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# **Pathways to Work**

University Research Programme 2007/2010

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

p.

## Table of Contents

	Introduction	6
1	Added value and intended end product of the programme	9
2	Structure of the programme	11
3	Knowledge input of partners	15
4	Topics within the work programme and project outlines	17
4.1	Institutional environment: The influence of the institutional environment on reintegration service practice	17
4.1.1	Fit or unfit: Towards explicit theories on reintegration services	18
4.1.2	Is chain cooperation effective? A qualitative inventory of chain cooperation in reintegration services and a quantitative evaluation of their effectiveness	18
4.1.3	Reintegration law improvement research	
4.1.4	Research into demand-oriented reintegration to better align labour demand and labour supply	19
4.2	Social environment: The influence of the social environment of clients on their return to work	19
4.2.1	Improving the integration of sick employees through attention for their double role	20
4.2.2	Reintegration of long-term benefit-dependent clients into the labour market. From insight into clients to the development of reintegration projects	20
4.2.3	Reintegration of ethnic minority early school-leavers	21
4.3	Work environment: The effectiveness of reintegration programmes for clients with (chronic) work-related limitations	22
4.3.1	Development and (cost) effectiveness of a participative work-related reintegration strategy to keep one's job in the event of possible absenteeism due to rheumatoid arthritis	22
4.3.2	Promoting the return to work of cancer patients – a randomized controlled study	23
4.3.3	Sustainable reintegration of employees with persistent fatigue	24
4.4	Correlation at project level and choice of the client groups	25
5	Organization and development of a research infrastructure	26
5.1	Organization of reintegration programme improvement research	27
5.2	Development of reintegration service structure for professional practice	27
5.2.1	Projects within the framework of development of reintegration service research infrastructure for professional practice: master classes	28

*'Academics too often get away with the enunciation of broad principles, leaving the hard choices involved in policy formulation and implementation to someone else. But it is these hard choices that test and illuminate the underlying principles. Choices that sometimes require the revisiting and revision of the latter.'*

*(LeGrand (2003) Motivation, Agency and Public Policy, p. 18)*

## **Introduction**

This research programme aims to strengthen academic research into reintegration services in direct interaction with the reintegration field, offering professional practice a broader and better grip over difficult choices in future policy formulation and implementation. The programme contributes both towards scientifically substantiating implementation processes in the area of reintegration services and developing sustainable knowledge in this field. As such, it fills the gap. To date, most research in this area has been ad-hoc, aimed at answering incidental policy questions. Generally, in conducting such research, there is neither the time nor opportunity to elaborate analyses or elevate them to a higher level. The strength of the current research programme lies in its bundling of researcher expertise in a single team representing all disciplines relevant for reintegration – socio-scientific, socio-legal and medical. The programme will function as a flywheel, reinforcing the collective learning capacity of researchers and professional practice in a modern-style social security system. Changes in social security policy take labour participation as the way to generate an income and as a form of social participation. In that context, people – with or without an illness or care duties – are encouraged to continue participating in the labour process until an older age. Employability and sustainable labour participation are the latest catchwords for people on benefits requiring reintegration, and for employees who run the risk of being excluded because of medical, socio-psychological or socio-cultural limitations.

Studies into the effectiveness and efficiency of reintegration projects show that there are numerous explanatory factors as well as broad range of critical success and failure factors. The studies reveal a lack of transparency in relation to the effective factors (De Koning et al., 2005; Heyma, 2005; Glebbeek, 2005). Research into the effectiveness of reintegration often concentrates on which reintegration service instruments are effective. What is missing is the question of *why* specific policy instruments are suitable for reintegration services. The researchers recognize the seriousness of this gap. This is again emphasized in a recent study carried out by the municipality of Rotterdam into the effectiveness of reintegration. "The most important shortcoming is that the reintegration process itself remains largely hidden (a 'black box') and all manner of – not or only partially founded empirically – assumptions are drawn about the substance of the interventions executed. (...) Based on the research method applied, no statements can be made about the way in which projects have contributed towards reducing benefit duration (...) This also conceals 'the effective element' in the reintegration approach for various client groups (Hekelaar, Zwinkels and Braat, 2006:25, 33). As a result, the study offers few starting points for policymakers and implementers focusing on improving reintegration services for highly diverse client groups. The

relevant client groups for this study include benefit recipients under the Unemployment Insurance Act (WW), the Work and Income according to Labour Capacity Act (WIA), the Work and Social Assistance Act (WWB), along with jobseeking youths/school-leavers, single parents, the chronically ill and ethnic minorities. For the chronically ill, individual (non-ill) citizens and society as a whole, the importance of reintegration is too great for it not to be accompanied by systematic scientific research. It is important that benefit agency clients can rely on good supervision upon returning to work, addressing matters related to earnings and social participation, but also structuring daily family life; self-esteem and self-respect are negatively impacted by being excluded.

This research programme focuses largely on these citizens, as it is impossible to incorporate everyone in a single programme. Selecting these client groups was prompted by both substantive (which client groups need to find out about reintegration the most?) and pragmatic reasons (which client groups are most prevalent?).

The lack of insight into the effective mechanisms is (partly) related to the fact that reintegration research in the Netherlands, other than in countries like the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States, is sparingly nurtured by academic research in which an integral approach to policy, implementation, client characteristics and context are taken into account. In addition, Dutch ministerial policy and the manner in which research is commissioned often result in research directed at answering overly concrete sub-questions. The confidence of Dutch citizens in the services has also waned over the last few years and urgently needs to be restored; improving reintegration supervision is part of this process. For society as a whole, successful reintegration could prevent poverty, exclusion and under-utilization of human potential. What's more, it is important for the standing of social policy that where large sums of money are spent on reintegration policy, such policy is implemented with due care, that operative mechanisms and successes can be shared, and that systematic insight is obtained into factors that can promote or impede the success of interventions.

In order to acquire such insight, it is urgently necessary to expand on the issues from a theoretical perspective. A research infrastructure can be created for academic reintegration studies through examining the interaction between the client and various environmental factors in both a theoretical and empirical context.

This research programme provides a starting point, hinging on an examination of the services provided to the client in relation to the most important contexts that determine the success or failure of reintegration: 1) the *institutional environment*, in which policy is implemented and in which far-reaching changes have taken place in recent years; 2) the *social environment* and motivating clients whose attitude to work is expected to change; and 3) the *work environment*, in which both employees and employers must adopt a proactive position preventing people from dropping out and encouraging employees with limitations to participate in the labour process.

The context or environment in which policy is implemented contributes towards shaping reintegration services. It is essentially an *interactive, negotiated process* in which the policy goals themselves are subject to change. A central research premise is therefore that the various environments in which implementation takes place also contribute towards the policy results

achieved. This applies to both the institutional environment of the reintegration services and the client's work environment. In addition, the client's social environment also influences reintegration. By linking the nature and impact of these environments on the policy results, we can offer the parties involved in the reintegration process (policymakers, implementation organizations and professional service providers) better insight into factors that play a role in the often laborious process between initiated and realized policy. Improving the degree of insight into the link between environments and results can, in turn, serve to promote the legitimacy and effectiveness of reintegration services.

## **1 Added value and intended end product of the programme**

The *substantive* added value of the proposed programme lies in an overview of operative factors in the client's various environments. The programme could contribute towards generating new theoretical and useful practical insights by continuing to build on existing traditions of research into specific interventions with various client groups (reintegration of income support clients and socio-medical research into chronic illnesses) on one hand, and by studying the connections between the various environments on the other.

Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the interaction between the three environments and the client; the client is seen as a pivot in the interaction between the three environments. In addition, the dynamic relationships between the three environments are represented.

The contribution of the programme to new *theoretical and useful practical insights* lies in:

- The dynamism that exists in the relationships between the various environment characteristics; in the relationship between the working, social and institutional environments. Do they speak the same language, do they have the same goals and how are mutual activities aligned?
- What are the internal shortcomings of the various environments and are these known to the 'stakeholders' (target groups, implementing parties, policy makers and employers)? What does this mean for a client functioning in these different environments?
- Where do the various environments overlap in their contribution towards reintegration and where are there gaps between these environments? How do clients deal with them?
- The comparison of client characteristics. Are the various client groups distinguished from each other in accordance with the degree of motivation, competence, social environment, limitations and opportunities for reintegration?

In short, this means that the added value of the programme consists of:

- 1) Making the client perspective central in relation to the three environments that influence reintegration;
- 2) Studying the specific dynamics of each of the three environments;
- 3) The influence of the dynamic relationship between the three environments that influence reintegration.

The *methodical and infrastructure* added value of the programme lies in:

- \* The multidisciplinary approach, making use of socio-scientific, medical, and socio-legal knowledge in separate projects and in the programme as a whole.
- \* The multi-actor approach in various projects, studying policy implementers, clients, care providers (doctors and case workers), employers and managers of administrative agencies and the mutual relations between these groups.
- \* The multi-method approach in various projects, using statistical analyses, qualitative interviews, interventions, observations and document analysis.

- \* The cooperation between various research institutes, guaranteeing good feedback from various disciplinary experts on the progress of the projects.
- \* By building up a network of reintegration researchers, reintegration companies, government bodies and their employees, client organizations and employers, a knowledge infrastructure is established to promote the client's reintegration.

The *practical value* of the programme lies in its usability for all the parties involved in reintegration. In addition to theoretical and empirical findings, the end report will contain recommendations aimed at improving internal aspects of the various client environments and the degree of interaction and alignment between the various environments. In concrete terms, the end report will provide recommendations on whether and how the motivation of specific client groups could be improved by specific interventions in the social environment, the work environment or the institutional environment, and what form of intervention would be the most appropriate. Necessary measures will also be outlined to improve the alignment of the various environments, identifying gaps between formulated policy and the interpretation thereof by the policy implementers. Finally, the end report will outline the results of the expert meetings between scientists, policymakers and policy implementers that facilitated the continuous exchange of views and promoted broad-based professionalization throughout the research programme.

Figure 1: The three environments in relation to the client



## 2 Structure of the programme

In recent years, policy implementation has received more attention. For a long time, policy implementation was merely seen as implementing policymakers' goals. Policy was then evaluated by assessing whether the results satisfied the goals set, at the lowest possible cost (efficiency). For example, a recent evaluation report (De Koning et al., 2005) determined that such evaluations do not provide sufficient insight into the 'unobserved characteristics' of clients such as motivation and social environment, and that the potential effectiveness of policy instruments can only be properly investigated if the way in which the instruments are shaped is taken into account in the study, which is seldom the case. Policymakers often lack the patience to identify – on the basis of careful research – why unintended effects occur and quickly latch onto new instruments to deal with gaps in existing policy. However, it is slowly becoming clear that hierarchical, instrumental research frameworks fall short. According to Wildavsky: "Implementation takes place within an evolutionary framework" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Policy implementation involves more than implementing specified goals alone. It is sooner an *interactive, negotiated process* in which goals themselves are subject to change. The context or environment in which policy implementation takes place coupled with the type of client serve to determine how reintegration services are shaped. With the separation of policy and implementation, differences in decisions and outcomes are referred to as policy deviations (Sabatier, 1986), which must be tackled with a multitude of control measures and drawing strict boundaries with regard to discretionary powers.

Implementers and clients function as interpreters of (centralized) policy. The contexts in which these actors operate contribute towards determining the impact and results of the policy pursued. The emphasis in terms of implementation lies on the problem the policy was formulated to address and not so much on the goals of the policy. The nature and method of implementation not only determine the success or failure of policy, but the environment also defines the nature of the policy (Schofield, 2001: 252).

In steering reintegration policy, account must be taken of processes in the labour market, the social environment and motivation of the people to be reintegrated, as well as their employment situation. Each of these three aspects is characterized by its own processes and goals, which at least partly determine the result and impact of policy. Or, to cite Pressman and Wildavsky: "It is intelligent to alter objectives to fit resources, to adjust programs to face facts, as well as to fit resources to objectives" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984).

### *Institutional environment*

American research shows that choices made by management and frontline workers for certain strategies and reintegration instruments have a significant impact on the result of reintegration efforts (Bloom et al., 2003; OECD, 2005). Research into the relationship between programme implementation – or how reintegration programmes (caseload, enforcement, knowledge of and personal attention for clients, etc.) work in practice – and governance (organizational design, steering mechanisms, relationships between actors in the field) must clarify the effectiveness of strategies and instruments. Our theoretical premise recognizes that reintegration is a form of case work. Reintegration theories are therefore theories of case work built up of diagnosis and

treatment, taking account of environmental factors inherent to the person or beyond. It also implies that implementation practice can be characterized as professional, because it involves the application of general insights and principles in specific cases and circumstances (cf. Van der Veen, 1990). An interesting parallel arises with rehabilitation research. Rehabilitation research also concerns individually oriented interventions directed at a combination of recovery and activation, and the problem of a lack of theory is emphasized here too. Of course, rehabilitation is geared towards more goals than reintegration alone and reintegration is not limited to occupational disability, but the overlap between both areas is interesting, particularly in a methodical sense. While recovery and activation are weighted differently, they are always present, because with respect to both the disabled and the long-term unemployed, obstacles must first be overcome before the end goal of a job can be achieved. Rehabilitation literature points out that the necessary theory must emphasize how interventions work and how they can be improved by the client in question. It is relevant in this respect to signal that rehabilitation research increasingly emphasizes the importance of psychosocial and environmental factors (Pransky et al., 2005). It is clear that these factors are also of great importance for reintegration research. The basic mechanisms employed by reintegration policy must be distinguished, as well as the specific circumstances under which these mechanisms are utilized; these are decisive for their effectiveness.

Research projects to be elaborated under this pillar in the forthcoming period are geared towards practice within the chain, particularly the practical strategies of reintegration companies. While the research focuses on the Netherlands, for more general or specific choices, reference will be made or alignment sought with parallel research in other countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, which are ahead in some respects (Sol and Westerveld, 2005).

#### *Social environment of the client*

An important yet often overlooked factor in relation to reintegration services that could explain why they are effective or supported, if at all, is the role of the client's social environment on resuming employment coupled with motivational aspects (Parsons, 1951; Gerhardt, 1989; Van Wel & Knijn, 2001). Although reintegration practice shows that perception of opportunities in the labour market coupled with (a lack of) support from the environment contributes towards determining successful reintegration, Dutch policy so far (although less so for implementation) is based on an atomized individual. Consequently, too little attention has been paid to knowledge of operative mechanisms arising from the perception of opportunities and the social environment. This project theme seeks to fill this gap by mapping the social environment and motivation for various client groups; a choice has been made for the most vulnerable client groups. The research focuses on ethnic minority early school-leavers, partially disabled employees and long-term benefit-dependent clients. Questions that will be addressed under this pillar in projects include the following. What role do the social environment and client's motivation play in returning to the labour process? How do the various client roles relate to each other in terms of disability (inability to perform the work role) and deviancy (the – unintentional – wish not to perform the work role). Positively formulated, this concerns the client's motivation and ability to accept work. Research into clients who are difficult to place or whose psychological, medical or social limitations could cause a hindrance is conducted to create a better profile of these clients. The insights acquired in this manner are used to test and

improve the knowledge and instruments of professional administrators of the reintegration policy in both work and institutional environments. Do they have insight into the influence of the social environment, the clients' capacities and motivation, and into what instruments they can use to make positive changes in this respect? The research is innovative in that it links insight into the possibilities and limitations of clients to the resources professional administrators have to exercise influence over those specific qualities.

#### *Work environment*

Labour-related variables play an important role in successfully reintegrating both ill and non-ill employees (Frings-Dresen, 2003). The awareness of the importance of research into the role of the employer in the reintegration process is becoming stronger in socio-medical research. Reintegration must be linked and aligned with the employability of (potential) employees. Not by making them better and/or training them first and then only going (back) to work, but by combining work experience and (potential) employability (place-and-train policy). Employment opportunities, not limitations, form the premise; the managers and (ill) employee share a role in directing this. However, little is known about how these are connected and how in combination they can determine success or failure. The lack of knowledge stems from the lack of a connection between socio-medical research and reintegration research in a labour market perspective. Dutch reintegration research includes labour market-oriented reintegration research, which evaluates outcomes (motivation, costs and benefits), and socio-medical research, which seeks to present solutions based on the nature of labour-related limitations. Up to this point, they are two distinct yet unconnected worlds. Research that connects both can indicate why service is effective, because it focuses on the conditions and circumstances under which the work environment can make socio-medical service successful. This provides better insight into the operative mechanisms. Intervention research projects focusing on chronic diseases are elaborated under this pillar. The choice for the chronically ill is based on the increasing number of chronically disabled people in both the general and working population (1.8 million people with an occupational disability in the age category of 20 to 65), and the high priority awarded to promoting chronically disabled workers in the labour process in government and social partner policy. The reasons for this are not only economic and socio-demographic, but also relate to health care. Moreover, chronically disabled workers are generally very motivated to stay at or return to work. Exactly how they are to achieve this is not clear. Although the support of chronically disabled workers by managers and colleagues is considered an important prerequisite for labour participation, it is still only marginally researched and evaluated. Additionally, the quality and method of support by (curative) care providers in conjunction with occupational health professionals could still be improved (Varekamp et al., 2006). In short, while it would seem desirable to involve the employer and colleagues – in addition to specialists – in the reintegration of the chronically disabled, the ultimate proof of the success of this approach is not yet available.

The choice of ailments/chronically disabled (people with cancer, rheumatism and chronic fatigue) involved in the programme is based on the increasing prevalence of preventing the ailments and related (complex) labour-related problems. The added value is that a reintegration strategy is being studied for these chronic ailments that can be applied to other (chronic) ailments if proven

effective, and within other contexts. The collective participation of (medical) professionals, the employer and the patient in the reintegration path of a chronically disabled worker is an innovative aspect to the programme.

### **3 Knowledge input of partners**

The programme-based cooperation between the three partners consists of expertise in the area of reintegration from different perspectives: the client's institutional, social and work environment in the return to work. The three perspectives are elaborated in greater detail in project proposals. The research is directed at aligning the perspectives to form an integrated reintegration model. The three specified 'environments' are therefore not separate. Successful reintegration comes a step closer through integrating the three perspectives.

The **Hugo Sinzheimer Institute** (HSI) is an interdisciplinary research institute of the **University of Amsterdam** in the area of labour and law. It carries out legal and socio-scientific research in the research fields of the labour market, reintegration and social security, labour relationships and working conditions, both of its own volition and on the instruction of others. The Hugo Sinzheimer Institute now has fifteen years' experience with research in the area of labour law and social security law and policy, institutional environment (governance and implementation) and instruments. For example, within the framework of the 'individual and collective' research programme, successful research was conducted in the past few years into the use of the private instrument contract for public reintegration policy. The institute's goal is to raise research quality by means of cooperation in research networks and research institutions (AIAS, etc.). It participates as a partner in a significant number of largely international, research networks in the area of labour market and reintegration, and plays an initiating role in this respect (Translam, Transwell, ESRN, OECD/LEED, EIRO, TWRM), and also enjoys good relations with international organizations including ILO and OECD. In 2003, the Hugo Sinzheimer Institute underwent a quality review by an external visiting committee under the chairmanship of a former Procurator General of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands. The committee's report shows that the opinion on the quality of the HSI research is positive. The positive elements identified include a wide range of scientific publications, a considerable volume of assignment research and a high percentage of completed research traineeship projects. The quality within the institute is safeguarded by periodic consultation of the scientific staff, a properly detailed training programme and regular intervention.

The *Social Policy and Interventions and Integration* (SOPINS) research programme of the **General Social Sciences** department of the **University of Utrecht** started up in September 2005 and focuses on studying social policy and social interventions from an interdisciplinary perspective, in particular with regard to the relationship between clients and professionals in the context of policy and organization changes inspired by new governance. There is a lot of expertise within the research group in the area of activating policy for underprivileged clients from a policy and intervention perspective and from a cultural-sociological and socio-psychological approach involving capabilities. SOPINS researchers participate in various European research networks such as the Network of Excellence 'Reconciling Work and Welfare' and the 'Transnational Research on Second Generation Youth' (both 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programmes of the European Commission) research programme. SOPINS forms part of the Amsterdam School of Social Science Research (ASSR) that takes care of the research traineeship training programme. Additionally, research trainees and postgraduate students participate in various courses on research methods, in the Comparative

Social Policy Analysis forum days, and the doctoral courses of European Social Policy Analysis Network / ESPAnet).

The **Coronel Institute for Labour and Health, Academic Medical Centre** (AMC) of the **University of Amsterdam** is a WHO Collaborating Centre in Occupational Health and is the biggest university department in the area of occupational health in the Netherlands. The department is a well-known research institute in the area of occupational health, research into the effectiveness of measures/treatment within company and insurance medicine, empowerment of chronically disabled workers with regard to access to retention of and return to work, socio-medical supervision of sick employees, guideline development and evaluation. The Coronel Institute is closely involved in the infrastructure for information provision on employment and health. There is long-term and structural cooperation with various partners at home and abroad. The institute is involved in various courses including the NSPOH (Netherlands School of Public and Occupational Health). Internationally, very good contacts have been established with the WHO, ILO, International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) and European Association of Schools of Occupational Medicine (EASOM). In this programme, the Coronel Institute primarily contributes knowledge about evidence-based actions within reintegration processes.

## **4 Topics within the work programme and project outlines**

In line with the main premise, the work programme for reintegration improvement research is built up along the three 'environments' in which the reintegration services are provided. When elaborating the programme into themes and subsequently, projects, a choice was made for a twofold approach to support the further development of the universities as knowledge centres in the area of reintegration services. In order to simultaneously broaden the group of reintegration researchers and generate an acceleration drive, the programme partners included both postgraduate projects and research traineeship projects: the research traineeship projects to broaden the range of researchers active in the area in the long term; the postgraduate projects with a group of recognized experts in the field, in order to generate a quality drive in the short term in (research into) improving reintegration services. The three topics and their projects will then be presented.

### **4.1 Institutional environment: The influence of the institutional environment on reintegration service practice**

*Coordinator: Dr C.C.A.M. Sol (HSI/UVA)*

A great deal of exploratory research has been conducted in recent years in the theme area of the institutional environment. There is an urgent need for further research to be conducted by senior researchers. Unlike the two other theme areas, this area focuses less on effectiveness as such, but explores underlying causes of (in)effectiveness. The theme is built up of four sub-research programmes, the joint characteristic of which is that a) the same institutions play a decisive role in an ever-varying constellation, and b) a more in-depth analysis of the institutional topics has remained in its infancy, while knowledge on these topics is of vital importance for professional practice. In view of the complexity of each of the topics, a choice has been made for professional, experienced researchers with a great deal of expertise to carry out each of the studies.

#### *Project 1.1 Fit or unfit: Towards explicit theories on reintegration services*

Research team: Dr A.C. Glebbeek (Soc. Inst./RUG), Dr C.C.A.M. Sol (HSI/UVA), A.J.E. Edzes (CAB), Dr F.H. Tros (HSI/UVA)

The aim of this project is to come up with a number of well-founded and policy-relevant reintegration theories. In this respect, our primary focus is not on academic theories that are presented in magazines or academic publications; the practical theories, the theories-in-use, of those people who make daily decisions about the deployment of reintegration tools are equally important. Practical theories and academic theories together form the policy theories on which every policy is based – explicitly or implicitly. The relationship between the two sources differs from case to case, but does not form the most important issue. It is important that both types of theories are joined together in a more refined and more effective system of knowledge.

Theories of reintegration services are scarce; review on the basis of theories hardly takes place. To date, the research is primarily geared to effectiveness. That is why there is often a lack of knowledge about *why* reintegration services are or are not effective. This research attempts to fill this theory gap by making use of practical theories, such as those used by the professionals in their

daily decisions and converting them into reintegration instruments. The project consists of developing a method to achieve substantively relevant and usable classifications, and then reviewing them on the basis of 1,000 cases. To this end, use will be made of a double professional learning strategy: (a) systematic case evaluation: why was the reintegration successful or unsuccessful? (b) accumulation of experience: what patterns can be detected in the case evaluations and how can they be incorporated in more refined theory? This research provides an instrument for the organization of the auto-didactic ability of the professional reintegration practice of reintegration companies.

*Project 1.2 Is chain cooperation effective? A qualitative inventory of chain cooperation in reintegration services and a quantitative evaluation of their effectiveness*

*Research team: Dr M. de Graaf-Zijl (SEO/UVA), Y. Hoogtanders (PP)*

With the introduction of the SUWI Act, responsibility for reintegrating jobseekers has been assigned to the CWI, municipalities and UWV. The three partners are expected to work together at a regional level and, if possible, to cooperate with educational institutions, employers and reintegration companies to limit the inflow into the benefits system and to promote the outflow. In order to promote chain cooperation, the three parties are encouraged to develop joint service concepts and offer their services from shared premises in the form of a one-stop shop. In addition, cabinet has encouraged the establishment of Regional Labour Market Policy Platforms, within which the three chain partners, together with employers and educational institutions, attempt to improve the alignment between supply and demand on the labour market. In the meantime, a large number of joint service concepts have been developed and implemented, and shared premises have been realized at over 50 locations in the Netherlands. This research answers the question to what extent chain cooperation effectively reduces the inflow into the benefits system (WW, social welfare, NUG) and increases the outflow of these groups, and which forms of chain cooperation are most effective in this respect.

*Project 1.3 Reintegration law improvement research*

*Research team: Prof. M. Westerveld, Dr R. Knegt, Dr C.C.A.M. Sol (HSI/UVA)*

Reintegration law concerns developments and requirements emerging from the dynamic reintegration and labour market, which appears to be becoming ever more competitive, flexible and informal, creating tension with the social security law.<sup>1</sup> Legal game rules are also subject to change. Privatization gives rise to new legal questions.<sup>2</sup> With the shift towards privatization, the reintegration field has been confronted with legal issues that 'didn't cause a problem' in the past when everything was still done publicly. Public and private law (game) rules change and new European rules have given rise to a new legal context. Against this new backdrop, it is proving difficult to optimally link law and policy.

The Reintegration Law Improvement Research project is exploratory research aimed at developing a legal reference framework for regulations and policy within reintegration law. The project focuses less on the implementation of existing structures and more on developing new law and policy. The

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<sup>1</sup> E. Sol and M. Westerveld 2005.

<sup>2</sup> See E. Sol & M. Westerveld 2005; E. Sol 2003.

key question is one of identifying what criteria should contribute towards determining the legality of intended regulations in the area of reintegration law in the legal arena in the Netherlands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Project 1.4 Research into demand-oriented reintegration to better align labour demand and labour supply*

*Research team: Dr A.O.J. Heyma (SEO/UVA), C. van Klaveren (SEO/UVA)*

Reintegration services can help to (1) unite jobseekers and vacancies, (2) reduce discrepancies in offered and requested competencies, and (3) to motivate jobseekers to accept a job. In recent years, reintegration services focused primarily on the deployment of instruments to increase the employability of non-workers (supply-oriented reintegration). Labour-demand-oriented reintegration places greater emphasis on the premise that the competencies of jobseekers can be aligned to the competencies requested in vacancies, and that this is also necessary to achieve the quicker resumption of work for jobseekers. But while the deployment of reintegration projects leads primarily to better uniting jobseekers and vacancies or to motivating jobseekers to accept a job, demand-oriented reintegration offers little added value over and above supply-driven reintegration. On the other hand, a more highly segregated labour market provides an urgent need for the deployment of instruments leading to development of the right competencies. The key research question therefore reads: *"To what extent can demand-oriented reintegration better unite labour demand and labour supply?"*

In order to answer this, we formulated three research questions:

1. How can future demand for labour be translated into demand for competencies?
2. To what extent do the competencies of jobseekers who fill vacancies align with the competencies requested for those vacancies? On the basis of the alignment can one speak of a more or less highly segregated labour market? How does matching vary between competencies, as well as the degree of segregation in the labour market into cyclical circumstances and regional institutional factors?
3. To what extent does the deployment of reintegration instruments result in better aligning the requested and offered competences? What is the role of education in this respect?

The research consists of an economic-theoretical foundation, the formulation of hypotheses and an empirical review of these hypotheses based on econometric analyses of the connection between the characteristics of labour demand and labour supply. It therefore aligns with reintegration practice, while simultaneously providing a missing scientific and economic grounding for the need to deploy demand-driven reintegration.

#### **4.2 Social environment: The influence of social environment of clients on their return to work**

*Coordinator: Dr G.C.M. Knijn (ASW/UU)*

The theme area of the client's social environment takes the potential, wishes and expectations of benefit recipients themselves as the basis for returning to work. The research focuses both on ethnic minority early school-leavers, on partially disabled employees and on long-term benefit-dependent clients. Each of these groups enjoys a very difficult relationship with the labour market,

if any, and also shares specific characteristics and social environments that influence opportunities for labour participation. It is innovative in that in addition to hard impeding and limiting factors and 'unobserved' factors, attention is also paid to both impeding and stimulatory environmental factors such as family ties ('benefits culture') and the social community ('volunteer work') of the client. The theme area encompasses three research projects.

*Project 2.1 Improving the integration of sick employees through attention for their double role*

*Research team: Dr M. Peeters-Bijlsma (ASW/UU) postgraduate, Prof. G.C.M. Knijn, Dr R. Abma, Dr F. van Wel*

Illness and recovery are often projected after each other in time, like shifting from the working role to the sick role and vice versa. However, policy relating to occupational disability is geared to both roles increasingly being performed simultaneously, e.g. with employees who have been partly rejected for medical reasons. This research intends to outline the situation experienced by this employee category and therefore contributing towards absenteeism theory and reintegration, and improving the supervision of partially disabled employees geared towards their long-term reintegration.

The research focuses on the reintegration of clients partly dependent on WIA (Work and Income according to Labour Capacity Act) benefits who also work part time. A characteristic of these clients is that they hold two positions simultaneously: they are employees and receive benefits, which makes them 'semi-autonomous' as it were.

The key question in this research is how these clients maintain this double position, what developments they undergo during this process and what efforts they themselves, their working environment, in this case employers and the institutional environment, being the professionals who supervise them (personnel specialists and reintegration employees), (can) undertake to promote long-term participation in the labour market for the full percentage of their occupational ability. Comparing reintegration projects (inside and outside of companies), research will be directed at identifying *best practices* that contribute towards establishing a long-term, optimal connection with work.

*Project 2.2 Reintegration of long-term benefit-dependent clients into the labour market. From insight into clients to the development of reintegration projects*

*Research team: V. Koppenrade (ASW/UU) trainee researcher, Prof. G.C.M. Knijn, Dr R. van Berkel, Dr F. van Wel*

As social security policy is primarily based on the goal of having everyone participate in paid labour while at the same time a large group of long-term benefit-dependent and disadvantaged clients exists, when evaluating options for reintegration, insight into factors which stimulate or prevent the client from returning to the labour market is vital. This knowledge is only present to a limited extent because for some time no special attention was paid to options for carrying out paid labour for former phase 4 clients. Moreover, research attention was either focused on specific groups of benefit recipients (such as disabled employees and single mothers) or on a limited number of generally 'hard' factors (age, gender, employment experience and medical limitations), while

'unobserved' factors such as the perception of opportunities for reintegration and the influence of the social environment have received less attention.

The first goal of this research is to develop profiles for long-term benefit-dependent clients in the labour market. Insight will be gained into the participation situation, the wishes and opportunities for long-term benefit dependents (people on social welfare and the partially disabled) paying particular attention to the experienced and perceived opportunities to be able to participate in activities that could contribute towards gaining access to the labour market (reintegration projects, education, forming a volunteer network or social activation, subsidized labour or care). It can be assumed that improving the perception of these activities would influence the chances of return to a significant extent. Research will also be carried out into the client's social environment and into the question of how environmental factors relate to the psycho-social and socio-cultural factors and capacities of clients. This leads to the development of an integral approach to client factors that could result in a better profile for various groups of benefit recipients.

The second goal of this research is to contribute towards developing social interventions that contribute towards the return to the labour market of long-term benefit recipients by providing insight into the capacities of social professionals in the institutional environment, i.e. reintegration supervision, and the need for insight, resources and skills to improve the reintegration process in such way that the *capacities* of clients can be better supported.

*Project 2.3 Reintegration of ethnic minority early school-leavers*

*Research team: K. van Zenderen (ASW/UU) trainee researcher, Prof. R. Maier, Dr W. de Graaf*

Unemployment among ethnic minority youths has been increasing in recent years, particularly among youths without starting qualifications (early school-leavers) who have a greater chance of unemployment. Compared to indigenous youths, a considerable number of ethnic minority youths do not participate in education and the labour market: two to three times as many (Ministry of Education, Culture and Welfare, 2006).

This means that young ethnic minority men are at particular risk of losing the link with society; they leave school without a diploma more often than ethnic minority girls, are unemployed far more often and score relatively high in criminality figures. An additional problem is that this group of youths is difficult to reach for benefits agencies because, due to their age, they are not eligible for benefits, or because they earn an income in the criminal circuit or are being taken care of by their families.

Because we assume that the goal of (re)integration goes beyond saving on benefits through 'return-to-work' alone, this study examines ethnic minority early school-leavers and their ambitions, options and socio-cultural environment in order to contribute towards gaining insight into how reintegration projects can be developed to enable these youths to achieve financial independence in Dutch society.

The goal of the project is twofold. First, the goal is to gain more insight into the experiences of youths with inclusion and exclusion in education, labour and other spheres of life, and in the perspectives and strategies for action they have themselves developed in this respect. Second, there is exploration into what initiatives are offered in the social environment, in this case the local

situation, with what effects to facilitate the transition to the labour market for these youths and how these initiatives can be improved by seeking alignment with their capacities and life experience.

#### **4.3 Work environment: The effectiveness of reintegration programmes for clients with (chronic) work-related limitations**

*Coordinator: Prof. M.H.W. Frings-Dresen (UVA/AMC)*

In practice, many activities in the area of reintegration are undertaken without any insight into the degree of effectiveness of the actions with regard to returning to work. Moreover, due to changing legislation, pressure has increased to reintegrate clients quickly and effectively. In the curative sector, actions are primarily focused on medical recovery and not on social functioning with a limitation/ailment. Barring exceptions, medical specialists have little knowledge of work-related problems, and occupational health and safety professionals have little knowledge of chronic illnesses (Varekamp et al., 2006). More knowledge and better communication between professionals, employer and the client are desirable for an optimal client reintegration. Given the lack of knowledge on the effectiveness of action in (curative) care focused on the quality of life and work with a chronic illness, this theme was added to the programme, emphasizing the effectiveness of interventions.

*Project 3.1 Development and (cost) effectiveness of a participative work-related reintegration strategy to keep one's job in the event of possible absenteeism due to rheumatoid arthritis  
Research team: Dr J.L. Hoving postgraduate, Dr J.K. Sluiter (UVA/AMC), Prof. M.H.W. Frings-Dresen*

Patients diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) have a strong chance of losing the ability to work and, consequently, their jobs (between 33% and 44% of RA patients). The number of RA patients in the working population is approx. 79,000. Dutch research shows that labour participation fluctuates between 39% and 47%. Of the people being treated by a rheumatologist, around half develop deformations and/or reduced functionality or disability.

Given the fact that RA patients run a greater risk of becoming disabled, the question is what measures would be effective for patients with RA to maintain their ability to work (longer). Little research has been conducted into an approach geared to the work situation for RA patients. Previous research shows that employees who followed a participative approach returned to work earlier than employees who received care as usual.

This research seeks to answer two questions: 1) What customized participative reintegration strategy (organizational, psycho-social, ergonomic) geared to the work situation, could be developed for RA patients to retain their jobs?; and 2) What is the (cost) effectiveness of a newly developed participative reintegration strategy for patients with RA vis-à-vis a care-as-usual group to keep their jobs?

In developing a participative reintegration strategy, use is made of available research and expert meetings are organized for professionals (and patients). For the participative approach, patient, direct manager, company director and rheumatism expert function as a team. Communication,

information for the employer and work environment, and participative work adjustments form an important part of intervention. During the reintegration period, an expert/process supervisor performs the role of coach/supervisor, both for the patient and the team members. The expert/process supervisor also consults with the patient on an individual basis and makes use in this respect of cognitive-behavioural insights. The ultimate goal is to evaluate this reintegration strategy by means of a randomized experimental study (RCT).

*Project 3.2 Promoting the return to work of cancer patients – a randomized controlled study*

*Research team: S. Tamminga trainee researcher, Prof. F.J.H. van Dijk, Dr A.G.E.M. de Boer, Dr J.H.A.M. Verbeek (UVA/AMC), Prof. M.H.W. Frings-Dresen (UVA/AMC)*

Every year, some 14,000 employees are diagnosed with cancer in the Netherlands. Important aspects of the reintegration process for patients who survive cancer include returning to work and keeping one's job. Despite increasing acknowledgement that interventions promoting reintegration into work must be designed and evaluated, such interventions have yet to be developed.