or product of service delivery. Depending on how the collaboration initiative is organized, the design element could be on the level of national policy-making or local attempts to foster innovative services through collaboration in the service delivery. The collaboration can be more or less permanent/temporary. For example, in the Danish case we are considering a five-year project running in the municipality of Copenhagen seeking to have a strong integration/collaboration between all the relevant municipal departments and professional employees engaged in the making of individualized action plans for long-term unemployed person.

Thirdly, the case should **involve different types of accountability**. It should contain both horizontal accounts (e.g. to other public agencies) and vertical accounts (either upwards to public managers / politicians or downwards to citizens or both). Moreover, these accounts should be available to the public, e.g. via ICT or just ordinary minutes of meeting, reports etc.

Fourthly, there should be **some kind of ICT-tools or systems** involved in the collaborative service design or delivery. The aim of such ICT tools could be to support either accountability or collaboration or both. ICT-tools or systems that serve other purposes are not relevant for this study.

By ICT for **accountability**, we are referring to any ICT systems involved in the production and/or dissemination of accounts of the actions by actors engaged in collaboration with other actors in the design or delivery of local service for the long-term unemployed. Often such systems would be designed to be able to monitor and report on the processes and/or results of public organizations and their services to relevant authorities or stakeholders. Thus they could have been designed to serve more traditional new public management output measurement
purposes, but may perhaps also allow for wider account-giving to others than just political or administrative superiors.

By ICT for collaboration, we mean any ICT systems involved in supporting collaboration among actors engaged in the design or delivery of local service for the long-term unemployed. Such systems are, to our knowledge, not very common. But any systems that provide information to actors that may support their attempts to identify other relevant actors for collaboration, or support their interactions (meetings, minutes, negotiations, decision-making).

The comparative case study has two components: a document study of national and regional/local policies and accountability mechanisms, and a more intensive interview-based study of one public authority.

1. Extensive Mapping of public policies, governance structures and accountability relations targeting the long-term unemployment by way of document studies. The aim of this mapping is to understand the national political context in which the delivery of services for long-term unemployment is taking place.

We realize that long-term unemployment services often is a part of the general employment policy, or social policy, or health policy. Then you of course must describe those general policies. But please try to be as specific about any attempt in your case country to deal explicitly with the long-term unemployed. More precisely, this mapping should illuminate four things:

Firstly, the overall historical policy development since the late 1990s:
What are the major policy discourses, instruments and reforms pertaining to the governance of long-term unemployment. As mentioned, this could potentially involve employment, social and even public health policies. We expect to write around 2-3 pages summary, excluding references.
Secondly, the current governance structure of policies (targeting the long-term unemployed): Who are the key public and, if relevant, private actors in the design and the delivery of services pertaining to long-term unemployment? What are the key responsibilities / tasks of these actors? Please distinguish between actors depending on whether they engage in consultation, design, implementation, delivery, monitoring, or other key functions. We expect you to write around 2-3 pages summary, excluding references.

Thirdly, current types of accountability mechanisms entailed in policies for handling long-term unemployment.

- What are the vertical accountability relations? (between central and regional / local levels AND between administrators and politicians AND (if in place: between citizens receiving the services and frontline workers / public managers)?
- What are the horizontal relations of accountability? (between various public authorities AND between public authorities and key private stakeholders delivering services)? If private actors do not play any significant role in delivering services for the long-term unemployed, then this latter accountability relations should of course be ignored?
- What type(s) of accountability mechanisms are used? Here we distinguish between four general types. They are meant as heuristic categories and should not exclude more precise descriptions that are relevant to what you find:
  1. Legal: redress mechanisms to ensure legal compliance, procedural fairness
  2. Political: control and accountability by/of elected politicians, electoral control, selection of stakeholders, account to constituency
  3. Administrative: performance, user satisfaction, innovation, price, budget, no. of persons moving from long-term unemployment to some kind of employment, changes in the health status or wellbeing of the long-term unemployed, etc.
  4. Professional: expert scrutiny, peer review

We expect you to write around 2-3 pages summary, excluding references.
Fourthly, current ICT systems are used to support account-giving (and account-reception) and/or collaboration.

The aim is to have an idea of the ICT systems that are used with the official intention of supporting either accountability or collaborative policies in the area of long-term unemployment.

Such ICT systems could have a national reach or they could be regional/local systems. We are also aware that despite their intentions these systems may not be very good at producing accountability or collaboration. However, if their explicit aim is to facilitate one or both of these two things, then you should describe them. We expect you to write 1-2 pages summary, excluding references.

We expect the main data to be used for the document study is:

- existing academic literature (say around 5 to 10 publications)
- key policy documents including central laws and regulations at a national or regional/local level depending on how employment policies are organized (say around 10 documents)
- possibly other documents / authoritative internet sources that you find relevant

2. Intensive case study of account-giving in collaboration in and/or around service delivery in one public authority, e.g. a municipal employment centre (If the responsibility for actual service delivery is at state or regional level, then the focus should be on that level). See above for more reflections on case selection. The main method is interviews, but it also includes documents.

The aim is to map and analyze how the collaborative service delivery works, the accountability mechanisms that are part of this collaboration, and the role of ICT systems for collaboration and/or accountability. The aim is to grasp both formal procedures and requirements, but also on how collaboration and accountability is actually practiced.
The intensive case-study is to be conducted by documents and interviews. Both should all shed light on collaboration, accountability mechanisms and ICT tools, see below. The WP8 contributors are responsible for transcription of the interviews. We expect to produce three articles, one or two of which could involve co-authorship by one or two persons from each partner. Roskilde University is main responsible for coding and further analysis. If some of you intend to be part of a publication, we can discuss what role you should have in contributing to the coding and analysis.

**Documents** should be collected that contributes to the description and analysis of the collaboration, accountability mechanisms and ICT tools/systems used by the selected public authority in its attempt to deliver service for the long-term unemployed. Such documents could be issued by the local/regional unemployment authority itself and possibly also by other public authorities. Documents issued by private stakeholders that are involved in the service delivery could also be relevant. We envisage that you collect around 5-10 documents, and make app. ½ page summaries in English per publication.

**Interviews** with 7 to 8 preferably individual interviews (around 60 minutes each) with key actors involved in collaborative service delivery in the area of long-term unemployment. The interviews must include public officials (at least one manager and two frontline workers). You should also interviews one or two elected local politicians that are either part of the network or have the role of external account-receiver.

If (and only if) a private (profit or non-profit) organization is engaged in the service delivery, you should also interview one or two from this private organization. If (and only if) the unemployed are part of the collaboration either in the design or in the co-production of the services, you should interview one or two unemployed persons.

Part of the interview entails making the interviewee draw a map of the collaborative network and the patterns of account-giving and account-reception taking departure in the position of
the interviewee (within and outside the network). We suggest that you ask the interviewee to draw the map after you have asked the questions about accountability (see below) to give the person a good idea about what you are interested in. If making one map is too complex, you may consider making two. First, one illustrating who collaborates with who and about what. Second, another map illustrating the patterns of account-giving and —reception among these actors and, if relevant, to actors outside the collaborative network. Apart from the actors, this latter map should indicate what kinds of accounts are given/received, and what account-receivers provide in returns to account-givers, such as oral feedback, moral support, blame attribution, economic resources, sanctions, etc. The map is meant to be a simplifying tool giving a snappy overview, so we trust your judgement in focusing on what you and the interviewee finds is essential, and excludes what is less important.

**Questions asked to both documents and interviewees**

The following could be regarded as a rough guide that present questions that you should answer both through the documents and the interviews. There are three sets of questions pertaining to collaboration, accountability and ICT-systems. If necessary, we expect that you attune and further elaborate the questions to suit your local context.

Firstly, regarding **collaboration**

We want you to map both the formal procedures and requirements for collaboration in the local authority, and – as far as possible – the actual practices of collaboration. Much of the formal requirements and procedures can be covered by the document mapping conducted above. However, there may be some local guidelines pursued by the local authority that you should map.

Hence, the following questions:

- What are the formal requirements and guidelines for collaboration between the public authority in the design and delivery of services for the long-term unemployed?
- How long has this / these collaboration existed?
- What were the rationale for establishing the collaboration? And what are its goals?
• What are the tasks – formal and informal – of the involved actors?

• Who are part of the collaboration?
  o How/why was it decided to include these actors?
  o What role, if any, do politicians play in the collaboration?
  o Are (representatives of) the long-term unemployed part of the collaboration?
  o If so, how? If not, why not?

• How is the collaboration managed?
  o Is there a secretariat,
  o How is the agenda of the meetings decided?
  o Does the collaboration have minutes of meeting?

• How and by whom is it funded?

• According to the person you interview, how successful is the collaboration in meeting its objectives?

• Does it actually help the long-term unemployed persons?
  o If so, how? If not, why not?

Secondly, regarding **accountability**

We are interested in examining account-giving and account-reception. We also want to map horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms. Finally, we are interested in accountability pertaining to individual members of the collaboration and the whole (network) of collaboration.

Again, the formal requirements and potential for sanctions can probably be mapped by documents, but we expect most to be examined through interviews.

**Account-giving**

• What accounts are given?
  o Distinguish between accounts given by individual members (to their constituency / organization) and accounts given by or to the whole collaboration (network)

• To whom?

• Why did you make the account?
• Why do you provide this type of account?
• Are these accounts accessible to the public? (where, how?)
• Did the receiver provide any judgment or evaluation of the account?
• Did the receiver express acceptance or criticize/sanction the account?
• Against the backdrop of the reception of the account, what actions were taken?
• Are there situations where you (or the network) do not give accounts, even if you could be expected to do so? Why (not)?

Account- receiving
• What accounts are received?
• From whom?
  o Distinguish between accounts received by individual members (to their constituency / organization) and accounts given by the whole collaboration (network)
• Why do you receive this type of account?
• Was the account relevant and intelligible?
• To what degree did you acquaint yourself with the account?
• Did you evaluate/pass judgment on the account, in case of yes, what judgement did you pass and how?
• Did you express acceptance or criticize/sanction the account?
• Did the account-giver provide any response?
• Are these accounts accessible to the public? (where, how?)
• Are there situations where you (or the network) did not receive accounts, even if you would expected to receive these? Why (not)?

Relationship between collaboration and accountability mechanisms:
• If any, what is the formal and informal relationship between the collaborative work undertaken and the accountability mechanisms described above?
• If there are some relations, do the accountability work to support the collaboration or do they rather work to inhibit collaboration?
  
  o Unfold why and how you think that the accountability mechanisms support or inhibit collaboration?

Thirdly regarding, **ICT systems.**

The aim is to understand what role ICT systems play – if any - for the collaboration and for the accountability of the collaborative service delivery.

• What ICT systems are used by the public authority with some kind of relevance for the delivery of service to the long-term unemployed?

• What are the aims of the ICT system?

• If at all, how does the ICT system influence (support or inhibit) the collaboration involved in the service delivery for the long-term unemployed?

• If any, what role does the ICT play for account-giving and/or account-reception both internally between the collaborating actors and externally to other relevant stakeholders?

• Are these ICT systems regarded by key actors in the collaboration network as helpful or as an obstacle to account-giving? Why (not)?

• Are these ICT systems regarded by key actors in the collaboration network as helpful or as an obstacle to get the long-term unemployed into (some kind of) employment?