

# “From Outdoors to the Labour Market”-FOLM PROJECT

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy recommendations report, within the frame of the project “From outdoors to the Labour Market” (hereinafter referred to as “FOLM” or “Project”), seeks to draft a roadmap for describing how the methodology developed within the Project should be embedded in the public policies of the three countries or regions in which it has been piloted: Cantabria (Spain), Ireland and Warmia-Masuria, Mazovia and Podlasie (Poland).

Bearing that in mind and attending to the experience acquired during the Project so as to its results, an analysis has been done of the obstacles for its implementation, the administrative and institutional particularities of each region, the good practices, and the lessons learned during the process.

It is worth mentioning that for each region where the methodology has been implemented and the Project developed, there is not only a diversity of the entities, but also of the institutional matrix in charge of drafting public policies —more or less centralized—, so that the network of relations created during the Project differs. Due to the characteristics of each Region, the focus of the potential beneficiaries changed: in Ireland, for example, the focus relied specially on the youth coming from disadvantaged areas; Cantabria, on the other side, opens to the participants of the Workshop Schools. In order to reach these young people, dissemination channels vary in each region being more or less successful.

Cantabria, for example, focuses on social media, the website of the General Directorate for Youth, the Employment Service, the Youth Information Offices, on mailing and word to mouth; in Poland, dissemination focus more on social media and in Ireland it’s done with the collaboration of other organisations, together with some of the channels used in Spain and, due to the difficulty of reaching out the young people, an influencer participated in the dissemination what turned out to be a very successful practice.

The obstacles encountered for FOLM implementation were diverse in all countries, but with similarities as for example, the fact of the pre-existing programs, similar to FOLM, that are funded with public funds and that coexisted with it. Nevertheless, most of these programmes have turned out not to be an obstacle and could be considered as much as allies. On the other hand, the fact that for example in Cantabria the partner has been a public institution translated into a lesser agility for some processes and specially for the adequation of the trainers hiring, but it has meant as well an advantage in terms of disposition of means for the Outdoor Learning activities and also in the capacity for action.

It wouldn’t be fair to go on without outlining the good practices identified during the process, that has been a permanent learning for the participant entities. Once obstacles overcome and after the diverse measures adopted for its implementation, some good practices that contributed to the success of the Project —and can, with no doubt, contribute to its sustainability— can be extracted. We find among them the figure of the ‘First Day’, an informative session prior to the outdoor learning experience that helped to keep the participants’ interest as they showed in some extent reluctance to move far from home; public-private collaboration and Job matching and Business Meeting sessions were key to inform companies and also to create meeting points for young people and potential labour recruiters. It is very important to highlight as well the modification of the rule that regulates the Workshop Schools by the Government of Cantabria, what allowed the participants to take part in FOLM.

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All of that has led to a systematization of the experiences and to a learning both from the mistakes as from the successes. But what has been key for the success is the basic philosophy of the FOLM methodology, based not only in the acquisition of skills towards the labour market but also in the so-called “soft skills”, transversal skills focused on the wellbeing of the person itself and on its interaction with the environment.

Taking into account the results of the Project, a roadmap is drafted towards the implementation of the methodology within public policies in each country. In this sense, and in general, it is essential to maintain public-private collaboration among entities, what has proven to be of indisputable value for the Project. In the specific case of Cantabria, it is highly recommended to adapt on a permanent basis the rule that regulates the Workshop Schools, what would imply the involvement of other actors, such as the Cantabrian Employment Service, that already participated in the Project. It is proposed, to introduce —if possible— the learned experiences in the Operative Programme 2021-2027 of the ESF+ and propose it as co-funded programme of interest or, to advocacy for the introduction of this approach in the national policies.

In the case of Poland, recommendations aim at including the methodology in the educational policies, supporting national and regional programmes addressed to unemployed people, specially with the focus on the interaction with nature, so as including the outdoor learning method in the legislation.

Finally, Ireland —with a centralized political system— advocates for addressing to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science so that the ETBs (Educational Training Boards) can provide FOLM towards the labour integration or return to education. It is also recommended to address to the Department of Rural and Community Development so that the OECs (Outdoor Education Centres) can tackle the phase of outdoor learning and the SICAP programme (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) can tackle the other two phases of FOLM methodology. Both ways require the governmental support so as additional funding to make it possible.

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## INTRODUCTION

“From Outdoors to Labour Market” is a Project that applies an innovative FOLM model based on Project partners’ expertise and an outdoor learning methodology developed by the Venture Trust and the University of Edinburgh (UK), the Edinburgh Model for personal and social growth through wilderness journeys<sup>1</sup>. The Project is aimed at young people aged 18-29 who are neither working nor studying (so-called NEETs<sup>2</sup>) in order to provide them with skills that will facilitate their access to the labour market and/or the continuation of their studies.

According to the definition contained in the Eurofund’s Report “Living, working and COVID-19”, “NEETs were specifically referred to for the first time in European policy discussions in the Europe 2010 flagship initiative ‘Youth on the move’. The age category covered by the term was 15–24 and was later broadened to include those aged 15–29. The concept is now centrally embedded in the policy discourse at EU level. In 2019, 12.6% of the population aged 15–29 was under this category, which was the lowest point for a decade, but following the COVID-19 pandemic this increased to 13.7% in 2020”<sup>3</sup>.

These young people transpired as one of the most exposed groups following the 2008–2013 Great Recession. Youth unemployment soared above 40% in many EU countries. In the EEA Grants and Norway Grants funding, the NEET category includes young people aged 18-29, who meet all three conditions:

- Are not working (are unemployed or inactive);
- Are not studying (they do not participate in formal education in full-time mode);
- Are not in training (they do not participate in extracurricular activities aimed at obtaining, supplementing or improving professional or general skills and qualifications needed to perform work).

The Project aimed and involved such 990 young people. In the process of assessing whether a given person is not being trained, and thus, qualifies under this category, it should be verified whether they took part in this type of activation, financed from public funds, in the last 4 weeks before joining the Project.

This Project, funded by the EEA and Norway Grants, has been developed in three different countries simultaneously (Poland, Spain and Ireland) and is formed by partners from four countries: Poland (Center for Innovative Education –CIE– and Food Bank in Olsztyn –Food Bank), Spain (Government of Cantabria –through the General Directorate of Youth– and Femxa Formación SLU, referred to as Femxa), Ireland (Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands, Midwest –previously Limerick Institute of Technology) and Scotland (University of Edinburgh and Venture Trust).

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<sup>1</sup> Hildmann, J., Higgins, P., White, S., Strang, M., & Hardie, A. (2021).

<sup>2</sup> There are analyses that indicate that the number of young people who do not really seek to insert themselves is much lower than it seems, since the vast majority of cases of unemployment are due to the lack of opportunities, so despite wanting it they do not find work <https://www.agendaempresa.com/662/de-nini-a-sisi/>. But as the acronym is generally used, in some occasions we will refer to them as NEET.

<sup>3</sup> Eurofund (2021), *Living, working and COVID-19 (Update April 2021): Mental health and trust decline across EU as pandemic enters another year*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

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FOLM Partnership decided to place particular emphasis on the recruitment of young people among the three groups listed below. The priority was the recruitment of people from the first two groups, but because of the desire to provide equal opportunities to all young people who are not educated and not working, also the third group was able to participate in FOLM recruitment.

- a. **Young people living in small towns and villages**, including villages of rural post-social cooperatives, unemployed, socially inactive. All this is associated with no possibility of continuing education in secondary and / or high school because of the long distance from the larger city; low professional qualifications, resulting in fewer employment opportunities; lower level of education; discouragement and / or termination of job search due to few offers in the area or a restriction due to the specialization sought by employers; early school-leaving; lack of motivation on increasing or commuting professional qualifications or lack of positive social and professional behaviour patterns.
- b. **Young people becoming self-dependent**, who have been in orphanages, family homes under the care of foster families. These persons often show insecure and introverted behaviour, due to previous life experiences; late independence from the family support centres or foster families; low professional qualifications and dependence on social welfare system, etc.
- c. **Young people who have also been defined by the FOLM Partnership as potentially interested in participating in the FOLM:**
  - i. Inhabitants of larger cities without proper competences and vocational education;
  - ii. Secondary school graduates without any ideas for further academic or professional life;
  - iii. Persons who have dropped out of secondary education;
  - iv. College and university students who resigned from education during the academic year or did not cope with their studies or graduates without an idea for further academic or professional life or unable to find job after graduation;
  - v. People with low self-esteem and self-confidence, struggling with personal problems;
  - vi. People with less developed social skills;
  - vii. People without appropriate skills and/or determination needed to find a job.

The participation in FOLM for youth gives an added value that includes:

- a. The opportunity to experience the adventure, gain new experiences, meet new people, increase self-confidence and be a part of society;
- b. The discovery of individual needs, interests and expectations of the Participant, support for the possibility of finding a tailored job offer thanks to the FOLM Platform;
- c. The support for young participants before and after Outdoor Learning activities by an experienced team of Trainers, Coaches and Mentors;
- d. The ability to set the purpose for their own individual lives and make decisions as to their educational and career pathway;
- e. An innovative form of outdoor activation developed by the University of Edinburgh (trust in the institution) and the use of the FOLM Platform
- f. The opportunity to undergo a recruitment interview and find out about the FOLM at a place of residence. Young people did not have to travel to a meeting, which is often a problem for people with low or no income and those with low self-esteem;
- g. Participation in an international project;
- h. The possibility of using the experience and knowledge of the FOLM partners' employees in the activation process.

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## Aims and Objectives

The FOLM methodology is aimed at providing these young people who are neither studying nor in employment, with soft skills and, at the same time, improve and promote their ability to find a job. To this end, the Project is divided into three phases: the first phase is Outdoor Learning, which lasts one week; the second phase is coaching; and finally, the last phase –mentoring– lasts six months. The Project also promotes Business Meeting sessions (meetings with companies to inform them about the Project and make them known) and promotes contact with companies that can offer employment through Job Matching.

As opposed to generic policies aimed at the unemployed as a whole, FOLM is based on the idea that:

- a. Young people need to become aware of and appreciate their individual talents and abilities. Formal education systems often fail to provide such experience and this results in higher youth unemployment.
- b. Therefore, in order to achieve the main objective of more sustainable and good quality youth employment, the Project creates a new "from the outside to the labour market" model that allows bridging the gap between young people who are neither in education nor in employment and labour market insertion.

The objective of this report is to elaborate a series of policy recommendations based on the results of the project in the three countries (Ireland, Poland, Spain) after analysing the existing labour and youth legislation, as well as the obstacles and good practices that emerged during the implementation of the Project, with a view to improving the labour market insertion policies of young people who, at the time of the FOLM, were neither active in the labour market nor studying.

The methodology applied for the realization of this report has included the following phases:

- Documentary review: documents and data generated during the life of the Project have been reviewed, as well as regional and national legislation on labour and youth issues.
- Quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Interviews with agents involved in the Project and/or with competences in legislative matters.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Interviews list on *Annex I*

## 2. CONTEXT OF THE FOLM PROJECT AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

### 2.1 CANTABRIA

As stated in the FOLM proposal, the young people targeted by the Project *need a tailor-made programme (...) to (re)access employment.*

The problem of young people neither studying nor working is a pressing one in Spain in general<sup>5</sup> and in Cantabria in particular. Unemployment is much higher among young people compared to the total unemployment rate<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, this lack of job prospects has not translated into a longer educational trajectory, which, added to other contextual factors, leads to a greater vulnerability to future unemployment.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cantabria presents particularly negative data with an unemployment rate of 57.67% in the under 25 age group (data from the INE Labour Force Survey for the second quarter of 2020). A relevant aspect to take into account in the analysis is that the level of education does not seem to have an obvious relationship with unemployment, as only 25% of the total number of unemployed young people do not have professional or university studies.

As data from recent years show, conventional employment and training measures and programmes are not effective in improving the employability of this group. This context explains the interest of the Government of Cantabria in exploring new ways to contribute to the integration of young people into the dynamics of employment. And, specifically, the FOLM as an innovative form of intervention to facilitate the access of this sector of the population to the labour market.

Originally, all three partners involved in recruiting were meant to engage 330 each in FOLM for the Outdoor Learning phase. Nevertheless, due to difficulties derived from different reasons (contextual factors, COVID-19, particularities of the country), as it will be described later on in this report, there have been transfers of participants from other partners to CIE and Femxa and the Government of Cantabria. In the particular case of Spain, the engagement of participants has resulted in the recruitment of 474 people, with transfers from Food Bank and TUS. FOLM has been implemented with partners in Scotland, Spain, Ireland and Poland. In the case of Spain, the initiative to participate in the FOLM came from the Government of Cantabria. It started in the previous legislature (2015-2019) on the initiative of the Directorate General for Youth, as part of the Regional Ministry of Universities, Equality, Culture and Sport<sup>7</sup> with the support of the European

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<sup>5</sup> Still in 2021 Spain had a much higher percentage of these young people than the European average [https://www.abc.es/sociedad/abci-ninis-drama-enquista-espana-desde-hace-decadas-202109170034\\_noticia.html](https://www.abc.es/sociedad/abci-ninis-drama-enquista-espana-desde-hace-decadas-202109170034_noticia.html)

<sup>6</sup> Analyses indicate that the number of young people who are not really looking for employment is much lower than it seems, since the vast majority of cases of unemployment are due to a lack of opportunities <https://www.agendaempresa.com/662/de-nini-a-sisi/>. <https://www.vice.com/es/article/yp7wyk/ninis-sisis-juventud-espanola-trabajo-estudio> describes the situation of several of these young people who, despite their desire, cannot find a job, and [https://twitter.com/\\_cje\\_/status/921331990691045376](https://twitter.com/_cje_/status/921331990691045376) proclaims the desire of young people to work and study at the same time.

<sup>7</sup> Consejería de Universidades, Igualdad, Cultura y Deportes [Regional Ministry of Universities, Equality, Culture and Sports] is the name after the change of government following the 2019 general elections, as it was previously the Dirección General de Juventud y Cooperación al Desarrollo [General Directorate of Youth and Cooperation]

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Projects Office of the Government of Cantabria (hereinafter referred to as OPE). Currently, the Directorate General for Youth is part of the consortium benefiting from the grant and shares it in Spain with Femxa Formación SLU (hereinafter referred to as Femxa). For the development of the FOLM in Cantabria, the Directorate General for Youth has the collaboration of the Directorate General for European Funds and the European Projects Office so as the Cantabrian Employment Service (hereinafter referred to as EMCAN).

It should be noted that in Spain, the implementation of active employment policies<sup>8</sup> is decentralized<sup>9</sup>. The main objective of active labour market policies (ALMP) is to increase employment opportunities or jobseekers and to improve the match between jobs (vacancies) and workers (i.e., the unemployed). On the other hand, the Annual Employment Policy Plan (PAPE) describes the actions and measures to be carried out in the Autonomous Communities –either with state funding or with their own economic resources– as well as the actions and measures that the State Public Employment Service itself is going to carry out<sup>10</sup>. It is worth mentioning that the State Public Employment Service (SEPE) is the body attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy which, together with the Public Employment Services of the Autonomous Communities, forms the National Employment System. Its objective is to:

*Contribute to the development of the employment policy, manage the unemployment protection system and provide information on the labour market in order to achieve, with the collaboration of the Autonomous Public Employment Services and other agents in the labour field, the insertion and permanence in the labour market of citizens and the improvement of the human capital of companies.*<sup>11</sup>

As already mentioned, for the development of the Project in Cantabria, the Directorate General for Youth has the collaboration of the Directorate General for European Funds, the European Projects Office and the Cantabrian Employment Service. The following section explains how this collaboration has been forged and how it has influenced the results obtained by the FOLM so far in Cantabria.

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for Development] of the Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deporte [Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport].

<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/european-semester\\_thematic-factsheet\\_active-labour-market-policies\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_active-labour-market-policies_en_0.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Article 149.1.7 and 17 of the Constitution. Royal Legislative Decree 3/2015, of 23 October, that approves the revised text of the Employment Act.

<sup>10</sup> <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/politicas-de-empleo-normativa/politicas-activas-empleo>

<sup>11</sup> <https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/que-es-el-sepe/mision-vision-valores.html>

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Figure 1. Bottom-up organisation chart of DG Funds, EMCAN and DG Youth

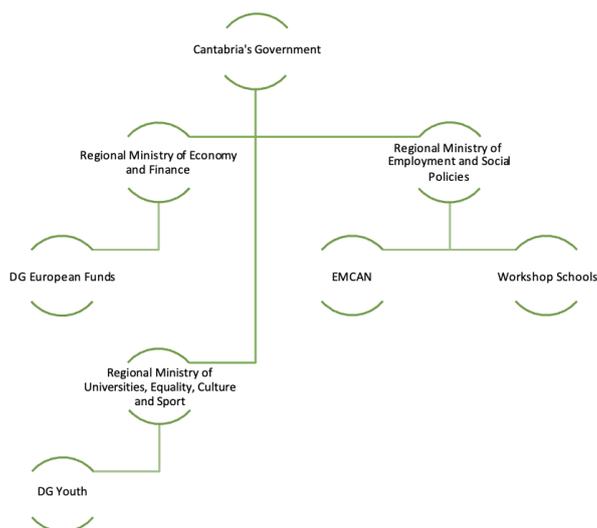


Figure 1 shows the bottom-up structure of the General Directorates involved in the Project. FOLM partner, the Directorate General for Youth, is part of the Regional Ministry for Universities, Equality, Culture and Sport. The competences of the Directorate General for Youth are detailed below (according to Decree 70/2020 of 22 October):

Figure 2. Competences of the Directorate General for Youth

General Directorate Youth	Coordination of the Autonomous Community Administration's comprehensive youth policies.
	Promotion of youth activities
	Provision of youth promotion services and the management of programmes for the integral development of young people and the promotion of youth associations.
	Management of grants and subsidies to promote actions aimed at young people..
	Authorisation of youth camps and campsites.
	Recognition of Escuelas de Tiempo Libre [Leisure Time Schools] for youth educators.
	Promotion of the development of the activities of the Cantabria Youth Council.
	Coordination and implementation of national and European youth policies with the Youth Institute (INJUVE).
	Planning, elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of youth projects and activities.

The Directorate General for Youth (whose website is Jovenmanía<sup>12</sup>), has a network of Youth Information Offices, which are entities dependent on the town councils that collaborate with the aims of the Directorate General. This network is made up of 38 offices and 15 information points distributed throughout the region. They collect and disseminate all the information related to issues of interest to young people generated inside and outside Cantabria and provide as well

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.jovenmania.com/>

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different services: issuing and collection of the European Youth cards (EYCA), the student and teacher cards (ISIC and TEACHER) and the hostel cards of the Spanish Network of Youth Hostels (REAJ)<sup>13</sup>, registration in youth leisure activities and programmes, etc.

The General Directorate of European Funds, which depends on the Regional Ministry of Economy and Finance, follows the Project with the potential interest of its implementation in the new programming period of the Structural Funds. Its functions are detailed below (set out in Decree 31/2021 of 18 March):

*Figure 3. Competences of the General Directorate for European Funds*

Directorate General for European Funds	Study, preparation, and monitoring, from an economic point of view, of the European Structural Funds.
	Channeling the management of matters related to Europe, as well as informing citizens, without prejudice to the competences attributed to the relevant regional ministries.
	Conducting studies and reports related to Community policies and institutions, adequacy, and implementation criteria.
	Advice, dissemination, and general information on EU rules.

The European Projects Office (OPE), a company of the Autonomous Public Sector of the Autonomous Community of Cantabria attached to the Regional Ministry of Economy and Finance, advises on international collaboration procedures.

EMCAN, under the directives of the Government and dependent on the Regional Ministry of Employment and Social Policies, is the autonomous administrative body responsible for active employment policies in the Autonomous Community that manages the labour intermediation and training programmes for the employment of employed and unemployed people. Its main purpose is

*To organize in a comprehensive and coordinated manner the management of a policy aimed at full, stable and quality employment, guaranteeing effective action in the search for employment for workers and appropriate coverage of the needs of employers, all in a public and free manner, and ensuring equal opportunities in access to employment, the free movement of workers, the unity of the labour market, equal treatment and coordination with the national employment system.*

It specifically highlights

*The proposal and programming of training actions derived from the needs detected and the prospecting of employment demand, with special emphasis on groups at risk of social exclusion.<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.iovenmania.com/carnets/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.empleacantabria.es/servicio-cantabro-de-empleo>

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It is also responsible for the design, planning, management and evaluation of the employment policies of this Autonomous Community, and in particular the following:

Figure 4. Competences of EMCAN

Planification, managing and following of employment policies	Elaboration and definition of objectives; management of programmes that support and promote employment.
	Organisation and articulation in the scope of the Autonomous Community of the Agreements signed with the entities that collaborate with the services towards employment.
	Control and management of the national programme Escuelas Taller [Workshop Schools], professional training centres and employment workshops.
	Management of agreements, collaboration agreements and their respective subsidies, with a special focus on the economic and social agents so as the local entities.
Occupational and continuing vocational training	Participation in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the training and vocational integration plan.
	The implementation of plans and programmes derived from the Government's policy on occupational and continuing vocational training, in order to implement employment-oriented vocational training.
	The promotion of continuous training for workers.
	The management of actions carried out in the field of occupational training and in relation to the national plan for training and professional insertion.
	The proposal and programming of training actions derived from the needs detected and the prospecting of employment demands, with special emphasis on groups at risk of social exclusion.
	The preparation of studies and the establishment of priorities on training needs aimed at improving the skills of workers in this Autonomous Community.
	The adaptation of the training offer in the field of occupational training through the homologation of training specialities and collaborating centres.
	Promote the culture of lifelong learning in enterprises.
	The management of concerts, collaboration agreements and the corresponding subsidies, with special emphasis on economic and social agents and local entities.
	Establish collaboration protocols with the Regional Commission for Vocational Training to link job offers and labour intermediation with vocational training.

EMCAN allows the use of its employment and training programmes (specifically, workshop schools) and means to implement FOLM, as it is interested in using the results of this pilot Project to improve the effectiveness of its public policies.

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The relations between the Directorate General for Youth and the other departments of the Government of Cantabria are based on the common interest of the different public bodies of the same government to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their policies. This collaboration does not generally require a formal agreement because each department works within its competences and using its own budget.

The same applies for other public bodies, which collaborate in different phases of the FOLM on the basis of a common interest and by carrying out activities that form part of their functions. Among them, the Workshop Schools<sup>15</sup>, different City Councils and Local Development Agencies (in particular in the places where the Workshop Schools used to cooperate).

*The Workshop Schools are a public employment-training programme aimed at the insertion of unemployed young people under the age of twenty-five. They are temporary projects in which learning and qualification alternate with productive work in activities related to the recovery or promotion of artistic, historical, cultural or natural heritage; the rehabilitation of urban settings or the environment; the recovery or creation of public infrastructures, as well as any other activity of public or social utility that allows the insertion through the professionalization and acquisition of experience of the participants.*

These Schools, therefore, develop mixed training and employment programmes for the unemployed, in collaboration with the Town Councils and are subsidized by the EMCAN.

The Project is also supported by the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations (CEOE) and the Chamber of Commerce of Cantabria, that were subcontracted as providers under FOLM's budget to facilitate contacts with companies for the job matching for the young FOLM participants.

## 2.2 WARMIA-MASURIA, MAZOVIA, PODLASIE

In case of Poland, two partners — Food Bank in Olsztyn and CIE— engaged in recruitment of FOLM participants and invited them to the three phases of the Project: outdoor learning, coaching and mentoring. CIE has undertaken this task in summer of 2020 due to COVID-19 impact on FOLM realization, particularly in Ireland, that made it difficult to reach the established number of participants. Before that, CIE was playing only the role of Project's management coordinator, so as communication and dissemination coordinator.

At the end of 2018, the unemployed persons of 30 years or below in the Warmia- Masuria Voivodeship constituted 26.8% of the total unemployed group and amounted to 14,224 persons. In 2020, the quarterly information on young people compiled by Voivodeship Labour Office in Olsztyn showed that the total number of the young people not working or studying at the end of the first quarter of 2020 was approximately 15.5 thousand people. This number has risen slightly during COVID-19, reaching the total of 16,000 persons.

The original number of Participants that Food Bank wanted to recruit during FOLM was about 400 people, assuming that of this, 330 people would take part in projected outdoor training. Food Bank assumed reaching such a group of people due to the possibility of using the potential of its employees (vocational advisors, coaches, recruiters, street workers) and organizations and institutions cooperating with it, which activation is one of the key activities.

<sup>15</sup> Information about Workshop Schools to be found under <https://www.empleacantabria.es/escuelas-taller>

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CIE and Food Bank cooperate with over 300 organizations and institutions in the Warmia-Masuria region and benefited from their willingness to support the FOLM recruitment. These organizations included, not limited to:

1. Local government institutions: Local Authority in Olsztyn, presidents, mayors of Warmia-Masuria towns and counties;
2. Social assistance organizations: MOP (Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej or Municipal Centres for Social Assistance), GOPS (Gminny Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej or Commune Centres for Social Assistance), PCPR (Powiatowe Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie or County Centre for Family Assistance);
3. Institutions dealing with research and analysis of the labour market, providing information to the unemployed and job-brokers: Voivodeship Labour Office, Local Authority Labour Offices;
4. The employment platform of which the Food Bank is a member;
5. Universities and secondary schools: University of Warmia and Masuria (e.g. Faculty of Education and Students), other universities, vocational schools, high schools and technical schools;
6. Non-governmental organizations working in the field of activation and activities for young people: ZHP (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego or Polish Scouts Association), P (Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy – Voluntary Labour Corps);
7. Organizations from the business environment: Lions and Rotary Clubs, Warmia and Masuria Chamber of Craft and Entrepreneurship, Business Center Club, Olsztyn Business Lodge, local Lewiatan – Employers’ Association, national Lewiatan – Employers’ Association; companies: Michelin, Schenker, PKS, Indykpol, Wipasz;
8. Organizations being members of the New Education Forum network.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, partners saw more difficulties in reaching young people, which resulted in changes of recruitment outputs and recruitment strategies. This is described in detail in Chapter 3 below.

## 2.3 IRELAND

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS) started off the FOLM as Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT). This university now serves the Midlands and the Mid-West region of Ireland. As part of the Project, its aim was to help motivate and mobilize young people to engage with employment, education and training through the FOLM model.

TUS is a multi-campus university with over 14,500 students, spread across six campuses throughout Ireland’s Midwest and Midlands region. It was formally established on 1 October 2021 following the merger of LIT and Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT). With campuses in Athlone, Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, it benefits from an already strong and vibrant history of education and learning in the wider region and look forward to playing their part in sustaining and enhancing this identity.

The area covered during the roll-out of the FOLM was across the Midwest region of Ireland. The groups delivered over the course of the Project were located in the counties of Tipperary, Limerick, Waterford and Galway. In the recruitment of the young people, it was essential to build strong links with different organizations from governmental to non-governmental organizations such as charities, youth services and disability services. By TUS casting its net wide in terms of different organizations it was possible to tap into a wider pool of unemployed young people. The connections created with the different organizations involved through the FOLM were based on

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the principle of engaging and collaborating with organizations who share mission, i.e., to help motivate young people to re-enter the labour market and help them with their personal development.

In the different regions and local towns, there were different organizations contacted and engaged with the FOLM initiative in Ireland. Their role in FOLM varied from general support to promote the Project to recruiting participants. One of the specific challenges that became evident, during the engagement and stakeholder mapping process completed by TUS, was that there is a complex matrix of supports, services and actors engaged with youth in Ireland. There was singular pathway to engage with the target group and in some case competing requirements from different organizations and support. Below is a list of some of the organizations who worked with the Irish FOLM partners during the course of the Project.

**Limerick:** Limerick Youth Services, Employability Limerick, Garryowen Community Development Project, Mental Health Teams, Pauls Partnership, NorthStar Project, Moyross Youth Academy, TULSA Aftercare, Foróige, PALLS Limerick, Probation Officer, Jigsaw, Citizens Information, Occupational Therapist, Turas Nus, CYPSC, West Limerick Resources, Limerick Sports Partnership, Intreo, Garda Youth Diversion, etc.

**Tipperary:** Tipperary Youth Services, Ability programme, Ancaire, Rehab Care, SICAP Officer South Tipp Development, TUS programme, Youth Employment Initiative, NOVAS, Moore Haven, Cuan Saor, 2Upskill, Macra na Feirme, Clonmel Training Centre, GAA clubs, Social Welfare Branches, Foróige, Tipperary Sports Partnership, Employability, Down Syndrome Tipperary, Shine, Spafield Family Resource Centre, Tipperary Comhairlena nÓg, etc.

**Waterford:** Waterford & South Tipperary Community Youth Service, Treo Portlairge, LeChéile, Intreo, Barnardos, AXIS Community Project, BALL Youth Justice Project, Frontline Drugs Project, Making Connections Waterford, PACT Youth Justice Project, SAOR Project, Waterford Comhairle na nÓg, TYRE Youth Justice Project, TUS programme, HSE Regional Social Inclusion Services, Aware, Pieta House, Waterford Sports Partnership etc.

**Galway:** Youth Work Ireland Galway, Foróige, Tusla, Social Welfare office, Intreo, ETB's, Community Training Collage, Comhairle na nÓg, Clann Resource Centre, Oughterard Youth Café, Garda Diversion Project, Galway Volunteer Centre, What Works, CYPSC, Probation Service, Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force, Galway Sports Partnership, SICAP Galway, Galway Traveller Movement, Ability West, etc.

The support, connections and relationships built through the FOLM with these different organizations was the key in identifying suitable participants for the Project and really helped to promote the Project within and outside their organizations. Overall, there was positive engagement from stakeholders in what the FOLM was trying to achieve in Ireland. This helped greatly when approaching the organizations about the Project. These connections were built through phone calls, Zoom presentations, face to face meetings and presentations about the FOLM. Later were made follow-up calls and emails containing promotional material and the registration form if there was a young person interested in joining the programme.

It's essential to keep that relationship with the support worker in the organization engaged and keep them informed about the FOLM model. To this purpose, stakeholders were invited to TUS annual regional New Education Forum (NEF) events and send update emails about the Project to the organizations. This Project would not have been possible in Ireland without all the help from all the different types of organizations, charities and volunteers in identifying and helping a young

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person to join the FOLM programme.

The FOLM faced a number of specific contextual challenges during its operation. COVID restrictions in particular, and the associated health advice, required TUS to change its delivery model in 2020/21 as it was not possible to facilitate trips to the outdoors. An innovative alternative was created, in consultation with Venture Trust, University of Edinburgh and Project partners which has enabled participants to meet the core objectives via activities being facilitated in the outdoors on the TUS campus. Within Ireland, TUS set a specific objective to target those who were at significant distance from the labour market. In particular, it did not target graduates from university or those with third level education, but instead focused on people from disadvantaged areas within the Midwest region. This was in line with TUS's mission to have contributed to the socio-economic impact of the region. These target groups were particularly challenging and, as mentioned, already serviced by a wide range of other support services and agencies.

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### 3. ANALYSIS OF ADMINISTRATIVE OBSTACLES TO FOLM IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASURES TO OVERCOME THEM

#### 3.1. CANTABRIA

From the beginning, the Directorate General for Youth informed EMCAN of the objectives and methodology of the FOLM and requested its support for the recruitment and selection of young people to participate.

Thus, at the beginning of FOLM, prior to the start of the pilot phase, an information and coordination meeting was held between EMCAN staff, including its Director General, the Directorate General for European Funds and the Directorate General for Youth. The aim of the meeting was to inform the parties whose participation in the Project would be necessary of the contents and purpose of the FOLM. During this meeting, doubts were raised whether the recruitment of young people would be successful given the previous existence of other similar initiatives, such as the **Sistema de Garantía Juvenil de Cantabria**<sup>16</sup> [Youth Guarantee System of Cantabria] and the **Lanzadera Cántabra Emprende** [Cantabrian Launcher for Entrepreneurship].

*The **Youth Guarantee System** in Cantabria is a European Union initiative that targets unemployed young people under the age of thirty who are not studying, with the aim of providing them with an opportunity for employment or further training. It is aimed at a target audience very similar to FOLM (at that time it was aimed at young people under 24). Even though, it was not being successful and was not succeeding in recruiting young people despite being totally free. It is worth mentioning that this programme was (and is) active simultaneously with FOLM.*

*The **Lanzaderas de Empleo y Emprendimiento solidario** [employment and solidarity entrepreneurship launchers] are defined as projects that increase, through the intervention of a person who works as a coach, called 'LEES coordinator', the probabilities of the participants to find employment, improving the strategies of self-postulation in order to be hired by third parties or to favour the creation of small companies for boosting self-employment. The duration of these projects is eight months and during six of them, the work is done with unemployed people, in which face-to-face sessions, both individual and group, as well as activities are developed. In the 2021<sup>17</sup> edition, there are sixteen launchers that are and will be launched, once the Cantabrian Employment Service (EMCAN) awards the corresponding subsidies. In this initiative, despite contacting people previously registered as jobseekers on a voluntary basis, these young people were difficult to convince benefitting from this possibility. It should be noted that people with lower qualifications were the most difficult to convince.*

Based on these previous experiences, FOLM's pilot action tried to recruit young people through the usual channels of the Employment Service. But after trying to recruit the people who go to the Employment Offices or follow their social networks, there were not enough candidates. So, a mass

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.jovenmania.com/index.php/comunes/descargarDoc/id/27529-1>

<sup>17</sup> The Boletín Oficial de Cantabria [Official Gazette of Cantabria] has published on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August the Extract of the Order EPS/33/2021, of the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, which approves the call for the year 2021 grants for the implementation of sixteen employment and solidarity entrepreneurship launchers in the Autonomous Community of Cantabria.

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mailing was made to people registered as unemployed with the desired profile. But even so, there were still problems in reaching the necessary number of candidates.

General Directorate of Youth tried to recruit participants through the Youth Information Offices of the local entities and City Councils, with little success too.

Interviews conducted for this report revealed two main reasons that diffculted the mobilisation of the youth by using the usual dissemination channels of the EMCAN or Youth Office:

- The interaction with the unemployed was done by letter or advertisement in the usual channels of these Official Services. But the **profile of the participants is that of people who do not follow these channels** and are not actively looking for new opportunities. In many cases, it is even clear that the recipients of the activity are not active users of social networks.
- On the other hand, the ways that **the Public Administration** operates in relation to users makes it difficult to have an availability of counsellors with the dedication and attention required by this section of the population.

For these reasons, the Government of Cantabria invited Femxa, also a Spanish partner of the FOLM, to collaborate in the recruitment of participants for the Project. For this purpose, a modification of the economic allocation to the Government of Cantabria was made in favour of Femxa, who hired two facilitators, in charge of recruiting and dynamizing FOLM's recruitment process. This was done through a personalized follow-up of the candidates between the recruitment and the start of the activity. Femxa stayed in contact with different Local Development Agencies and Local Social Services, also using Social Networks and joining efforts with EMCAN and Jovenmanía.

Persons engaged by Femxa as recruiters have qualities for entertainment work, an adequate qualification and availability of working days with sufficient working hours. EMCAN's recruitment system, based on replacement lists from the Government's Directorate General of Civil Service, would have been very difficult to find candidates with these conditions.

To support the young people in the outdoor training phase, there was the collaboration of instructors with different backgrounds (psychology, physical education, etc.), mobilizing a total of 29 trainers throughout the FOLM. In each session there were 3 trainers per group, one of whom was a psychologist or pedagogue, and the other two were a more technical and logistical profile. There was also a general coordinator for the outdoor learning phase.

In addition to the difficulties mentioned in recruiting interested young people, another important aspect of the experience is that the FOLM pilot action showed how difficult it is to keep the attention of recruited participants from the moment they are recruited until the outdoor process begins. For example, only 5 out of 12 people recruited to participate in the pilot experience were available when the day came to start the outdoor phase. This showed, once again, that the motivation of young people with the profiles sought by FOLM was very low, as had been experienced with the Launcher initiative mentioned at the beginning of this section.

During the FOLM pilot action in 2019, when the Government of Cantabria tried to organize the outdoor expedition for the first time, it was very difficult to gather the necessary number to start the processes. Given the experience of the first pilot and in order to improve the attractiveness of FOLM, the idea to establish coordination between the different government agencies involved in the Project emerged. In addition, and given the experience of other programmes, the training offer

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seemed to have no appeal for young people, so it was decided to change the message conveyed to the target audience and focus on a week-long process of life introspection and personal development in the open air to make the activity attractive.

However, as highlighted by all the entities interviewed, the **key point** was EMCAN's agreement for the participation of the Workshop Schools in the process of recruiting suitable young people for FOLM. It should be noted that the Workshop Schools open their courses to people under 30 years of age, not 25. This age range could have been an obstacle to the implementation of the Project; however, it was decided to extend the group from 25 to 30 years of age given that youth unemployment in Spain, unlike other European countries, is concentrated in a wider age range. In this country we find qualified young people who can be described as *not in employment nor in education* insofar as their disenchantment with the society—which does not facilitate their access to employment—has led them to adopt a passive attitude, both in the search for employment and in training, although the characteristics of the 25 to 30 age group are in part different from those of the under the age of 25.

The activities of the schools are in principle oriented towards low-skilled profiles. Participants first have 6 months of training and then are offered a paid job (usually for 6 months in the local authorities of the partner municipalities).

The **use of the Workshop Schools in the framework of the FOLM was key** to recruit enough young people, because their activities are aimed at disadvantaged young people who need training, and also a stimulus to enter the labour market.

### 3.2 POLAND

As the other regions, CIE and Food Bank encountered obstacles for the implementation of FOLM. The most important regarded:

1. Demotivation of unemployed young people (as mentioned in the previous chapter);
2. Insufficient engagement of governmental offices, which statutory aim is counteracting unemployment and helping youth find jobs;
3. Other publicly funded projects treated as competitor to FOLM.

Those activation programs diagnosed by Food Bank as the most important “competitors” to FOLM model targeted the same age group, unemployed and were meant to help mostly labour insertion (however, unlike FOLM, are not delivering the complex programme to youth and are only focusing on employment). Some of these programs are:

1. *Training voucher under the Labour Fund*. Addressed to unemployed persons up to 30 years of age interested in raising or acquiring new professional qualifications that will make it possible to get employment after the training. Young could be paid with a voucher up to 100% of the average remuneration, including travel and accommodation costs for training.
2. *Apprenticeship voucher under the Labour Fund*. Addressed to unemployed persons up to 30 years of age, that has an apprenticeship with an employer for a period of 6 months. The employer is obliged to employ the apprentice for at least the next 6 months, and the local authority pays an additional reward to the unemployed for the duration of apprenticeship.

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3. *Employment Bonus under the Labour Fund.* Addressed to unemployed persons for the 18 previous month and that has up to 30 years. The employer has a partial reimbursement of the costs and social security by the employment office for a period of 12 months.
4. *A settlement voucher under the Labour Fund.* Addressed to unemployed persons up to 30 years of age that undertake work or business outside their place of residence. It could be up to 200% of the average salary.
5. *Co-financing of up to PLN 40,000 for starting a business to people who are under 30, and not in education or employment.*

But not only programs were potential competitors to FOLM. Also, different organizations aiming at inserting unemployed people in the labour market could be considered, if not as a competitor, as entities that could make it difficult for the youth to access FOLM. These organizations felt high saturation of the space devoted to youth re-engagement. To name some of them:

OHP (Voluntary Labour Corps), an organization operating for many years on the market, implementing projects based on foreign training and internships. 160 young beneficiaries were foreseen in the years 2018-2020.

1. Labour Offices, that carry out projects to activate young people with other methods. They had the goal to recruit 3,500 young unemployed in the years 2019–2020.
2. MOPS and GOPS (Local and Municipal Social Assistance Centres) that recruit participants for projects they implement themselves under European Social Fund programmes. In such programmes they have additional resources for social workers. Numbers of potential participants vary every year.

In terms of preferences, it has come out that the young people not in work, not in education or training, whom Food Bank and CIE wanted to reach and engage in FOLM do not like activities as participating in Outdoor Learning. Furthermore, support and meetings with trainers and former participants before and after OL is a challenge for this group of beneficiaries and, as they spend too much time in the virtual world, it is hard for this group to stay disconnected for few hours, not to mention for 7 days of outdoor learning. Finally, they don't like activities that are far from their place of residence, and this feeling represents a challenge to overcome the own limitations.

Polish partners have also determined as structural impediments for effective youth recruitment that there are not internships or practices in FOLM and also that FOLM is not paying young people for participating, as it only reimburses the travel costs.

Due to the fact that Food Bank and CIE are non-governmental organizations, they sought a partnership with local and regional authorities. This could strengthen the recruitment process and allow wider access to innovative Outdoor Learning method by those who need it the most, the unemployed youth. Hence, in May 2019 Food Bank and CIE signed a cooperation agreement with Warmia-Masuria Voivodeship Labour Office and with the Federation of County Labour Offices. Employees of these authorities were informed about that FOLM was accessible to Warmia-Masuria young unemployed. FOLM promotion materials were also distributed among these offices.

Each of the organizations with which Food Bank and/or CIE cooperated was provided with information on FOLM and, in addition, the recruitment persons of Food Bank and CIE contacted each of them directly. However, as a result of 2019-2020 experiences, the main emphasis in the work of people recruiting participants was on keeping direct contact with the potential FOLM participants.

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After the COVID-19 pandemic, partners saw even more difficulties in reaching young potential FOLM participants. This was due to several facts, including:

- Reluctance of governmental staff at the Labour Offices;
- Changes related to the way that potential FOLM participants spend their free time.

Therefore, the Partnership has changed its recruitment outputs and recruitment strategies. Food Bank has transferred 50 of its FOLM participants to Spanish Partners: Cantabria Government and Femxa. And CIE has undertaken 96 participants from Limerick Institute of Technology. In terms of strategy, partners placed more emphasis on street working approach as well as reaching young people not working nor studying through various types of social media.

### 3.3 IRELAND

The recruitment strategies used at the beginning of FOLM were similar to that of the Cantabria Government whereby all the usual channels of the employment service were targeted such as the local social welfare offices. As it transpired during the pilot, this turned out to be an ineffective way of recruiting young people, as the Project was competing with all of other providers of employment programmes and support services which were mentioned in *Section 2.3*. In particular, the range of financial (social welfare) supports provided to young people meant that there was also limited incentive to engage in a programme which could potentially result in them losing some or all of their financial supports. In addressing this issue, the scope was widened in trying to target young people who were already engaged in different services such as the youth service, disability programmes, sport programmes or those involved in the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) programmes<sup>18</sup>. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme 2018 – 2023 provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organizations and public sector agencies. The approach changed from trying to compete with other employment services to approach it as one service helping out another, with a similar goal to help motivate young people back into the workplace.

This approach seemed to be the most effective way in targeting young people to join the programme. The various services providers already have a relationship built up with the young person and, as long as their programme leader trusted the FOLM programme, this trust was handed on to the participant. In Ireland, there was a serious issue with regards to recruitment as Ireland in 2019 had a high employment rate for young people. Those who were out of employment had a lot more needs and support required to get them to a place where they were ready to enter the workplace. These needs were sometimes beyond the scope of the practice and training of FOLM staff, so they would be referred onto the appropriate services to access the correct supports.

The main approaches of the adapted recruitment strategies to contact these hard-to-reach young people we used are captured below, even if this version was adapted after COVID.

- Social media, through paid advertising and organic content;
- Newspaper, radio and other traditional media;
- Online webinar and Q&A (question and answers) events;

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/social-inclusion-and-community-activation-programme-sicap-2018-2022/>

- Directly connecting with Education Training Boards (ETBs), youth organizations, clubs or policymakers and virtually pitching the FOLM;
- Physical materials such as flyers, posters, etc.

Naturally, the main way of recruitment through face-to-face meetings was gone once COVID took over, so the main way of targeting the young people was done through social media. The social media campaign, run at the beginning of the summer 2021, was essential in kickstarting the recruitment after the series of lockdowns. It helped reach people through Facebook and Instagram. Later on, it is important to highlight the importance of hiring a social media influencer which helped grow the responses to the recruitment calls.

In the Irish team there were 2 part-time staff hired who helped with the recruitment of the young people, where they would engage with possible stakeholders, youth groups and young people to motivate and ensure they had all the necessary information needed before turning up to the first coaching session. Engaging and re-engaging with the young people was essential in keeping them interested and motivated to do the programme.

Throughout COVID, several Q&A sessions were run on Facebook, Zoom and MS Teams with different organizations and this helped to put participants at ease about the outdoor learning and the coaching. As the restrictions eased, there was a strong indication from different youth services to come and meet the participants in person, as they felt they weren't engaging with the online element anymore and were "Zoomed out". The key part of these online presentations was virtually pitching the Project to different stakeholders in the hope they would promote it to their young people.

Traditional media such as radio was key with the launch of the campaign back in May 2021, where the coordinator was interviewed along with the social media influencer collaborating in the FOLM for various radio stations to get as much coverage for the Project as possible. This also linked in with social media, as the interview was filmed and shared on social media too, which garnered more shares and support.

#### 4. GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED WITHIN FOLM

- A figure called "First Day", in which the day before the outdoor expedition, young people are explained what the process will consist of, and they are given instructions on what they have to bring was key in the engagement of the young people. The reason for this is that it had been seen that the young people signed up for the activity, but when they were called to participate, they dropped out. In addition to this meeting, and in order to maintain the tension among the young participants, "facilitators" were hired who would give more personalized and continuous attention to these young people until the "First Day" meeting. In this way, the day before departure, they were invited to participate in a meeting and confirm their willingness to participate and get involved. In fact, all the OL preparation phase has been key for relationship building and goal setting.

#### *Good Practice no. 1: The First Day*

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- In order to obtain the collaboration of the Workshop Schools, based on the support of the Government of Cantabria for the idea, it was first necessary to obtain the consensus of the FOLM partners, then of the Workshop Schools themselves and finally of the collaborating municipalities. Consequently, in EMCAN's next call for proposals to finance the activities of the Workshop Schools, it was established as a condition that the **Schools should offer young people the possibility of firstly participating in FOLM**. To this end, it was necessary to **modify the rule<sup>19</sup>** that regulates Workshop Schools activities to allow the young to dedicate a maximum of 100 hours during the 6-month training phase to participate in other initiatives.

*Good Practice no. 2: Modification of the rule that regulates the activities of the Workshop Schools to integrate and recognise the formation given by FOLM.*

- In the 3 countries the dissemination process of the FOLM was diversified.

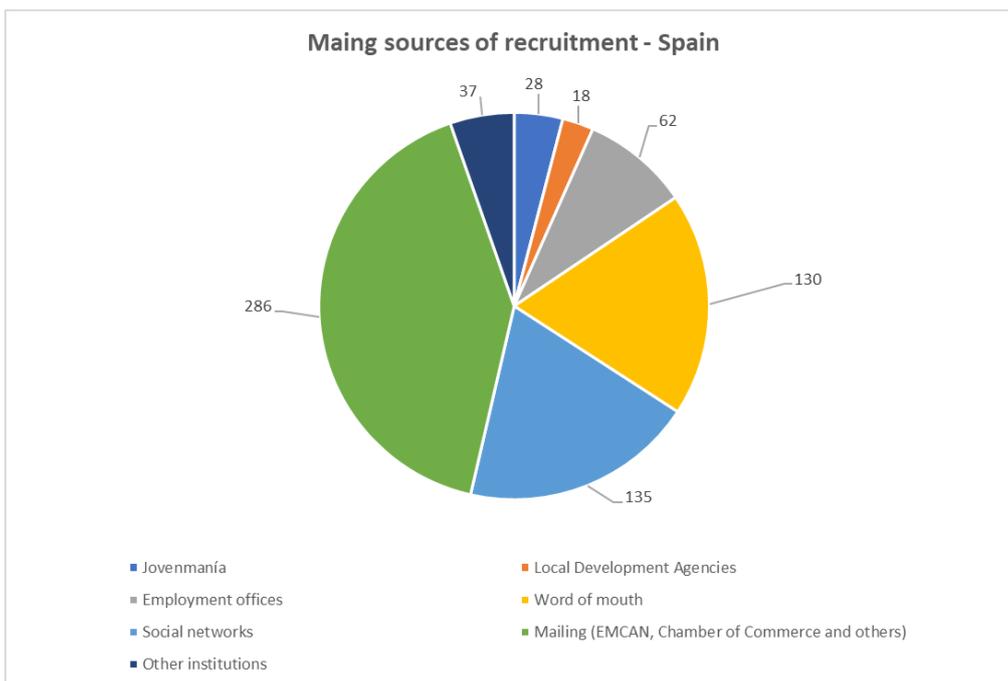
For instance, in Cantabria different sectors of civil society were involved such as schools, NGOs, associations, AMPAS (Parents' Associations of schools and high schools), as well as institutional entities and their attached bodies (the Local Development Agencies and Jovenmania, the European Information Points, the youth portal of the Government of Cantabria). This collaboration was always based on informal agreements.

In addition to the solutions mentioned above, word of mouth among young people has been crucial in recruiting new people.

In the case of Spain, after completing all the calls to participate in FOLM, 1,600 people were initially enrolled, of which 696 were recruited and 474 finally participated in the Project until November 2021. Of these, 124 came through the call via social networks and 127 by word of mouth, 187 through dissemination by public bodies (EMCAN mail, employment offices and other administrative units).

<sup>19</sup> Order HAC/44/2016 of 26 September 2016 of the Regional Ministry of Economy, Finance and Employment of the Government of Cantabria at <https://boc.cantabria.es/boces/verAnuncioAction.do?idAnuBlob=304423>

Figure 5. Main sources of recruitment



Source: data extracted from the Project.

Relationship building was key in terms of recruitment and dissemination for the Project in Ireland. As identified earlier, it was pitching the FOLM as a complimentary element to other programme providers to work together towards the same goal instead of viewing each other as competitors. This helped whereby they identified young unemployed people in their organizations who weren't necessarily engaging with their services. So, they would refer them on to FOLM where there was the aim to engage and help them. This referral process was useful as there would be a contact person in the organization who was aware of the FOLM and, if a young person became interested, they could go to that person, who they trusted first, and who would introduce FOLM to the participant then. Relationship building was a key element for every part of this Project but especially for recruitment and dissemination.

**Good Practice no. 3: Identification and diversification of the adequate channels for the recruitment of young people to FOLM.**

- In relation to employability, as a result of FOLM, a strong percentage of the young participants have improved their situation as shown by the data:  
 In Spain, 77 out of 474 participants have found a job, meaning a 16% of the total. On the other side, 133 have returned to the education, what translates into the 28.06%.  
 In the case of Ireland, from 134 participants, 13 have taken up their studies and 10 have found a job, 12 have gone into training. And, for Poland, from the total of 382 participants recruited by Food Bank and CIE, 232 young people have completed the FOLM. Among

them, 107 returned to their studies and 86 have found a job.<sup>20</sup>

In the Job Matching phase, public-private collaboration has been the determining element in the employability generated in young people, which has been translated into jobs: that is, into **real employability**. Job matching has been carried out in the most possible personalized way through the cross-referencing of the candidates' profiles with the needs of the companies. For instance, in order to facilitate job offers, the Government of Cantabria subcontracted Chamber of Commerce or CEOE<sup>21</sup> to collaborate in the search for companies that could offer jobs. The Chamber of Commerce launched an informative bulletin that gathered the experience of the young people. Meetings with the companies were organized, in person at the beginning. During the lock-down and also afterwards when the COVID-19 risk was high, these meetings had to be virtual in the form of a webinar.

Without the collaboration of **different public and private entities**, the positive result of the FOLM in Cantabria, Warmia-Masuria, Mazovia and Podlasie and Ireland would have been impossible to obtain.

#### *Good Practice no. 4: Public - private collaboration*

- The results of the meetings with business were very positive and aroused the interest of employers, who in some cases instead of advertising their jobs offer, have started to offer jobs directly to young people who had followed the FOLM programme. In addition, companies were offered to register on the FOLM website and use the FOLM logo as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility strategies.

As for the young people hired after completing the FOLM programme, the companies have expressed great satisfaction and no complaints, which is very positive. The great advantage of these activities is that when companies required a specific profile, they know that the people sent to them matched that profile.

A database has also been created with companies that can offer jobs in the three regions of the Project (Cantabria, Warmia-Masuria, Mazovia, Podlasie and Ireland), to which all young people who have participated at some point in FOLM can upload their CVs with their access codes to the platform. These companies can access the summaries of the

#### *Good Practice no. 5: Creation of companies' database*

qualifications of the young people registered in the database, upload their job offers to the website and receive applications from interested young people.

<sup>20</sup> Dates as of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Confederation of Businesses of Cantabria: <https://ceocantabria.es/>

- Young people who are not active on labour market, education or training can tend to be less physically active and there would be limited exposure to outdoor learning. Participation in outdoor learning was seen by them as a fearful experience. Support in the form of meetings with outdoor learning trainers and former participants before and after outdoor learning phase has convinced the youth to join FOLM.

A similar situation occurred with potential participants who were used to spending too much time in the virtual world. It was hard for them to stay disconnected. Also, young people who are not working nor studying show reluctance to activities outside their place of residence. FOLM partners have encouraged them people to overcome their own limitations through individual meetings, promoting the history of former participants, arranging several routes so that they can choose the routes closest to home.

***Good Practice no. 6: Reaching out to inactive youth by adjusting to their limitations***

- As the Project developed, partners engaged more persons to help them in participants' recruitment. These additional recruiters have been recognized in diverse places, mostly in smaller towns and villages. They knew the local communities of youth, among which there were persons who could qualify for FOLM.

Due to the fact that new recruiters were often known by potential Project participants, this relation could benefit from mutual trust and confidence placed in FOLM.

***Good Practice no. 7: Engaging additional recruiters***

## 5. LESSONS FROM THE INNOVATIVE OUTDOOR LEARNING METHODS AND OTHER METHODS INTRODUCED BY THE FOLM

The FOLM experience has been very positive, as FOLM's objectives have been achieved.

To further assess the results and the overall satisfaction of the participating entities, it should be considered that a large part of the process has also been carried out within the framework of the restrictions generated by COVID-19, with the consequent delay in activities and difficulties in holding face-to-face events.

According to studies on the youth labour market, in the case of Spain, which in some cases could be extrapolated to other countries, the motivation of many university graduates is very low, and they

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do not trust the labour market because their expectations of finding a job are low<sup>22</sup>. Sometimes the lack of motivation comes from awrong orientation towards their career opportunities, and the Project shows them thatmaybe they were not on the right path, so they decide to reorient their professional life. Therefore, the experiences and knowledge gained during the FOLM allow them to opennew paths of career exploration.

This fits perfectly with one of FOLM's main objectives, which is to teach young participants how to solve their problems and face reality, which proves the relevance of the choice of this target group.

The key to the good result, therefore, and as can be seen from the interviews held withthe different actors, has been **FOLM's basic philosophy**, consisting on listening to the young people, supporting them in their ability to build self-confidence, and facilitating the formation of multidisciplinary teams among them during their time in nature. This process teaches them to interact proactively with the environment.

One aspect to consider is **that the participation of public entities in the FOLM endows the initiative with transformative capacities that are impossible for private institutions to achieve** (for example, the change of that regulation so fundamental for the success of the Project). But it also involves certain difficulties, because in contracting a public administration is subject to procedures that guarantee public interests, but do not allow the flexibility in contracting required for the execution of a pilot Project that a private entity does have.

An example of this is the lack of agility and the submission to strict rules for hiring personnel. Public Administrations must necessarily resort to already rigid procedures and established employment lists without matching the qualification criteria with those necessary for the functions and dedications sought in this Project.

Furthermore, a public administration is subject to the contracting procedures and requirements laid down in the contracting law, which hinders the necessary flexibility to modify or extend contracts during the activity.

On the other hand, it is important to take into consideration the fact that the participation of Public Institutions in the Project (as it was the case of the Government of Cantabria) facilitates the **use of means at no additional cost**. Thus, for example, the financing channels of the training-employment-integration programmes can be used simply by changing their use (for example, to finance tutors and trainers), but without requiring an increase in the budget. For instance, the Tama hostel where the outdoor activities took place has a maintenance cost, but it is budgeted for whether it is used or not, and the use for FOLM activities does not entail a significant additional cost.

**Collaboration with business entities** should also be highlighted as a way of facilitating fluid contact with companies that can offer jobs.

In Cantabria the experience of the Workshop Schools has been enriching. In fact, at first the directors of the Workshop Schools were reluctant to participate, as they felt that FOLM could conflict with their own training offer and they themselves find it difficult to recruit young people for their courses. But in view of the results in terms of participants' employability and acquisition of soft skills, there

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<sup>22</sup> Interviews with EMCAN officials. A detailed analysis of the labour market for university students can be found in the CYD Foundation reports, in particular on pages 125 and following pages of the 2020 Report <https://www.fundacioncyd.org/publicaciones-cyd/informe-cyd-2020/>.

has been a generalized process of support and interest in collaborating.

Given the public that attends the Workshop Schools, which encompasses a typology of very varied profiles in terms of training, one of the repercussions of the fact that the young participants come from that Schools is that in some cases they are people who have completed non-compulsory stages of regulated studies<sup>23</sup>, including university studies. But, at least in the Spanish case, this does not mean that they have a greater capacity to enter the labour market, since, on the one hand, there is an asynchrony between the studies offered and the job profiles in demand. And, on the other hand, the fact that they have more training does not imply the acquisition of soft skills that would allow them to have the initiative or the problem-solving capacity to enter the complex world of work.

One key point for the success of FOLM initiatives will be to find the right channel to reach the unemployed youth. In each country this role was played very **effectively by associate private and public organizations**. It is particularly interesting the case of **Workshop Schools**, which know the profile of the unemployed very well because they are already in contact with them in their training and insertion programmes. Moreover, the participation of a significant number of their beneficiaries in FOLM facilitated dissemination to other groups thanks to the publicity they did on their social networks. In Ireland's case, this was helped by the hiring of a social media influencer. After the impact of reaching possible participants was reduced as youth organisations were not able to contact their young people as effectively before due to COVID. This became a key stepping stone in advancing its recruitment strategy over the summer of 2021. Some previous participants from FOLM were asked who was a good role model for them and someone who they looked up to on social media. It was then decided to ask Conor O'Keefe, an ultramarathon runner and podcast host to help promote and support the Project in trying to recruit participants. The difference it made in sign-ups was significant and people registered on the website after he posted it on his story. Going forward engaging with the world of social media is key in recruiting young people, it cannot be ignored. So, finding a good person who speaks to similar values of the FOLM is essential to ensuring the image of the Project is maintained in a good light.

In the case of the Workshop Schools, the FOLM experience was normally carried out in the 2nd or 3rd month of the training process. But what has emerged during the course of the Project is that it would be necessary to carry out a **more detailed analysis** of the best time to carry out this experience. At the beginning of the training process, in order to motivate the young people during the whole course, there is the risk that when the time comes to go out to the labour market, they might have lost motivation. Or shortly before entering the labour market, but with the risk that they may have taken less advantage of the training course. In any case, the FOLM experience should take place during the 6 months of training provided by the School, since at the end of this period the young people go on internships. In any case, it is very important that the time between the FOLM experience and the job search is short, so that the young people do not lose motivation.

It would also be significant in successive editions to carry out a statistical follow-up in the **short, medium and long term** on FOLM's employability results in order to see the change in attitude generated in young people. At the moment, when it is said that motivation has improved among young people participating in the Project, it is an impression obtained from partial data on their trajectory (employability or resumption of studies). But there is no comparative statistic to confirm this with data also at different points in time.

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<sup>23</sup> In Spain, compulsory education encompasses secondary education which is normally completed at the age of 16.

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The matrix of actors necessary to make the FOLM approach a success does make it complex to deliver and differing approaches and systems will be needed depending on the particular situation of countries and regions. In Ireland, for example, given the centralized administration framework where resources and regulations are decided at a National Government level, regional and local flexibility can be a challenge. Conversely, there are also developmental opportunities through the education system with potential for expansion of services offered by Outdoor Education Centres (OEC). Currently, many of the OEC only work with secondary and further education and do not currently have a remit within the unemployment services. Expansion of collaboration between employment services, education and social services is necessary and while this can sometimes be achieved at a regional level (where administrative structures allow) this can be a longer-term process where National regulations and policies are in place (such as the case of Ireland).

Finally, and considering the chronification of unemployment among young people in Southern Europe and the needs and adaptations that have been made for the implementation of the Project in Cantabria, it would have been advisable to have **extended the age range for participation** in the FOLM to 30 years of age. Moreover, in the Spanish case, in many cases, young people have family roots, secondary and even university studies. But even so, this is a group that has clearly benefited from FOLM's activities because they are stuck in long-term unemployment, with no job prospects and totally discouraged.

## 6. ACTION PLAN FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC YOUTH POLICIES TARGETING YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EDUCATION NOR IN EMPLOYMENT

The outcome of the Project has been very positive, given the impact on unemployed and young people with insufficient studies.

Looking to the future, in order to continue along the path that has proven to be effective in FOLM, it will be necessary to **institutionalize** the regulatory changes whereby the different institutions could collaborate inside their attributions, and the young could profit of the acknowledgement of their activities and qualifications obtained.

Even if in the 3 countries was very important the capacity of the different governmental bodies to collaborate on the basis of informal agreements, and aligning their different activities in a complementary way towards the same goal, a key point that explains the **success of the FOLM** in Cantabria must be taken into account here: the capacity of the entity responsible for the Project (Government of Cantabria) **to change those regulatory aspects that hinder or may facilitate the success of the initiative**, making available the necessary requirements for it to work.

It would be important for the future **to include the philosophy and logic of the Project, as well as the experience of the dynamics generated in the programmes financed by the new European Social Fund (ESF+)**. At this point in time, employment programmes need to be constantly adapted to the needs of the labour market. This is more significant in a world that is changing very rapidly, but where we have a stagnant education system that is very slow to adapt to these needs. As a result, more and more young people are becoming demotivated because they cannot find job opportunities that match their training.

Actions aimed at the unemployed in Southern and East Europe traditionally focus on courses and hiring subsidies. Whereas in Scandinavian countries they are aimed at promoting their capacity for initiative and self-management through entrepreneurship courses, coaching and the offer of

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microcredits for business ideas. **In this sense, it could be analysed whether the FOLM methodology can also be used to support the development of entrepreneurial skills.**

**To assume this logic in the new ESF+ Operational Programme (2021-2027)** would be away of regenerating employment policies, making them more flexible and adaptable to changes in the socio-economic environment. One aspect to highlight is that the ESF+ merges the European Social Fund (ESF), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). At least 10% of ESF+ resources should support youth employment, provided that the Member State has a higher rate of young people aged 15-29 that are not in employment, education or training than the EU average in 2019 according to Eurostat data. This becomes **even more relevant in the context of the new European funding instruments**. The Next Generation EU complements the implementation of the new ESF+ and ERDF Operational Programmes in the period 2021-2027.

It is also important to **carry out a study on how to certify the skills and abilities generated in young people who have participated in the FOLM process**. In the case of Spain, for instance, it would be essential to integrate Outdoor Learning into the project that the State Public Employment Service (SEPE) is developing to generate an Artificial Intelligence tool to better understand the knowledge and skills that improve employability, so that they can be certified. In this way, young people participating in FOLM could see their experience certified.

### 6.1 Roadmap for Cantabria

The FOLM experience is especially important in a country like Spain with high rates of youth unemployment, to the extent that it has aroused interest even in the Vice- Presidency of the Spanish Government, which was demonstrated by the visit of the former First Vice-President of the Government to Cantabria, Carmen Calvo, during the month of June 2021, in which she showed willingness to receive more information about the programme.

It would be important that the Workshop Schools could offer their beneficiaries to participate in the Project in such a way that they **obtain recognition of the training hours and maintain the daily grant they receive during the training courses in the schools**. An added advantage of this institutional participation is that, given that the beneficiaries will have a 6-month work experience after the course, there is a reference counsellor who works in coordination with the directors in each Employment Office related to the Schools, and could take advantage of FOLM's experience in the process of their labour market insertion.

According to the above, the roadmap that should be proposed in Cantabria to capitalize on the FOLM experience and introduce it into the "mainstream" of employment policies aimed at favouring the labour insertion of young people who neither study nor work would be:

1. The Cantabrian Employment Service should **take on the creation of a permanent support programme for young people who are neither studying nor working**, aimed at fostering their self-esteem and job-seeking skills and at highlighting their abilities. The way in which DG Youth would participate in this programme would be by providing the support of the Youth Offices for the dissemination of the measures and the availability of hostels for outdoor activities.

The programme should be designed based on FOLM's experience, to:

- a. Maintain the collaboration with the Workshop Schools, adapting their

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regulations on an **ongoing basis** so that they are fully compatible with the carrying out of outdoor activities.

- b. Maintain public-private collaboration with local entities and other associations that have contributed to channelling young people to FOLM.
- c. Provide the necessary budget allocations to hire trainers, mentors and coaches, as well as a coordinator for all activities and participants.

In particular, FOLM's teachings can be of great use for the new evolution of the Workshop Schools, which will now become Young Talent Schools. In this new phase, the schools will extend the period of the programmes to 18 months, increase the daily grant for young people and offer level II vocational certificates after the end of the course. The insertion of FOLM activities at the commencement of these training and work experience processes could be facilitated, and the young people would also benefit from the professional certification.

FOLM's methodology could also be of interest for the programme *Lanzaderas de Empleo y Emprendimiento Solidario*, which are defined as projects that during 6 months allow to significantly increase, through the intervention of a coach, the probabilities of the participants to find employment, improving their self-postulation strategies to continue education or favouring the creation of small companies for the development of self-employment. These eight *Lanzaderas* are aimed at the unemployed in general, but one of them will give priority to young people and could integrate the FOLM methodology, benefiting from its experience and results obtained to date

2. If possible, from taking into account the structure of the operational programme, to **introduce**, in collaboration with the Directorate General of European Funds of the Regional Ministry of Economy and Finance, **the experiences learned from this initiative in the ESF+ Operational Programme 2021-2027, and also propose it as a programme of social interest co-financed at 95%**.
3. If the regulations finally allow it, try to ensure that the methodology developed by this programme can be supported by the lines of action of the National Plan for Recovery, Transformation and Resilience.<sup>24</sup>
4. As mentioned throughout the report, one of the factors behind the programme's success has been the public-private partnership. This collaboration has made it possible to take advantage of business partnerships to attract the business fabric to the Project. It has also made it possible to establish a channel of trust with the companies that have participated in the programme, since through these channels they perceive greater accessibility and proximity, as well as a fluid transmission of information. It is therefore recommended that **collaboration with business organizations be maintained, taking into account**, both in the rules and in the budget of the programme, the need for their support and the cost it may entail.
5. To advocate the **integration of this new approach to support policies for the integration of young people** who neither study nor work into national policies, especially in relation to the systems for the certification of skills by the State Public Employment Service (SEPE)<sup>25</sup>.
6. To maintain and expand, in collaboration with the European Projects Office, the European

<sup>24</sup> [https://planderecuperacion.gob.es/politicas\\_y\\_componentes/componente-23-nuevas-politicas-publicas-para-un-mercado-de-trabajo-dinamico-resiliente-e-inclusivo](https://planderecuperacion.gob.es/politicas_y_componentes/componente-23-nuevas-politicas-publicas-para-un-mercado-de-trabajo-dinamico-resiliente-e-inclusivo)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/formacion/certificados-profesionalidad>

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networks generated by FOLM, with the dual objective of maintaining a permanent exchange of experiences, and to try to participate in European projects that finance activities consistent with the objectives of integration of young people who neither study nor work.

Therefore, if the Government of Cantabria was to use the FOLM experience, it would have to:

1. Insert FOLM activities as part of the Operational Programme of the Social Fund;
2. **Link FOLM methodology to the Schools for Young Talents and to the *Lanzaderas de Empleo* [Employment Launchers];**
3. Take into consideration the need to implement the FOLM methodology by:
  - a. The funding of a coordinator, trainers and coaches;
  - b. Maintaining inter-institutional collaboration within the Government and with other local institutions;
  - c. Promoting public-private collaboration, with business organizations (to facilitate the search for employment) and with social organizations (to find young people who are neither studying nor working).

## 6.2 Roadmap for Poland

In accordance with the assumptions of the recruitment strategy, the recruitment activities and complementary communication and dissemination were carried by Center for Innovative Education and Food Bank in Olsztyn. They were conducted with local and regional governments of Warmia and Masuria region, some in Podlasie and Mazovia regions as well, further: government institutions and units at the commune, poviát (county) and provincial level; educational units and universities (secondary schools, colleges, schools for adults, education offices), leaders of non-governmental organizations and the media, and –directly– with potential project participants.

Polish Partners contacted potential partners through individual meetings, on-line meetings, mailings, mailings by traditional mail, activities in social media, participation in conferences, symposia, workshops, participation in TV and radio programs. At the needs of partner organizations, further cooperation projects and recommendations for the implementation of outdoor activities were developed. In this way, after making arrangements with the Warmia and Masuria Commander of Voluntary Labour Corps, the Food Bank developed activation projects both for young people under the care of the Voluntary Labour Corps in Ełk and for young people ending support provided under the Voluntary Labour Corps.

The Food Bank in Olsztyn, after consultations with the directors of the Poviát (County) Labour Office in Olsztyn, the Regional Center for Social Policy in Olsztyn, the Department of the European Social Fund of the Warmia and Masuria Marshal's Office, developed the concept of joint system projects possible to be implemented with European funds in the program perspective 2021-2027. Ultimately, as part of the consultations, joint systemic projects were abandoned. The Managing Institutions of EU funds in the Warmia and Masuria region decided to additionally score outdoor activities and/or promote them as good practices in future design contests. Currently, the Food Bank is monitoring the inclusion of relevant provisions in program documents at the level of the voivodship (regional) self-government. The same activities were carried out in the Zachodniopomorskie region.

As part of the dissemination of the FOLM results and the methods of personal and social development using nature, the Food Bank and Center for Innovative Education prepared cooperation plans and projects with the local governments of Piła (Greater Poland region), Tczew, Chojnice (Pomeranian region), Stawiguda, Rybna (Warmia-Masuria region), Ostrowiec

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Świętokrzyski, Kielce (Świętokrzyskie region). Together with the local government from Rybno and Stawiguda, cooperation projects involving school youth "Time for the forest –outdoor for teenagers" have been developed –the Food Bank is at the stage of searching for funds for these activities. In the case of the local governments of Piła, Tczew, Chojnice, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski and Kielce, work is underway to develop action and financing plans.

Non-governmental organizations were also involved in joint projects: among others, the Foundation for the Development of the Olecko Region, the Etk Association of Active Citizens STOPA, the Federation of Social Organizations FOSA, the Federation of Polish Food Banks. FOSA has started implementing outdoor activities as part of its activation and family projects. Together with the Federation of Polish Food Banks, a draft Program for the Development of Civic Organizations PROO Think Tank was developed.

The Food Bank also promoted and disseminated the FOLM as part of the EIT FOOD Association (European Institute of Innovation and Technology, matching conferences in 2020 and 2021). The Food Bank has also developed a cooperation project on Education in Outdoor "Outdoor around the sea" submitted to the Council of the Baltic Sea States /Baltic Sea Fund with partners from Germany (Hilfsverein eV Dortmund) and Lithuania (Lithuanian National Committee of the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF). With the above-mentioned organizations, talks about further cooperation are underway.

There were also two study visits at the Food Bank in Olsztyn. During them, the FOLM was presented and disseminated. The study visits were attended by representatives of local and regional governments and non-governmental organizations operating in the Świętokrzyskie region as well as local governments cooperating with Food Banks throughout the country, e.g. MOPS (Municipal Social Assistance Office) Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, MOPS Kielce, MOPS Starachowice and MOPS Skarżysko Kamienna.

In total, the Food Bank developed four concept notes of system projects which could bring FOLM model into life. During the development of the Operational Program for the Warmia-Masuria region, representatives of the Food Bank contributed with their comments in the area of education and social policy, presenting the outdoor education methodology as an effective form of activation and education. These actions were reflected in the program inventory and presently are officially indicated as effective manner for bringing youth back into the labour market.

Following the above-described experience, the Polish roadmap should include concrete methods of FOLM capitalization. The method used in FOLM –though very complex– proved to be very effective, therefore should be promoted and implemented on all possible levels.

#### On the national level, FOLM Partners advocate for:

- 1. Implementation of outdoor learning experience in the national educational curricula.** Such solution will counteract school dropouts at all levels of education. Furthermore, outdoor learning experience would help school staff better diagnose the challenges students face in their daily lives, not only within the school environment. Hence, teachers and other school support professionals will be able to intervene early before the actual problem of individual student or between youth occurs. Also, outdoor learning solutions will enable young students to better determine their strengths and individual talents, on which they will be building their future educational and professional pathways. In result of wider outdoor experience implementation at the school levels, students will be able to undertake more mature and more satisfactory life choices.
- 2. Support financial mechanisms addressed at re-engaging people in labour market, which foresee longer work with individuals.** Financial means should be directed at

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programs, which are composed of outdoor learning experience as well as mentoring and coaching that follow such experience. With its 80% effectiveness rate, the FOLM proved that in order to activate persons who struggle to be engaged in the society, including the employment, projects which foresee longer cooperation with such persons to be more successful.

#### At regional level:

1. The regional Employment Offices should **permanently support projects addressed to the unemployed**, not only youth, aimed at fostering their inner motivation, and further their self-awareness, self-esteem and job-seeking attitude based on their strengths and talents. Without building these qualities, the unemployed become discouraged and unable to keep up with their learning and work commitments. The regional Employment Offices should **permanently support projects engaging the unemployed with nature**. COVID-19 pandemic has proven that isolation is one of the factors that keeps particularly youth away from the labour market. However, social skills are very important in order to find and maintain a job post. Hence, experience in the wilderness, which strengthens transversal competencies, will provide a valuable support for the unemployed when seeking their jobs. They will prove to the employers, their improved communication skills, including such competencies as giving and receiving positive feedback, acting in the stressful situations, finding common solutions and leadership skills.
2. The regional and local authorities **should enter into their blueprints** (just as it has been done in the above recalled examples) and, further, in their legislature outdoor learning method as an effective mean for fighting unemployment and disengagement of youth.
3. The regional and local authorities **should also consider addressing offer of outdoor learning to other groups of recipients**, such as seniors, persons with disabilities, mothers who want to come back to the labour market after giving childbirth, persons fighting their drug, alcohol or other addiction.

### 6.3 Roadmap for Ireland

Ireland has a centralized government. In terms of the jurisdiction, local authorities have a limited amount where they provide local government services at county or city level<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, in terms of policies and strategies being adapted and changed, they are all driven by the national governmental policies. These policies are drafted through public consultation along with government being advised by its officials and dedicated advisors. These policies are written as a plan over the span of roughly five years. Once the policy has ended then it is reviewed again on its success and adapted and changed to include best practice in that particular sector.

In Ireland, there are two routes in terms of advising policy changes for FOLM to be adapted and undertaken by a governmental organization:

The first department to approach is under the **“Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science”**:

ETB's in the different regions could be approached to run FOLM as a course to help young people to re-enter the workplace, education or training. The problem that arises with taking this route is that the ETBs are more likely to take on an accredited course as it is in aligned with the National

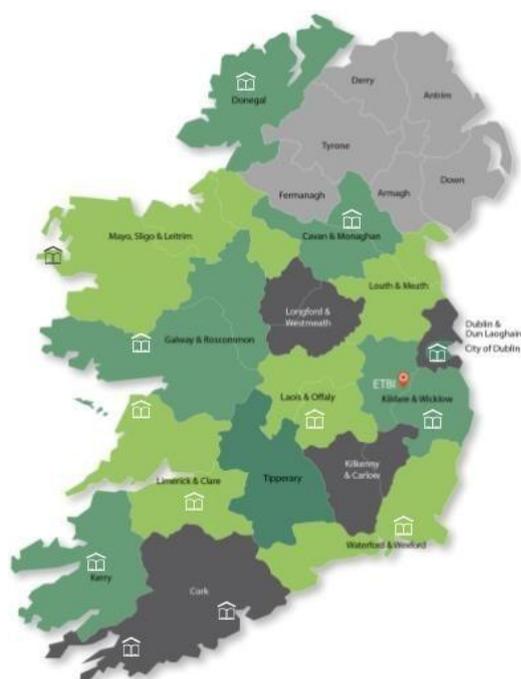
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<sup>26</sup> To learn more, please refer here: <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Ireland-intro.aspx>

Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) – QQI. In its nature, the FOLM programme is a personal development programme and if there was an assessment added to the course it would deter much of the cohort of Irish participants. The constriction of it becoming an accredited course would hinder the possibility of participants exploring their future careers with no judgement, as they don't feel the pressure of being assessed.

The Outdoor Education Centres (OECs) are another branch of the ETB services across Ireland which have a network of 12 OECs, as shown below:

Figure 6. Location of OECs across Ireland



Source: <https://www.etbi.ie/outdoor-education/>

But, as they are partially funded by the government, allocating more funding to this resource and the training of staff would be key in getting FOLM established in these centres. One more matter with using these centres as the main location to run the outdoor learning part of FOLM, is they are in hard-to-reach locations and require transport to get the participants there, therefore this would need to be budgeted for going forward. In essence, to make FOLM as accessible and sustainable as possible, it needs to be located in main towns or villages close to where the participants live.

### The “Department of Rural and Community Development”

This route is probably the best course of action and Minister Heather Humphreys was contacted to highlight the importance of FOLM and the impact it is having in fighting youth unemployment in the Mid-West Region of Ireland. Through the organization “Pobal”, it would align with their current “Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme” (SICAP) 2018-2022 and link to the “Pathways to Work” scheme. Although this programme is ending next year, it would be of big interests to advise the government on the impact of the FOLM and how it has helped young

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people across Ireland and Europe. In this way, future SICAP programmes could have a section dedicated to outdoor learning and youth employment initiatives going forward. This SICAP programme is delivered locally by Local Development Companies within local areas and in this way, they are better located to make FOLM accessible to all<sup>27</sup>.

The best-case scenario in terms of getting governmental support would be to have the **OECs deliver the outdoor learning element of the programme** (once staff have been trained and resources are in place, a role TUS could be involved with), while the SICAP programme ensures the recruitment, employment of staff and delivery of the other twophases. The above suggestions are in terms of gaining governmental support for the delivery of the FOLM programme and identifying the appropriate departments and policies which need to be addressed in making this a reality.

It is also important to note that currently FOLM has also been successful in continuing on its legacy through Venture Out who are a charity situated in Galway. They offer outdoor learning personal development programmes to people in the locality. They were trained through the FOLM, and this has provided them the skills to carry on helping disadvantaged youth in the area. Their ember programme is an adapted version of the FOLM programme, where they are sustaining the model through applying for different grants from national funding sources<sup>28</sup>. This is another example of how FOLM can be sustained in Ireland going forward in a smaller but still impactful way.

<sup>27</sup> See map of LDC's here: <https://ildn.ie/directory/local-development-companies-map/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.venture-out.ie/ember>

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## 8. ANNEX 1: Interviews (Methodology - Phase 3)

Interviews to institutions which are part of the Government of Cantabria:

- **Lanuzo, Irene:** Former General Director of Youth, Regional Ministry of Universities, Equality, Culture and Sport.
- **Callejo, José Manuel:** General Director of the Cantabrian Employment Service (EMCAN), Regional Ministry of Employment and Social Policies.
- **Díaz Nieto, Paz:** General Director of European Funds, Regional Ministry of Economy and Finance.
- **Demetrio Laya, José Ignacio:** Head of Unit of Youth. General Directorate of Youth, Regional Ministry of Universities, Equality, Culture and Sport.
- **Fernández Alonso, José Ignacio:** Technician of the Cantabrian Employment Service (EMCAN), Regional Ministry of Employment and Social Policies.

Interviews with private entities that participate in the FOLM:

- **López Cruz, María del Carmen:** Project Director, Femxa (partner of the FOLM).
- **Sánchez, Adela:** Head of European projects of CEOE-CEPYME Cantabria
- **Tortosa, Jesús:** General Director of the Cantabrian Chamber of Commerce.

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