IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINED-UP GOVERNANCE FOR SOLVING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY ISSUES IN ESTONIA: MATCHING EU PRESSURES AND CIVIL SERVANTS' PERCEPTIONS

TANJA DIBOU
ANU TOOTS

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the supply side of joined-up governance in youth policy. Theoretically, the article seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how the challenge for more intense cooperation has altered the roles of central government in local policy implementation, and how civil servants adapt to this new situation. Empirically, the analysis represents a case study of the provision of integrated labour market services for youth in Estonia, focusing on one-stop-shop Pathfinder service centres. We analyse the EU's impact on pushing national governments to apply a joined-up approach in youth policy. We study how joined-up thinking is reflected in national policy strategies and institutional arrangements, and then compare this institutional framework to intersectoral cooperation practices and perceptions of civil servants toward joined-up governance for solving youth issues. The analysis revealed that joined-up governance in Estonia is supported by the relevant domestic and European policy strategies and is accepted by civil servants as a more efficient way to provide youth employability services. Although the readiness of actors for cooperation has been seen as the main premise for joined-up governance, there was also a clear expectation that cross-sectoral joined-up working should be initiated firstly at the ministerial level, as it would then be easily transited to the local level.

KEYWORDS: *cross-sectoral integrated youth policy, joined-up governance, collaborative partnership, employability, civil servants' perceptions, Youth Guarantee*

Introduction

Empirical studies on the implementation of joined-up governance (JUG) in youth policy are rather rare, which may be a result of two factors. On the one hand, youth policy[1] is a relatively novel life-course-perspective area; and on the other, it is scattered across various public policies. For instance, youth (un)employment issues typically sit within the overall employment and social policies, but the development of employability skills is allocated to educational policy. This article attempts to challenge this conventional sectoral approach and analyse the problem of youth employability as embedded at the junction of social, educational and youth policy. In this paper, we distinguish employability from employment. We study youth employability as the development of an individual's special characteristics, capacity skills and readiness for work.[2] In contrast with employability, (un)employment concerns only the concrete status of having/not having a job.

By applying the JUG perspective, it is possible to analyse the extent to which the premises and conditions for JUG exist at policy level and whether JUG principles and practices can be found at the office level of service provision. Our focus is on supply, i.e. the actors' side of JUG. Previous studies have found that if participants' value orientations are neglected, the

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[1] Youth policy—a policy (set of agendas, documents, plans, actions) that aims to ensure favourable conditions for the development of young people.

[2] McQuaid, R., Lindsay, C. (2005). Concept of Employability. Urban Studies, Vol. 42, No. 2, 197–219, February 2005, p. 200.

real mechanisms that make JUG work remain hidden.[3] This article seeks to contribute to filling this gap and investigate institutional arrangements, legal documents, and the perceptions of civil servants who work with cross-sectoral integrated youth policy initiatives.

In research literature, joined-up governance is often associated with new public management (NPM), and therefore the majority of the studies empirically analyse countries where NPM is most profoundly rooted, such as the UK, New Zealand and Australia. Yet, fragmentation and the "silo" effect in policy implementation caused by the core principles of NPM is geographically much more widespread. Estonia, the research site for this article, has been one of the active followers of NPM. The Estonian experience is valuable as, in the last ten years, the youth policy sector has been enriched by new institutions and legal strategies stressing interaction between youth policy actors. Moreover, in 2014, based on EU recommendations, Estonia adopted the Youth Guarantee (YG) plan, leading to new measures to increase youth employability and strengthen partnerships across government agencies.[4] The pressure to overcome these "silos" came from international actors (OECD, EU), and the problem is recognised by national policymakers. At the level of policy implementation, however, collaboration still occurs more often within one sector (i.e. actors from the youth sector contribute to youth policy) than horizontally across various sectors; the vertical dimension of collaboration between central and local levels is even more ad hoc. All this makes Estonia an interesting case for studying the application of JUG in youth policy, since one can expect high dynamics and noteworthy interactions between multiple levels of governance.

The aim of the article is to understand how EU pressure, existing national policy strategies, and institutional arrangements associate with the perceptions of actors that implement joined-up services in youth policy. The article begins with an examination of approaches to the concept of JUG. The conceptual analysis is followed by an exploration of existing national legal acts and strategies in the youth field in order to understand whether the existing institutional arrangements and regulations advance or hinder the JUG approach in youth service provision. Our special interest is in the role the EU has played in advancing the integrated approach in youth policy and services. Although methodologically relying on the institutionalist approach, we argue that actors can play an active role in building a cooperative management culture, and their actions can have a significant effect on dismantling the "silos". This agency perspective is elaborated in a qualitative analysis of individual interviews with civil servants that deliver services for youth at various governmental levels and policy sectors. The main argument for using two kinds of data—legal documents and civil servants' interviews—lies in the very nature of the joined-up approach. Sullivan claims that policy strategies are often "flawed" (being too superficial or contradictory) and therefore provide an insufficient source for judging the implementation of JUG.[5] However, JUG is an interactive, dynamic process in which a vast range of actors with potentially different values and understandings is involved. Therefore, it is important to study how actors "translate" strategies and other relevant policy documents into their everyday practices. The concluding section revisits existing JUG theories on the basis of empirical findings.

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[3] Schulman, S. (2010). Better together? A comparative study of joined-up practice and youth policy in England and New Zealand. PhD thesis at the University of Oxford.
Taru, M. (2017). Integrated youth policy—Riding the wave of cross-sectoralism. In Youth Knowledge 21 "Needles in Haystacks".
Davies, J. (2009). The Limits of Joined-up Government: Towards a Political Analysis. Public Administration, 87(1), pp. 80–96.
Foster, C. (2005). Joined-Up Government and Cabinet Government. In Bogdanor, V. (2005). Joined-up Government. The British Academy Press by Oxford Academy Press, pp. 114–138.

[4] European Commission (2016). The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on. Internet source available at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:73591c12–8afc-11e6–b955–01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF 11.03.2018.

[5] Sullivan, H. (2005). Is Enabling Enough? Tensions and Dilemmas in New Labour's Strategies for Joining-up Local Governance. Public Policy and Administration. Vol. 20 (4), pp. 10–24.

1. Defining joined-up governance (JUG)

Development of governed partnership

A joined-up approach to organisation and delivery of public services is not a new concept. The idea of partnerships and networking as a way to unlock the power of the public sector grew in importance through the late 1980s and early 1990s as a consequence of the deficiencies in new public management (NPM).[6] The joined-up approach soon came to be seen as the main vehicle for better integration of various public-sector executive institutions that would facilitate addressing impressive problems—complex challenges that cannot be handled by simply breaking them into several isolated pieces.[7]

In contrast to JUG, NPM aimed to break the monolithic public sector, and in pursuing this aim has created multiple agencies with relatively narrow foci, internal markets and compulsory competitive tendering. At the heart of these reforms was a hope for efficiency, accountability and responsiveness. However, despite some efficiency gains, such agencification and a single-focus approach resulted in the increasing difficulty of coordinating multi-agency responses to complex problems that often extended across different policy areas and levels. To counter "departmentalisation" and fragmented modes of working, various holistic modes of governance emerged.[8] In 1997, the Blair government in the UK introduced "joined-up government" to achieve horizontal and vertical coordination and hence avoid situations in which different policies undermined one another.[9] Some scholars see JUG as a viable mechanism for providing services, being an alternative to traditional hierarchical governance.[10]

Beyond being a domestic remedy to better governance, the JUG approach gained high prominence with European Union (EU) bodies. The EU added the multilevel governance perspective to horizontal cooperation, by labelling it as a "coordinated action by the EU, Member States, and local and regional authorities, based on partnership, and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies that leads to responsibility being shared between the different tiers of government concerned, and which is underpinned by all sources of democratic legitimacy and the representative nature of the different players involved."[11] As far as youth policy is concerned, the EU became an advocate for the joined-up youth policy approach in the first decade of the 21st century. A major shift to the JUG approach was made by the European Commission in the White Paper on Youth 2001. The White Paper set out a framework of cooperation between national ministries and youth councils, and between the Commission and the European Youth Forum by using the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The EU

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[6] Newman, J. (2001). Modernizing Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society. London: SAGE Publications Inc.
Skelcher, C. (2000) Changing Images of the State: Overloaded, Hollowed-out, Congested. Public Policy and Administration, Vol. 15(3), pp. 3–19.
Ling, T. (2002). Delivering Joined-up Government in the UK: Dimensions, Issues and Problems. Public Administration, Vol. 80 (4), pp. 615–642.
Davies, J. (2009). The Limits of Joined-up Government: Towards a Political Analysis. Public Administration, 87(1), pp. 80–96.

[7] O'Toole, L.J., Jr. (1997). Treating Networks Seriously: Practical and Research-Based Agendas in Public Administration. Public Administration Review, 57(1), pp. 45–52.
Guo, C., & Acar, M. (2005). Understanding Collaboration among Nonprofit Organisations: Combining Resource Dependency, Institutional, and Network Perspectives. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 34(3), pp. 340–361.
Isett, K., Mergel, I., Leroux, K., Mischen, P., & Rethemeyer, K. (2011). Networks in Public Administration Scholarship: Understanding where we are and where we need to go. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 21, pp. i157–i173.

[8] Skelcher, C. (2000) Changing Images of the State: Overloaded, Hollowed-out, Congested. Public Policy and Administration, Vol. 15(3), pp. 3–19.
Champion, C., Bonoli, G. (2011). Institutional Fragmentation and Coordination Initiatives in Western European Welfare States. Journal of European Social Policy, Vol. 21 (4), pp. 323–334.
Van de Walle, S., Groeneveld, S. (2011). Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management, Volume 21: New Steering Concepts in Public Management. Bradford, GBR: Emerald Insight.

[9] Pollitt, C. (2003). Joined up Government: A survey. Political Studies Review, Vol. 1, pp. 34–49.

[10] Provan, K.G., & Kenis, P.N. (2008). Modes of Network Governance: Structure, Management, and Effectiveness. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 18(2), pp. 229–252.

[11] EU Committee of the Regions. (2009). White paper on Multi-level Governance.

Youth Strategy 2010–2018 proposed the joined-up approach as a central policy principle, which should include short and long-term actions and all key policy areas that affect young people. However, the joined-up governance of youth policy is mainly limited to the policymaking phase, whereas the responsibilities for implementing different parts of the strategy will remain with the relevant ministries or government bodies.[12]

Joined-up working can have a number of aims including: a) innovation in policy development or service provision by bringing together people with different backgrounds, professions and experiences; b) better use of financial resources and improved cost-effectiveness; and c) increased efficiency for policy outcomes and services to tackle cross-cutting issues by eliciting the contribution of multiple players at central, regional, local and community tiers of governance.[13] All these aims are relevant to youth policy. Firstly, this is because different policy areas tackling youth issues and needs bring together a large variety of specialists. Secondly, youth policy is typically not the first priority in public budgets, and often suffers from scarce financial resources. Thirdly, youth issues quite often crosscut each other, which begs for cross-sectoral solutions.

To some extent, JUG aims are similar to those of NPM, i.e. enhancing the efficiency and responsiveness of policy performance. Moreover, similarly to the research on competitive tendering and (quasi-)markets in public services, many studies on joined-up delivery of public services have found that existing evidence hardly allows the conclusion that policy performance has generally improved in terms of better use of resources or novelty and user-friendliness of services.[14] What, then, is novel and promising in the joined-up approach?

One strand of studies relates JUG to new non-hierarchical forms of governance, such as networks that should fit better in the era of blurring boundaries and wicked issues. In governance networks, interdependent yet operationally autonomous actors are engaged in a process of dialogue and self-organisation where rules and defined supervision do not play a central role.[15] These characteristics fit well with the core idea of JUG. However, there are also important differences between joined-up and network-based governance. JUG "seeks to align formally separate organisations towards a particular goal of public policy. It aims to coordinate activities across organisational boundaries without removing the boundaries themselves."[16] Furthermore, in networks all parties are regarded as equal and none could have a legitimised leadership role. In the case of joined-up arrangements, a defined leader is important for success.[17] In a multilevel governance situation, this means that the central government sets clear objectives that local networks need to achieve.

Thus, although a joined-up approach differs from a sector-based "silo" government, it does not mean a hollowing-out of the state. On the contrary, it requires a restart for government bodies regardless of type or level, in order to work across portfolio boundaries and provide integrated responses to policy issues. The role of government in this JUG approach is to enable, steer and coordinate rather than control. Steering does not rest on authority; instead, it builds on the capacity to create the

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[12] Denstad F. (2009). Youth policy manual. How to develop a national youth strategy. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, p. 19.

[13] Newman, J. (2001). Modernizing Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society. London: SAGE Publications Inc., p. 109.
Pollitt, C. (2003). Joined up Government: A survey. Political Studies Review, Vol. 1, pp. 34–49.
Lagreid, P., Randma-Liiv, T., Rykkja, L., Sarapuu, K. (2014). Introduction: Emerging Coordination Practices in European Public Management. In the book "Organising for Coordination in the Public Sector". Palgrave Macmillan UK, p. 2.

[14] Tett, L., Crowther, J., O'Hara. (2003). Collaborative Partnership in Community Education. Journal of Education Policy, Vol. 18(1), pp. 37–51.

[15] Newman, J. (2001). Modernizing Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society. London: SAGE Publications Inc., p. 108.
Considene, M., Lewis, J. (2003). Bureaucracy, Network, or Enterprise? Comparing Models of Governance in Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. Public Administration Review, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Mar.–Apr., 2003), pp. 131–140.
Soerensen, E., Torfing, J. (2007). Theories of Democratic Network Governance. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

[16] Ling, T. (2002). Delivering Joined-up Government in the UK: Dimensions, Issues and Problems. Public Administration, Vol. 80 (4), p. 616.

[17] Sullivan, H. (2005). Is Enabling Enough? Tensions and Dilemmas in New Labour's Strategies for Joining-up Local Governance. Public Policy and Administration. Vol. 20 (4), pp. 10–24.
Saikku, P., Karjalainen, V. (2012). Network governance in activation policy—health care as an emergent partner. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 32 Iss 5/6, pp. 299–311.

conditions for positive-sum partnerships.[18] Similarly to Newman, Sullivan does not favour a neoliberal managerial efficiency. *Legitimacy, mutual confidence, mindset:* for her, these are the key concepts in understanding what makes joined-up policy delivery successful.[19] Such an approach brings Sullivan close to those researchers stressing that trust, creating meaning and value orientations of partners in joined-up action are important.[20]

Ways toward success in JUG

Considering the popularity of rhetoric about joined, integrated, holistic, etc., styles of governing, it may well be that joining up is forced from above instead of being a result of an evolutionary learning process among partners. Typically, joined-up practices are studied at the local level, although in the era of multilevel governance, avoiding currents from the national or even supranational level seems to lead to an inadequate understanding of the situation.[21] In such a form of working, where interaction exists between vertical and horizontal levels, actors may come into conflict. Multi-actor cooperation may involve disagreement over accountability, inter-actor rivalry, conflicting objectives, or values. This can occur inside the cabinet, between ministries and departments involved in inter-sectoral task forces, programs or projects, or specialised actors involved in collaborative service delivery.

Literature looking at barriers and disagreements more closely can be divided into two strands. The first takes an institutionalist approach and explains the success or failure of JUG via formal structures of governance. Bogdanor argues that JUG can become successful through changes in governmental structure and money allocation. If existing structures are left untouched, partnerships may be time-consuming and inefficient.[22] Page also stressed the importance of structural factors, showing at the same time scepticism towards the second strand of literature. For him, major conflicts between departments can hardly be solved through training.[23] Bevir and Newman, in contrast, believe that a new working culture and collaboration-oriented training can support structural changes.[24] The idea of JUG seems mostly to be about working together in a pragmatic and intelligent way.[25] In reality, though, actors bring to the network their former traditions of vertical and hierarchical decision-making, which makes innovative ways of joined-up service delivery difficult to push through.[26] If existing value conflicts are not recognised and dealt with, there is a risk that interest groups with different values will replicate silo practices.[27]

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[18] Newman, J. (2001). Modernizing Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society. London: SAGE Publications Inc., p. 108.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Davies, J. (2009). The Limits of Joined-up Government: Towards a Political Analysis. Public Administration, 87(1), pp. 80–96.
Bevir, M. (2005). New Labor. Routledge.
Tett, L., Crowther, J., O'Hara. (2003). Collaborative Partnership in Community Education. Journal of Education Policy, Vol. 18(1), pp. 37–51.
Saikku, P., Karjalainen, V. (2012). Network governance in activation policy—health care as an emergent partner. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 32 Iss 5/6, pp. 299–311.

[21] Sullivan, H. (2005). Is Enabling Enough? Tensions and Dilemmas in New Labour's Strategies for Joining-up Local Governance. Public Policy and Administration. Vol. 20 (4), pp. 10–24.
Davies, J. (2009). The Limits of Joined-up Government: Towards a Political Analysis. Public Administration, 87(1), pp. 80–96.

[22] Bogdanor, V. (2005). Joined-up government. The British Academy Press by Oxford Academy Press, p. 81.

[23] Page, E. (2005). Joined-up Government and the Civil Service. In Bogdanor, V. (2005). Joined-up government. The British Academy Press by Oxford Academy Press, p. 148.

[24] Bevir, M. (2005). New Labour: A Critique. Routledge. London.
Newman, J. (2001). Modernizing Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society. London: SAGE Publications Inc.

[25] Van de Walle, S., Groeneveld, S. (2011). Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management, Volume 21: New Steering Concepts in Public Management. Bradford, GBR: Emerald Insight, p. 17.

[26] Saikku, P., Karjalainen, V. (2012). Network governance in activation policy—health care as an emergent partner. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 32 Iss 5/6, pp. 299–311.

[27] Davies, J. (2009). The Limits of Joined-up Government: Towards a Political Analysis. Public Administration, 87(1), pp. 80–96.

Thus, joined-up working requires changes from actors in order to learn new routines, new cultures, and new languages.[28] Here, one can see a rather sharp contrast in how NPM and JUG interpret the autonomy of civil servants. NPM reforms increase the autonomy of individual civil servants and emphasise their individual responsibility for particular blocks of work, while JUG implies shared responsibility, both between civil servants in different departments and between civil servants and their counterparts at the local level.[29] The existing literature provides mixed evidence regarding the satisfaction of civil servants with professional autonomy. Page claims that they are not interested in maximisation of individual autonomy and thus are eager to support the JUG approach only if it provides the right to decide on cooperation.[30] Schulman takes a more optimistic note and finds that joined-up initiatives produce high-quality output in cases where civil servants adjust their routine and use JUG tools in their daily work.[31]

JUG tools can go beyond regular meetings and include institutional rearrangements as well. One such example is one-stop shops like the Pathfinder centres studied in this article. But there are also many other tools: inter- and intra-organisational policy networks; restructured ministries or agencies; shared objectives, procedures or strategies; special positions with coordination responsibilities; inter-agency collaboration units; and specific budgeting tools that encourage the achievement of common goals.[32]

Quite obviously, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions for efficient implementation of JUG. The differences between policy fields and the differences between countries do matter.[33] Thus, it is important to research real JUG practices in various policy fields within particular national contexts, as this sheds light on successful paths toward joined-up working. The next section will explore the experience of Estonia in implementation of JUG in youth policy, and more precisely in the field of youth employability. Our special interest is finding out how the opinions of civil servants, with changes in structure and legal documents, support JUG in youth policy.

2. Implementing the EU Youth guarantee in Estonia as an experience of joined-up working

This section is divided into three subsections. First, we provide an overview of the institutional structure of actors engaged in enhancing youth employability in Estonia. Institutional arrangements identify the main actors in youth policy, in which actors take a leading role, and how actors interact with each other (the main strategies and tools for joined-up interactions). By using theoretical knowledge, we explore whether existing institutional arrangements advance or hinder the JUG approach. Our special interest is on Pathfinder one-stop-shop centres, which provide integrated counselling services for young people for their better employability. Then we analyse whether and how the JUG approach is addressed in youth policy strategies and legal documents. This will allow the evaluation of not just the current state of affairs but also future directions for youth policy governance. Thirdly, we explore how civil servants perceive JUG in youth policy and how their perceptions match legal frameworks and the theory of JUG. As previous research shows, successful implementation of JUG requires civil servants to share common meanings and values in JUG and a readiness to change work cultures. Throughout the analysis, we look at the role of the European Union in advancing an integrated approach to youth employability.

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[28] Klein, R., Plowden, W. (2005). JASP meets JUG: Lessons of the 1975 Joint Approach to Social Policy for Joined-Up Government. In Bogdanor, V. (2005). Joined-up Government. The British Academy Press by Oxford Academy., p. 108.

[29] Bogdanor, V. (2005). Joined-up government. The British Academy Press by Oxford Academy Press.

[30] Page, E. (2005). Joined-up Government and the Civil Service. In Bogdanor, V. (2005). Joined-up government. The British Academy Press by Oxford Academy Press, pp. 139–155.

[31] Schulman, S. (2010). Better together? A comparative study of joined-up practice and youth policy in England and New Zealand. PhD thesis at University of Oxford, pp. 340–341.

[32] Lagreid, P., Randma-Liiv, T., Rykkja, L., Sarapuu, K. (2014). Introduction: Emerging Coordination Practices in European Public Management. In the book "Organising for Coordination in the Public Sector". Palgrave Macmillan UK, p. 4.

[33] Perry, G. (2005). Joined-Up Government in the west beyond Britain. In Bogdanor, V. (2005). Joined-up government. The British Academy Press by Oxford Academy Press, p. 50.

The empirical analysis is based on EU and Estonian youth policy documents and expert interviews with Estonian civil servants in the field of youth affairs working at the supranational, national, and local levels. A total of 11 individual semi-structured expert interviews were carried out in 2013 and 2017, in accordance with the periods of the Youth Policy Strategy (2006–2013) and Youth Field Development Plan (2014–2020), respectively; personal interviews were accompanied by a focus group of 12 municipality-level respondents (youth centre managers and youth council members) in 2013.

Do existing institutional arrangements support joined-up government in enhancing youth employability?

This section analyses how formally separate governmental and non-governmental actors are jointly involved in enhancing youth employability at various levels. In other words, we check whether the institutional structure is favourable to JUG, characterised by the non-hierarchical relations between actors and work toward a common goal. We begin our empirical analysis with an overview of institutional arrangements that help understand which actors take the leading role and what the main tools are for joined-up interactions. According to previous research, JUG institutional arrangements require leaders that steer and coordinate rather than control. Thus we explore which bodies take on the leader's role. Furthermore, we analyse the main tools in use by relying on the classification suggested by Lagreid et al.[34]

A JUG approach to youth employability in Estonia presupposes the collaboration of actors in three policy sectors: social policy, educational policy, and youth policy. Influenced by the New Public Management, Estonia established a vast number of executive agencies focusing on some rather narrow policy implementation areas. Agencification was further boosted by EU programming periods, when significant amounts of EU funds needed to be properly allocated and used. As a result, policymaking in Estonia is extensively interwoven between ministries and agencies. In the area of youth employability, we see the emergence and strengthening of two executive agencies: the Archimedes and Innove Foundations. The latter executes (besides curriculum development and national testing) EU and domestic policies in career counselling and labour market training, while the former deals with educational mobility, including youth exchange and work placement practices abroad (such as Erasmus). The early years of agencification strengthened the silo effect, where different departments worked separately and therefore failed to address important issues (such as the youth labour market transition). An important impetus in overcoming the silo effect in youth policy governance was given by the Youth Guarantee (YG) Scheme, adopted by the European Commission in 2013 in the aftermath of a significantly weaker situation in European labour markets. The YG program set member states the goal of ensuring a job, education, apprenticeship or traineeship for all young people under 25 within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. The Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA), as the leading actor in Estonia, presented the national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) on 30 April 2014; this can be regarded as an initial step in breaking the "silos" and moving towards joined-up thinking. The plan targets youth aged 15–26 years old with the goal of tackling two major obstacles preventing young people from being employed: low levels of education and lack of relevant work experience.

The MSA is responsible for the entire labour market policy, including youth labour market policy. One important task of the MSA is to communicate with the European Commission regarding the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. To facilitate a partnership between the actors engaged in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee domestically, the MSA has formed a working group that involves relevant parties, coordinates activities, and monitors implementation of the plan. The working group enhances cooperation between specialists and representatives of different interest groups related to the Youth Guarantee implementation.[35] There are three key actors included here: the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (social policy actor), Estonian Youth Work Centre (youth policy actor), and the Innove Foundation (educational policy actor) with its Pathfinder network. The first is a quasi-governmental organisation, and a legal person in public law, that offers various labour market services and benefits; the second is governed by the MER and manages youth work in the framework

[34] Lagreid, P., Randma-Liiv, T., Rykkja, L., Sarapuu, K. (2014). Introduction: Emerging Coordination Practices in European Public Management. In the book "Organising for Coordination in the Public Sector". Palgrave Macmillan UK, p. 4.

[35] Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia. (2014). Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Estonia.

of national youth policy; the last (Innove) was also established by the MER to develop career and educational counselling services and regional cooperation in the field.

Besides steering the working group activities, the MSA and MER also use task delegation, which is very common in Estonian governance practice. The MSA delegated some labour market services to the Unemployment Insurance Fund that, in the frame of YG, provides preventative measures such as job-search workshops in schools and the "My first job" supportive measure for registered 17–29-year old unemployed individuals with little or no work experience. The MER, responsible for career counselling services, delegated the implementation of services to two different bodies: the government agency, Innove, and the Estonian Youth Work Centre. The Innove Foundation, with its 15-county-based Pathfinder one-stop-shops (*Rajaleidja* in Estonian), provides career services for all young people aged 7 to 26 years. The Estonian Youth Work Centre delegated the implementation of the Youth Prop Up program (*Tugila* in Estonian) to a non-governmental umbrella organisation, the Association of Youth Centres (AYC). The AYC focuses on NEET-youth [not employed and not in education] aged 15–26 by providing specialised services via the Youth Prop Up program to approximately 8,800 at-risk young people in order to bring them back to education and/or the labour market. Compared to governmental agencies, the activities of the AYC are more project-based and the work is envisaged for the period of the existing Youth Action Plan (2015–2018). The Pathfinder centres were launched in September 2014 as an explicit measure to implement the EU's YG. Their main mission is to offer integrated services in special educational, social pedagogical and psychological counselling, speech therapy, career counselling and career information provision. Before 2014, services were provided by different institutions, including local governments, non-profit organisations, and foundations, totalling 24 institutions all over Estonia. The system was fragmented and limited; unevenly distributed resources did not allow youth services of equally high quality everywhere in Estonia.[36] Pathfinder centres were intended to be the remedy for the fragmentation of the previous system. Furthermore, it was intended to improve access to services, raise the quality of services, and increase public awareness of the counselling possibilities in the one-stop-shop manner. The coverage and quality were secured via county-based locations and a unified quality assurance system. All centres have a common digital client database that fulfils two goals. First, in case of a difficult problem, all of the specialists from various centres can work with the same client, since the database makes information sharing possible. Second, the system collects statistics about all clients needed for monitoring and evaluation of the program as a whole. The Pathfinder network also puts significant effort into increasing the visibility of its services. Trainers and counsellors often visit educational institutions; in 2017, a Snapchat account for online consulting and answering questions was launched.

Specialists in the various institutions described above are meant to collaborate closely in solving youth employability issues. For instance, if a young NEET person is registered in the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF), they simultaneously receive information about Pathfinder centres and Youth Prop Up centres. In order to reach NEET and other marginalised young people, local municipalities are responsible and do mobile or detached youth work that takes place in areas frequented by young people, such as streets, cafés, and parks, at times that are suitable for young people. Mobile/detached youth work is important in establishing contact with young people and then encouraging them to use YG services. In the case of unemployed young people who are interested in continuing their studies, the EUIF directs them to career guidance in Pathfinder centres. The schools and youth centres in turn are obliged to note educational problems shown by young people and to the use Pathfinder centre specialists' support and guidance. EUIF and Pathfinder centres also do preventative work with young people at schools through various workshops in introducing the labour market and career planning to young people. The core idea of the system is based on the collaborative work of qualified specialists, which guarantees young people the services they need, no matter where the first contact with the young person was made.

The success of collaborative working is measured via a set of indicators.[37] Some of them are common to all actors implementing YG in Estonia, while some are for the EUIF only. As is clear from previous common research goals, shared funding and concrete responsibilities with indicators for progress evaluation are prerequisites for successful joined-up working.

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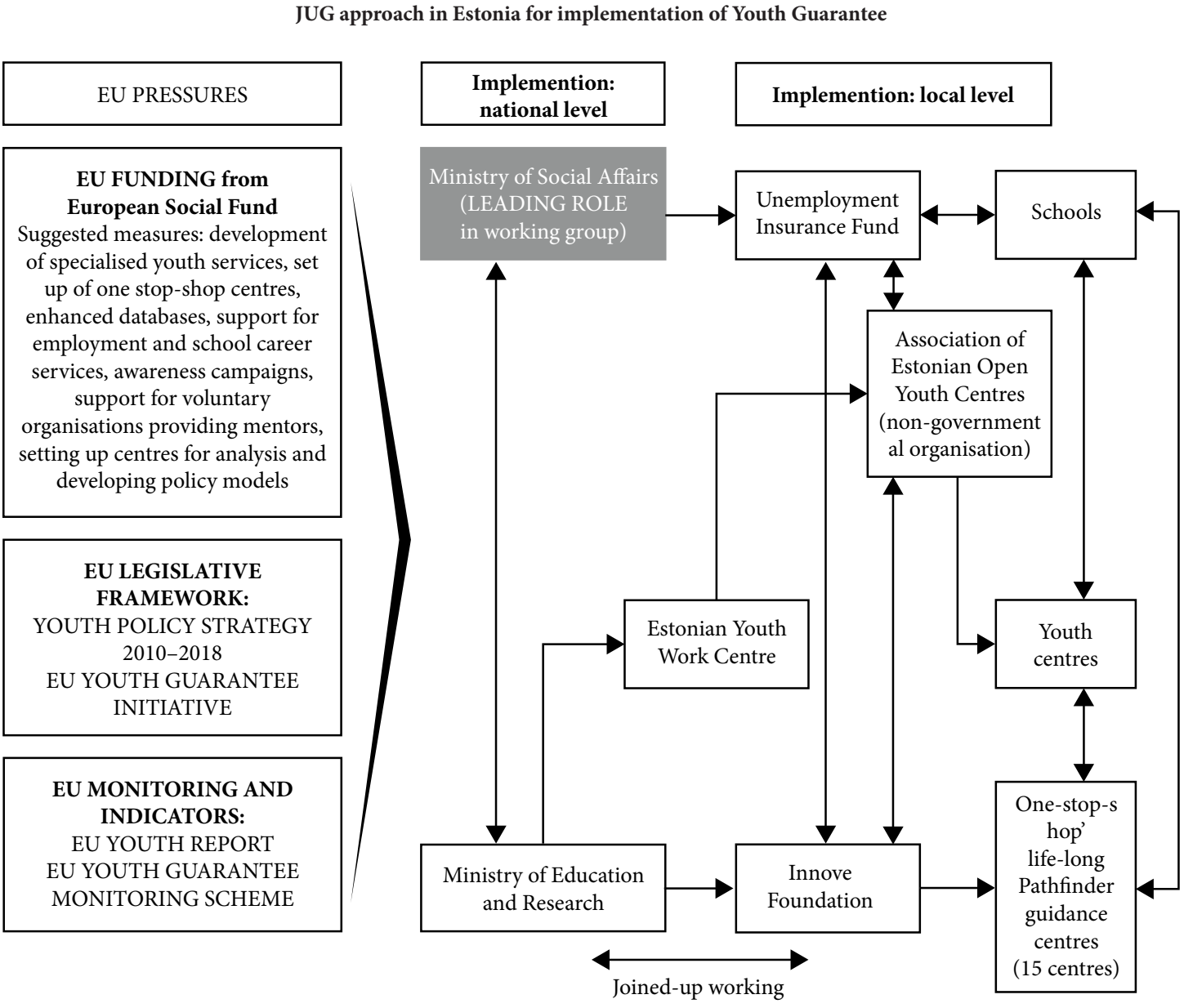
[36] Innove Foundation. (2018) Lifelong Guidance in Estonia. Internet source available at https://www.innove.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/LifelongGuidance_170x240_web.pdf Retrieved:06.02.2019.

[37] Ministry of Social affairs of Estonia. (2014). Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Estonia.

Although interactions between institutions may look rather chaotic because a young person can receive services from all YG actors at the same time or according to their needs, we argue that this type of collaboration represents the nature of joined-up working. Institutions have common goals for working towards youth employability; the interactions are non-hierarchical, and include actors from various policy sectors (youth, education, social policy), various types of organisations (state authorities, state-governed, NGOs), and various governance levels. Figure 1 summarises the institutional arrangement of YG implementation in Estonia. As can be seen, the state's role is not diminished; instead, one ministry (MSA) plays a leading role in coordinating a non-hierarchical cooperation network.

Figure 1. Key organisations jointly implementing the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Estonia.



To conclude, the YG implementation plan has given an important impetus for cooperative working toward a common goal in increasing youth employability. Under the tools for joined-up working proposed by Lagreid et al,[38] Estonia has mainly made use of common objectives with specific indicators, budgeting tools via support from EU structural funds, and a temporary working group led by the MSA and Pathfinder one-stop-shop centres with a full cycle of career and educational guidance services. The Pathfinder network thus far seems to be rather successful in advancing cooperation across governance levels and departments. However, to make the change sustainable, it needs to be supported by policy strategies and action plans. We will turn to this issue in the next section.

Do youth policy strategies support joined-up governance in enhancing youth employability?

Contemporary policymaking is often framed to a greater extent by strategies and action plans than by legal acts. A policy field as novel as youth policy is a good example of this shift. Therefore, we omit the analysis of legal acts here and focus on strategies at the European and domestic levels. Estonian policy strategies are closely linked to EU youth policy and, in the area of employment, this relationship is especially clearly visible. The responsibility for developing a youth policy strategy lies with the Ministry of Education and Science, which involves other ministries, youth agencies and associations according to their area of responsibility.

The National Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013 was the first governmental document to attempt to coordinate the activities of different spheres and integrate them into a coherent policy. The strategy emerged after two EU youth policy documents, namely the EU White Paper on Youth (2001) and Youth Pact (2005). The White Paper urged an increase in cooperation between EU countries in the youth policy and greater account to be taken of youth in sectoral policies. The Youth Pact stressed the adoption of joined-up working to ensure the social inclusion and employment of young people in the EU.

The Estonian Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013 defines youth policy as "a more extensive area—a unified approach to all activities targeted at young people in all areas concerning their lives".[39] The document also highlights the importance of joined-up youth policy and explain its value to young people: "as a result of a joined-up youth policy, a young person is expected to get the experience that will enable successful management of the challenges, choices, and opportunities ahead, including: participation opportunities and experience; studying; creativity and the possibility of self-expression; information and guidance; experience in social membership; safety and welfare; prevention of problems and support in dealing with them."[40] The strategy includes the main mechanisms for the development of the joined-up cross-sectoral approach as the "creation of a cooperation network at the local level and improvement of the cooperation of the concerned ministries."[41] In the Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013, the following polices are included: education, employment, health, culture, social, family, environmental, crime prevention and national defence policies. However, the strategy does not outline how these policy sectors should be connected and what the main responsibilities of these institutions are. The document stresses a broad universal approach to the youth policy, which extends to all main areas of life of young people. Additionally, it focuses mostly on youth work as the main tool for implementing youth policy. The indicators of the youth policy implementation are mostly linked to youth work results.

The next national strategic document, the Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020, was developed to advance the cross-sectoral joined-up approach in youth policy. The key differences from the previous Youth Strategy (2006–2013) include, first, a novel understanding of the concepts of youth policy, and second, greater emphasis on institutional roles and responsibilities.

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[38] Lagreid, P., Randma-Liiv, T., Rykkja, L., Sarapuu, K. (2014). Introduction: Emerging Coordination Practices in European Public Management. In the book "Organising for Coordination in the Public Sector". Palgrave Macmillan UK, p. 4.

[39] Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia. (2006). Estonian Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013, p. 5, Internet source available at https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/noorsootoo_strateegia_eng.pdf (27.02.2018).

[40] Ibid. p. 16.

[41] Ibid. p. 18.

The Development Plan does not make a differentiation between youth policy and youth work. The new concept is a youth field that includes both dimensions and hence can be seen as a step towards more holistic policymaking. The Development Plan also stresses the institutional aspect of cooperation, and defines the main actors responsible for implementing the cooperation that ensures the administrative capacity to run a coordinated project.[42] The responsibilities of the main actors such as the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Culture are clearly defined. The document also contains a list of other effective national strategies and action plans with the aim of showing a more holistic picture of youth policy. Joined-up working with other spheres is required by the document and the need for a comprehensive approach to the lives of young people is explained.

A comparative analysis (Table 1) of these two youth policy documents reveals different meanings and understandings of cross-sectoral joined-up youth policy in general, and the different roles of actors in it. The more recent document stresses the institutional aspects of cooperation and points out the main actors responsible for the implementation of the integrated approach. This shift suggests that joined-up governance today relies on a more sustainable and administratively capable foundation.

Table 1. Differences of the integrated cross-sectoral approach in the Estonian Youth Strategy (2006–2013) and Estonian Youth Field Development Plan (2014–2020). Compiled by the authors.

Differences	Estonian Youth Strategy 2006–2013	Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020
Role of actors	Implementation of Strategy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research, shared with the Estonian Youth Work Centre The following parties and authorities are involved at local, regional and national levels: youth workers, young people and their representative organisations and institutions, parents' councils.	Implementation of the Development Plan is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research, shared with the Estonian Youth Work Centre In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Culture, and subordinate agencies (e.g. Innove, the Police and Border Guard Board, Rescue Board, Unemployment Insurance Fund) and other partners, youth associations, local governments and county governments according to their areas of responsibility are involved.
JUG emphasis	On engagement of individuals in the youth sector	On the role of institutions
Use of terms: youth work, youth policy, youth field	Youth work as the main area; two terms, "youth work" and "youth policy", are used	Youth work and youth policy are integrated in one term: "youth field"
Universal versus targeted approach	Universal youth policy. The strategy gives a list of the main areas of young people's lives and the policy aims.	Targeted youth policy. The plan is directed at concrete youth issues, focusing on concrete priority goals and measures

[42] Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia. (2013). Youth Development Plan 2014–2020. Internet source available at https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/nak_eng.pdf 27.02.2018.

Differences	Estonian Youth Strategy 2006–2013	Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020
Indicators	Few indicators on youth work results Indicators: ■ Youth (7–26 years) involvement in youth work ■ Youth participation in youth associations ■ The number of youth work institutions increases ■ Youth councils in every county and major town	More indicators, including those in employment and education Indicators: ■ Decrease of proportion of young people (aged 18–24) with basic or lower levels of education that do not continue in education ■ Decrease of the youth unemployment rate in the age group 15–24 ■ Involvement of young people in youth work (% of the total number of young people) ■ Regional availability of youth work provisions ■ Number of opportunities for organised participation ■ Satisfaction of young people with youth work ■ Proportion of youth workers taking part in training (per year)

Another important change in building the legal framework of youth policy is an even closer link between domestic and European strategies. The effective EU Youth Strategy (2010–2018) sets a framework for cooperation via two main objectives: to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the labour market; and to encourage young people to participate actively in society. The Estonian Youth Field Development Plan (2014–2020) aims to create opportunities for the self-development and self-realisation of young people that support the formation of a cohesive and creative society. National and European documents on youth employability issues are also similar, as demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Similarities between the EU Youth policy strategy (2010–2018)[43] area "Employment and entrepreneurship" and the Estonian Youth Development Plan (2014–2020)[44] measure toward the employability and labour market inclusion of young people.

EU Youth Policy Strategy (2010–2018)	Estonian Youth Field Development Plan (2014–2020)
Area: Employment and entrepreneurship Address the concerns of young people in employment strategies ■ Invest in the skills employers look for; ■ Develop career guidance and counselling services; ■ Support quality internships/ apprenticeships; ■ Encourage entrepreneurship.	**Measure 2. Increase the labour market inclusion of young people and improve their employability** ■ young people's employability is supported by providing them with opportunities to obtain work experience (including voluntary work) and better understand the world of work, paying particular attention to risk groups; ■ the ability of young people to become entrepreneurs and employers by themselves is enhanced by supporting their initiative and more effectively implementing a variety of youth work provisions for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit to be recognised, and this, among other things, in cooperation with businesses; ■ measures are launched for young people not in education, employment or training by means of youth work services provided by institutions and organisations to support their return to education and/or entry into the labour market.

As far as policy implementation mechanisms are concerned, the EU supports member states for joined-up working. Besides calls for mainstreaming the youth issues across all policy areas and common objectives set in the Youth Policy Strategy, the

[43] European Commission. (2009). Youth Policy Strategy 2010–2018. Internet source available at https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en Retrieved 01.10.2018.

[44] Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia. (2013). Youth Development Plan 2014–2020. Internet source available at https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/nak_eng.pdf Retrieved 27.02.2018.

EU is applying common indicators against which the overall progress towards Strategy objectives is measured. The Youth Report, published every three years, makes progress evaluation public. Since the EU cannot use institutional tools in "soft" policy areas, it turns to strategies, shared objectives and indicators to force joined-up working in the youth field in member states.

In summary, we can see a strengthening of the joint-up approach in national youth policy documents over time, which is supported by similar tendencies at the EU level. In the area of youth employability the joined-up approach is first and foremost characterised by forcing more intense cooperation between actors in education and actors in labour market policies with allocation of clear responsibilities and JUG tools to all parties. Now let us turn to an investigation of civil servants' perceptions, a key factor in the vitality of join-up governance.

Joined-up governance as perceived by civil servants

This section is divided into three parts. Firstly, we will investigate how civil servants understand the meaning of cross-sectoral joined-up youth policy; secondly, we will analyse civil servants' experience with joint working in terms of tools and premises; and finally, we will present civil servants' interpretations of their roles in the new governance situation.

Understanding JUG

The idea of the joined-up approach was generally understandable to most respondents, but nobody was able to provide an exact definition, and the concept of "joined-up youth policy" caused some confusion in interpreting the term. This proves that the joined-up approach in youth policy is not easily achieved because of its broad meaning. For some, the joined-up approach in youth policy means, first of all, including the opinion of youth, whereas the majority stressed the cooperation between various actors from various policy fields.

> "Integrated joined-up youth policy is when young people's wishes and needs are paramount. It is a youth-oriented policy."

> "Joined-up youth policy is actually a networking of various stakeholders. It does not mean that only the youth worker runs around and delivers youth services, but other actors also need to be actively engaged in the process, like teachers, social workers, child protection workers, the police, no matter who, everybody relating to young people."

Respondents also mentioned that joined-up working should have at least one actor with a coordinating role.

> "I see it as close collaboration between different sectors, while I think that it needs to be coordinated by one responsible institution."

One respondent stressed that joined-up working needs a common vision of solving youth issues and shared values between all stakeholders:

> "Integrated means youth policy is not directed towards a specific group like young people, but takes into account the broader picture of youth development. For me, this is not a fixed action of one or two stakeholders, but rather various stakeholders agree on an overall common vision on how to solve problems and provide responses in close cooperation. An integrated approach will work if all stakeholders share common values concerning what a better future for young people is."

Thus, respondents accept the joined-up approach as it is described in the national documents on youth policy. They are aware of the concept of cross-sectoral youth policy and recognise it as a priority. Moreover, they believe that joined-up working requires a shared vision and shared values in order to achieve common goals.

Existing cooperation practices with JUG.

Next, we were interested in determining what joining up looks like to civil servants and how they cooperate and work together. We studied effective cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors when dealing with youth issues and explored the perceived need for even closer joint working. First, respondents were asked to name their partners and how they cooperated with them. Based on the interviews, a comprehensive table of cooperation between various actors is compiled. As Table 3 demonstrates, cooperation more often occurs between actors of the same level of government and within one sector, in particular the youth sector. However, civil servants also pointed out that this cooperation took the form of non-hierarchical collaboration, which can be regarded as a solid premise for JUG. Some respondents also describe working between non-governmental and governmental actors and across various levels of government.

> "The Tallinn City Youth and Sports Department has close cooperation with city municipalities, we also work with the Estonian Youth Work Centre, Estonian Youth Council, cooperation with universities, youth work researchers, even the business sector. Our cooperation is not only with youth work organisations but with other areas, as well."

> "The Estonian agency of the EU's Erasmus Youth Program works with various agencies. We have a county affiliate system. We have partners mostly in each Estonian county and we also try to recruit these partners to achieve the youth program goals. Local youth centres and schools are also our very big partners."

> "The Estonian Open Youth Centre acts as the umbrella organisation. We bring information from the ministry to youth centres, 'translating' from higher to lower levels. We have members in our work from all over Estonia. Thus, this ensures for us that we have a strong voice and can better organise the proposals on the ministry level, and it's easier for us to be heard by the ministry. In this case we are the translator from the bottom to upper levels."

Table 3. Non-hierarchical cooperation between actors in solving youth issues. Source: interviews.

Actors	Partners	Cooperation levels
Ministry of Education and Research; Ministry of Social Affairs	EU institutions, Estonian ministries, youth umbrella organisations, youth researchers, civil society	The same level, upper level (EU) and lower level (local, regional)
Local governments	Municipalities of other EU countries, municipalities of Estonia, local, city and county youth councils, various foundations and organisations from different sectors	The same level, upper level (EU, umbrella organisations)
Youth centres	Schools, youth organisations, local governments, other youth centres, NGOs, the police, Union for Child Welfare, Unemployment Insurance Fund, Estonian Youth Open Centre	The same level, upper levels (regional, national, umbrella organisations)

Actors	Partners	Cooperation levels
Schools	Local municipalities, the police, culture and hobby centres, youth centres, the Estonian Open Youth Centre, Estonian Agency of the EU Youth in Action Program, other schools, the Estonian Union of School Student Councils	The same level, upper level (umbrella organisations)
Youth councils	Local municipalities, student school councils, student university councils, the Estonian National Youth Council	The same level, upper level (umbrella organisations)
Estonian National Youth Council	The Ministry of Education, school and university students' councils, the Estonian Agency of EU Youth in Action Program	The same, i.e. national level
Estonian Association of Open Youth Centres	The Ministry of Education, Estonian Agency of the EU Youth in Action Program, Estonian Youth Work Centre, local municipalities, youth centres	The same, i.e. national level, lower level
Estonian Youth Work Centre	The Ministry of Education, Estonian Agency of the EU Youth in Action Program, youth organisations, PRAXIS think tank	The same, i.e. national level, lower level
Estonian agency of the EU Erasmus Youth Program	The Ministry of Education, youth organisations, youth centres, schools, the Estonian National Youth Council, city governments, the Estonian Youth Work Centre, EU institutions and other agencies of the EU Youth in Action Program in EU member states	The same, i.e. national level, upper level (EU), lower level
Innove Foundation (including Pathfinder centres)	The Ministry of Education, Estonian Unemployment offices, youth centres, schools	The same, i.e. national level

The cooperation can take various forms and be of varying intensities. Based on interviews, we distinguished three modes of operation:

A: an institution works independently, does not cooperate with others (2 respondents out of 23);
B: an institution works with specific partners and rarely engages new partners (15 of 23);
C: an institution works with a range of partners and is active in engaging new partners (6 of 23).

Respondents from categories A and B were mostly government institutions both at central and local levels. Respondents from category C were mostly from youth umbrella organisations or institutions working on youth affairs at the local level, such as youth work centres and Pathfinder centres.

When asked about institutional support or sustainability of cooperation, respondents revealed that such aspects were almost entirely missing in current cooperation practices, or at least respondents were not aware of such mechanisms. For them, cooperation depends heavily on enthusiastic people ("Cooperation quite often depends on individuals' initiatives and is very much based on previous contacts") or is evoked by some temporary project or issue ("Cooperation is short-term in nature and very often based on special projects' objectives"). When the project is finished, "the working group is dissolved" and "this also ends the cooperative practice." Institutions were seen by respondents as barriers rather than facilitators for efficient cooperation, because senior managers are focused more on formalities that do not let them go outside the box.

> "Every organisation has its own goals and priorities that sometimes do not match others."

> "Our organisation has its own strategic plan for next year, there are concrete actions, objectives and even partners. Thus we have to follow our plans. Sometimes we cannot take part in some joined-up working event, because it was not planned in advance in our strategy."

The vague concept of youth policy has been mentioned as an additional barrier that enforces institutional rigidity, as each institution has its own understanding of the field and objectives of youth policy.

> "Youth policy is currently under one ministry. Although the topic of young people should be discussed in every ministry in the same sense, if there is no information about youth as a whole and there is no common understanding about the youth field among ministries, then it cannot really be assumed that cooperation between the other institutions at the local level will emerge."

> "I think the particular needs of young people can be solved in a more effective way if we share more information and good practices between institutions. Quite often, there is a lack of information about partners' activities and programs. If I knew more about all of the programs that our partners provided, I would probably do more networking and cooperation."

The impact of the EU, however, was perceived in a positive way. Several respondents expressed the opinion that EU institutions, with their funding and priority goals in the youth field, have been forcing joined-up working at the national and local levels in Estonia. As an example of a positive EU spill-over, civil servants named Pathfinder centres as good practice for joined-up actions.

> "Inevitably, we have to take into account EU directives and in my opinion, it is a natural process that we rely on in international agreements. On the political side, it gives the opportunity to adjust their legislation, and at the same time provides opportunities for close cooperation with others, to exchange different countries' experience."

> "Due to the general framework and funding mechanisms, every ministry has the obligation to do the work to implement EU recommendations. This is a big plus."

> "The EU provided strong development for better cooperation. The EU also definitely influenced the development of the inter-sectoral approach to youth policy."

The analysis of current practice in cross-sectoral youth policy in Estonia shows that the main premise for JUG is a shared understanding of the cross-sectoral approach to youth policy. The link between effective practices, national youth strategy and an institutional system is, however, largely missing. This means that joined-up working exists at a very early stage, often being just a synonym for cooperation. Joint institutional structures have not emerged, with the exception of the Pathfinder centres. However, the case of Pathfinder unfortunately confirms the project-based character of JUG in Estonia. As explained above, Pathfinder centres have been established under the EU programming period, and in 2020 when the programming period is over, the Pathfinder centres will partially be closed, and their tasks divided between the Unemployment Insurance Fund (career counselling) and educational institutions (career teaching). Thus, there are and will be several institutions playing an important role in youth policy, but the respondents did not provide any clear answers on how such cooperation could be governed. The dominant view was that joined-up working should start at the ministerial level. If cooperation between ministries is ensured, ministries can take the leading role in joining up various actors at the local level.

Personal role in advancing JUG as perceived by actors

According to the interviews, civil servants perceived their roles in JUG in many different ways: as the information holder, informer, communicator, policy implementer, designer of young people's opinions, designer or decision-maker of youth policy, youth representative, fiscal planner, representative of youth interests, planner, counsellor, contributor. One of the main roles that respondents mentioned was "partner", which indicates the internalisation of the non-hierarchical nature

of JUG. Moreover, respondents noted that their roles changed quite often according to cooperation needs, which suggests acknowledging the flexibility and context sensitivity of joined-up working. However, the dilemma of civil servants' autonomy as revealed in previous research came up in this study, too. Respondents said that there were quite often expectations of fixed obligations from them, leaving limited room for changing roles and novel collaboration. Interestingly, they also admitted that adherence to formalised behaviour was sometimes dependent on the people themselves, and not on institutional constraints.

> "The established formalities and structured tasks quite often are not conducive to cooperation, and for me it seemed difficult to jump outside the box."

> "I have concrete tasks, and if my duty ends here I am not supposed to interfere with other areas."

> "It seems to me that this attitude to joined-up working is well formalised, so that the civil servant cannot do anything he wants."

> "For some officials, frames for actions may be made by the institution. Or he has created these frames for himself."

Participants were asked about the knowledge and skills civil servants needed in order to work jointly. Personal characteristics and the will to work collaboratively were considered most important. The interviewees argued that officials should not interfere with interpersonal relationships, but should rather focus on common goals.

> "I still think that personality matters. If you are a person prone to conflict, you cannot have such cooperation. I've also sometimes been combative. I've said a lot of things directly. I feel that half of the things could be saved."

> "A person needs to be social, courageous and open-minded, they need to dare to be involved and get in touch with others. They have to understand the main goals and know when to join up and how much."

> "Personal relationships are hindrances, in that if there has been some kind of personal offence, misconception or misunderstanding, then this will be a hindrance."

Concluding the analysis of civil servants' perceptions and experiences with JUG, we found that they shared a common understanding of the cross-sectoral joined-up youth policy approach, accepted the need for JUG to provide youth services in a more efficient way, and agree that the main premise for JUG was the readiness of actors. The role of institutions was perceived in a vague and rather negative manner. Institutions limit and formalise cooperation, especially with actors from other bodies or sectors. However, central government institutions (i.e. ministries) were assigned the obligatory role of being a leading partner in JUG. They must initiate and launch JUG firstly at the ministerial level; afterwards, it can transition to the local level.

Conclusion

The implementation of JUG in youth policy is a relatively new and challenging area, which is handled by many political agendas at the European and domestic levels. This article has attempted to analyse JUG policy and practice in the area of youth employability in Estonia. We have focused on institutional arrangements; legal strategies and documents in youth policy; civil servants' perceptions; and real experience in joined-up working.

The analysis revealed that joined-up governance in Estonia was supported by appropriate domestic and European policy strategies. The European effect has become significantly more visible in the Youth Field Development Plan (2014–20) compared to the earlier Youth Work Strategy (2010–18). The EU Youth Guarantee initiative forced national governing bodies to revise existing links between the parties involved and to make their responsibilities better defined. In order to stimulate collaboration between different policy sectors, MSA, within the framework of the Youth Guarantee implementation plan, formed a working group of actors from youth, social, and education policies. As result of the EU's intervention, the first one-stop-shop in the field of youth employability in Estonia—the Pathfinder centre network—was established. Pathfinder was seen by civil servants and youth workers as a tangible positive experience of joint working. Therefore, the EU recommendations and funding for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee initiative made the MSA the leading JUG actor in domestic youth policy. The EU, with its strategic documents, measures and indicators, also had its effect on which JUG aim has become the most prominent. Based on empirical analysis, we suggest that an increase in the efficiency of policy outcomes in tackling crosscutting issues by eliciting the contribution of multiple players has outperformed other JUG goals such as policy innovation and better use of financial resources.

In broader terms, joined-up governance in Estonian youth policy largely remains at the rhetorical level, filled with diverse content by various participants. Interviews revealed that cooperation occurred mainly within organisations at the same level, and although there are many signs of non-hierarchical relations, rank-and-file civil servants overwhelmingly expressed the wish to have the ministry as a clear leader in JUG. The interview material unfortunately does not allow us to determine whether this leading role is seen more in terms of steering or command-and-control. Similarly complicated is the expression of a "final word" regarding the perceived importance of institutions versus agencies for successful joined-up working. A majority of interviewees share the scepticism of Bogdanor, Page, Saikku and Karjalainen that existing institutions constrain the progress of JUG. Several others, in contrast, agree with Sullivan and Newman's perspective that personality matters more and a willingness to cooperate can eventually bring about institutional change. A follow-up analysis of the experience of the Estonian Pathfinder centres would probably provide more evidence about the complex interplay between structure and agency.