

On Track conference - Different youth work approaches for different NEET situations

Bratislava, Slovakia

13-16 April 2016

Trainers' Report



About the conference

This conference was an **international event** for professionals from different sectors about creating better opportunities for young people in NEET situation in society and on the labour market. Young people in NEET situation is a rising issue across Europe and reducing this is a policy goal at European level.

The event took place in **Bratislava, Slovakia between 13-16 April 2016**. It was a follow-up to a seminar held in Finland in 2014 entitled 'What is Your NEET' (www.salto-youth.net/neetseminar) and to **iNEETiative seminar** which took place in Bucharest, Romania in May 2015- www.salto-youth.net/ineetiativeseminar, which both welcomed cross-sectoral stakeholders from formal, non-formal and business backgrounds to work together to find innovative and realistic methods of reaching and connecting with young people who are currently in a difficult life situation.

The conference focused on **sharing and exploring good practices in working with people in NEET situation**, coming from the **SALTO Inclusion** and participants' experiences. Part of the activities involved participants visiting successful local projects in Bratislava, working with this target group. The participants had the opportunity to hear presentations from international and local experts as well as sharing their own good practice with the rest of the group.

The **aim of the conference was to promote sustainable cooperation between professionals from different sectors** in order to create better opportunities for young people in a NEET situation, to enable their active involvement in society and integration into the labour market. More specifically the **objectives** of the conference were:

1. To highlight variety of resources on young people in a NEET situation, including SALTO Inclusion study "On Track".
2. To explore different NEET realities across Europe and different types of practices.
3. To exchange the possible ways to work together and stimulate development of cross-sectorial partnership projects for youth in a NEET situation.
4. To explore possibilities of the Erasmus+ programme, in addressing the issues that young people in a NEET situation are facing.

The seminar was organised and hosted by the **Slovakian National Agency** for the **Erasmus+ Programme** - in cooperation with the **SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre** and with support of the **Turkish and Belgium-FR E+: YiA National Agencies**. The conference gathered 42 professionals from different sectors: youth work, education, social work, employment, working on topic of NEET. **Seventeen European countries** participated in this conference: Belgium-FL, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.

Agenda

Wed 13th April	Thurs 14th April	Fri 15th April	16th
	Who is on the train? Voices of YP who are in NEET situation 9.30- 11.00	What routes can we take? Working with YP in NEET Situation 9.30- 11.00	Departure after Breakfast
	Coffee break -11.00-11.30	Coffee break -11.00-11.30	
Arrivals in time for Lunch	What NEET track is Europe on? 11.30-13.00	What routes can we take?: Working with YP in NEET Situation 11.30-13.00	
Lunch -14.00-15.30	Lunch -13.00 - 14.30	Lunch -13.00 -14.30	
Getting "On Track" 15.30-17.00	Stopping at local stations: Visit to Slovak Projects 14.30-18.00	Choosing our next destination 14.30 - 16.00	
Coffee break - 17.00-17.30		Coffee break -16.30-17.00	
Offers and requests for the journey ahead 17.30-18.30		Looking back on our journey Reflection and evaluation 17.00-18.00	
Dinner at 19.00	Dinner at 19.30 Reflection with Funnylicious Improv theatre	Dinner Out	

Outcomes

Clarification of concepts

In order to assure that the group had the same understanding of the concepts used during the seminar, at the beginning of the workshop the facilitators offered clarifications of the terms like: NEET, youth unemployment, SALTO Inclusion, cross-sectorial cooperation etc. During the conference we used the term “NEET” to refer to a situation, not a stigmatizing quality we put on people that are not in education, employment or training. All the participants received a handout with the terms in order to use them during the conference .

Also, in the beginning of the seminar, a descriptive **video about how can youth work tackle NEET situation** was projected. The video is available at this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6rO7XL15_I

The session positively stimulated the participants who came up with individual comments and have risen new questions like: Is it enough to offer a job to someone unemployed in order to say that he is social included? The group shared opinions and added more meaning to the clarification of the terms, pointing out the cultural differences and context that we need to consider when defining concepts.

Experts' presentations



In the second day **Ian Goldring, Director of Project Works Association** was invited, as expert and author of the book “On track”, to give a presentation on the research findings - this covered: the concept of NEET, the effects of being in NEET situation, NEET trends across Europe, why should we work with/ think about young people in NEET situations, types of policy responses, types of projects/interventions, key take away/conclusions from research. The input was well-received by the participants and the expert created a constructive interaction with the group.

During this session the concept of NEET was explored more deeply. It was identified that it is an umbrella term covering a great variety of situations different individuals face in their lives. Sometimes it includes “false NEETs”- meaning persons who are technically in a NEET situation, but voluntarily. The damage of being in NEET situation was highlighted - there are both personal and societal costs. It was discussed that projects which create intervention as soon as possible in the young person’s journey to becoming in a NEET situation were desirable. This prevents or reduces the longer term effects of being NEET. Next, the challenges of volunteering projects were highlighted - young people who are disengaged are

less likely to be interested in volunteering, but the benefits of doing so are still significant. The importance of developing young people's agency through projects was also noted.

In addition, a local expert, **Jana Miháliková** gave a presentation on **“What is the local reality of NEET in Slovakia?”**. This covered: which groups becomes NEET in Slovakia (e.g. Roma youth, immigrants, young people with disabilities) and what problems do they face, what is the Slovak approach to supporting people in NEET situation (e.g. policies such as national youth policies or youth guarantee etc.), what challenges professionals face when reaching out and supporting young people in NEET situation in Slovakia and what has worked successfully so far.

The presentation from the local Slovakian highlighted that **young people in NEET situation in Slovakia** were often **Roma young people** and **young people with disabilities**. With regard to implementing the **Slovakian Youth Guarantee**, the importance of reform for both public employment service and vocational educational training was highlighted. In addition, the importance of cooperation between schools and employers, and some data from “Results of the expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015”- http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/contribution-youth-work_en.pdf

Challenges and realities of the target group - Voices of young people

The session about “Voices of young people” intended to bring in the experience of participants being/ or used to be in a NEET situation and offered space for sharing opinions, life experiences and working methods to tackle NEET situations. Firstly, all the participants



were given a presentation by Michael Ward, a young person formally in a NEET situation, on his experiences being NEET, and moreover how it feels like to live as an Irish traveler during EVS. The participants were really impressed by Michael’s story, and felt inspired, as they confessed in the final feedback.

Secondly, the participants were split into small groups. A young person in a NEET situation was present in each group. A **structured discussion** was used to enable the group to **hear from the young person** about their perspective and experience of **being in a NEET situation**. This was a good opportunity for the group to address questions and discuss with one representative of their target group. Some guiding questions were used by the facilitators: What are the challenges for a



young person in NEET situation to get into employment? How does being in a NEET situation affects a young people later on in life? How do young people become in NEET situation?

During this session the importance of **designing projects that meet the needs of young people** was discussed. It was identified that the best way to do this is to design project *with* young people supporting them to decide what sort of support they need. One of the young participants highlighted the importance of supporting emotional intelligence and the work he had done around this, as well as the need to support youth entrepreneurship in areas where jobs are not always available. It was identified that some of the key issues affecting young people in a NEET situation are: **lack of career guidance** and **costs related to studying**, as well as **low self-confidence** and **communication skills**.

The impact that **international mobility projects such as EVS** can have on young people was identified in this session. It was discussed that programmes like EVS enable young people who are in NEET situations to see broader possibilities about their future and this in turn raises their aspirations.

It was identified that the goal of projects should be **reintegration into society** and **the labour market, empowerment** and **raising self-esteem** to enable young people to see more opportunities and advance their educational attainment.

Sharing of Good Practice

The trainers invited four participants to **present an example of good practice** in their field. They represented a diversity of **approaches from different sectors**.

1. One participant from **Belgium**, (Organization Maks vzw) presented a good practice from the category of **prevention through cross-sectorial cooperation**. The project refers to one day training of unemployed young people aged 18 to 25 with volunteers from private companies like Accenture, Nestlé, Securex and Freshfields. On one hand, they created links with business partners on the other hand links with youth in the neighborhood. They offer a specific program with the name “Discover and present your talents”- www.discoveryourtalent.be.
2. Another good practice from the category of **prevention and reintegration** came from **Croatia**. This was a NEET tracking system with both preventive measures (for those that are recognized as being in the highest risk) and measures aimed at activation (for those that are already in a NEET situation). Life-long career guidance centers (CISOK) are identified as the central points for tracking and activation of young people in NEET situations. Official website-www.cisok.hr

3. A participant from **Estonia** (Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres), gave a presentation about motivational interviewing as a useful tool to make working with NEET target group possible. This was a good example of a **cross-sectorial project for reintegration**. The project focuses on finding and contacting the NEET youth, motivating and supporting them through youth work at local community level in order to direct them to enter educational system or labour market. It's about working with other partners on local community level (municipality, schools, church, counselling centre, unemployment insurance fund etc.). Also it was outlined how effective can be a well organised network at local community level in order to help NEET youngsters. Official website- www.tugila.ee.
4. A good practice example of **transition** came from one participant from **Slovakia** (ATENA – Society for non-formal education development). It uses mobile applications in career counselling and non-formal education centers and integrates services of other public services at the local level as a form of social innovation. Official website- www.mojakariera.sk

After the presentations of the practices, a **Q&A session** (questions and answers) followed where each speaker had the chance to offer more details about their projects. Most of participants' curiosities were related to how to reach the target group and how to implement certain methods in different working contexts. The discussion was useful because it focused on possible obstacles that may arise and ways to overcome them. In order to give the opportunity to discuss more, the participants were invited to group discussion analyzing three areas- resources, methods and cross-sectorial cooperation challenges.

Resources

In this space we dedicated time to analyze and think about what is needed for implementing good practices with implication for what each can introduce in their own reality.

The participants generated various ideas about how one can find and provide resources in working with people in NEET situation. From measurable resources like: money, people, community, buildings, technology, know-how, experience, theory, media, institutions, policies, approaches, innovations, human resources, materials (publications, toolkit, leaflets, posters) to personal values like good will, positive attitude etc.

Also some already existing programs were outlined: European Qualification Framework, Euro guidance, Europass.

Some **ideas** for how to involve different type of resources in tackling NEET situation:

- Involving peer group members for both designing and providing services for young people in NEET situations

- Gaming
- Youth centers with young people ambassadors
- Young people as “consultants” for social enterprise placements in social services
- Application for national project grants
- Supervision and further education mentorship
- Using the community online media for free (training of staff and funding)
- Direct contact making (outreach)
- Social networks (sharing experience, pictures, guidance for users, adaptation of services for online use and youth)
- Policies developed through structured dialogue etc.

Methodology

In this section the group together with the facilitator discussed about the focus we need to have in designing projects for people in NEET situation and what are the key points when choosing the methods.

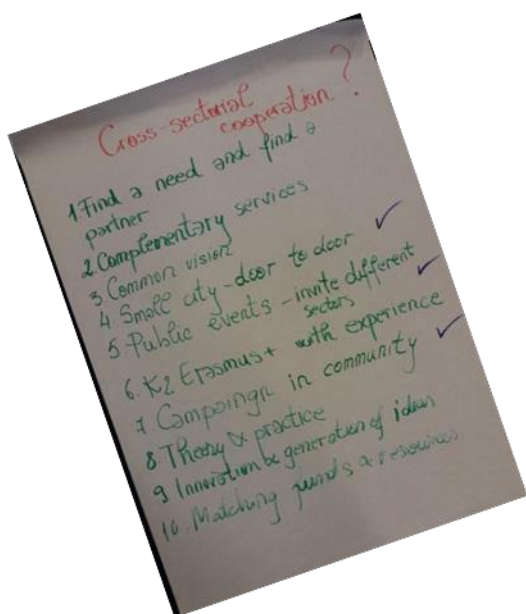
The participants proposed **various solutions** like:

- Using conversation
- Accepting needs and desires and let young people to set a goal
- Mix NEET with EETS
- Provide successful stories for people in NEET situation
- Apply the progress principle- see progress and benefits from the start
- Building self-esteem and self-confidence
- Participating in the society
- Young people to design projects
- Matching needs with NEETS
- Provide continuation after project
- Anticipate and follow using social media
- Management of failure
- Activate a person in NEET situation to become agent of change
- Encourage entrepreneurship
- Help people to set goals and fulfil them

Cross-sectorial cooperation challenges

In this section the participants were challenged to think about past or future projects that have an impact on people in NEET situation because of their cross-sectorial approach. The discussions focused on **obstacles** that we may find when initiating a **cross-sectorial cooperation** but also on the **solutions** that we can apply.

The group was really dynamic during this activity, the movement created in the room stimulated the generation of ideas and interactivity.



The participants pointed out various **advantages of cross-sectorial cooperation:**

- Mixing complementary services
- More recognition
- Involvement of more resources
- More communication channels (visibility)
- More information/ views/knowledge that can bring a benefit for NEET
- More chances to have success
- Involve more agents of change (youth workers, teachers, municipalities, schools etc.)

Also, some **guidelines** were drawn for establishing **cross-sectorial cooperation:**

- Start with needs analysis, decide what kind of resources you need in your project
- Identify who can be your partner and provide those resources
- Decide how can you approach possible partners from other sectors
- Make an agreement between partners

The following aspects of **successful projects** were highlighted:

- **Clear goals and outcomes** - with aims shared by both the youth project and the young people.
- **Young people should be involved in project design** so project is matched to their needs.
- **Extensive Outreach work** (both digital and face to face) is important to recruit people in NEET situation.
- Projects need to **show clear benefits** to young people in early stages of projects - quick progression.
- On a practical level, practices working with NEET are remarkable **similar across Europe** - the same project designs were often seen

Field visits

In the second day of the conference, participants in smaller groups visited the following Slovak youth / social programmes. They had the opportunity to see the work of other practitioners working with people in NEET situations from the local communities, hear a presentation on each project and address questions.

The visited organisations included:

- **EPIC Slovakia** - a non-profit organisation registered in 2012 by its parent organization EPIC Assist from Brisbane, Australia. The main goals of EPIC Slovakia are to influence public policies on employment and social inclusion of marginalized groups, initiate and implement specific programs to increase employment on the local level, raise awareness about employment opportunities for people with various types of disability, and provide individualized employment services for disadvantaged individuals. EPIC Slovakia runs a number of projects, including capacity building through social entrepreneurship, support of municipality social businesses, Job Interview Simulator and Youth Employment Week. It is also involved in the European Voluntary Service and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programmes- <http://www.epic-org.eu>
- **Vagus** - established in 2011 by social workers working with homeless people. Their primary goal was to maintain support for street work (outreach) services and build a daily low-threshold reintegration centre for homeless people. In the course of time it has developed several innovative services, including those which help homeless people reintegrate back to the labour market. The shelter, called Domec, (The House) gives homeless people a chance to engage in meaningful activities during the day and provides them with social counselling, sanitary and healthcare services. Its aim is not only to provide shelter and food but also to raise aspirations and set personal goals of their clients. Domec helps people find jobs and organises part-time income-generating activities. Vagus also runs a social enterprise café Dobre&Dobré (Well&Good) in the historical centre of Bratislava where homeless people work under the guidance of professionals- <http://www.vagus.sk/domec>
- **Mixclub** a low-threshold youth centre Mixclub was established by the Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic in 2004 for unorganised children and youth aged 6 to 18 years who live in a higher-risk area of Bratislava nick-named as Pentagon. It is primarily a social prevention and counselling site for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds providing extra-curricular activities to increase their social and problem-solving skills. Psycho-social support and work with the local community are indispensable for the club's activities. In the course of time the Children's Fund found the need to establish a centre also for whole families at risk, particularly single mothers. Since 2004 it also provides specialised services for children with ADHD and ADD. During the visit there will be workers from two other organisations present – Odysseus and Prima – who work with people with substance misuse issues and/or involved in sex trade who often come from neighbourhoods like Pentagon- www.mixclub.sk

The site visits closed up with a visit to a local cafeteria “**Dobre&Dobré**” (Well&Good) established as a **social enterprise** in the center of Bratislava. Here the participants had the space to share opinions and impressions from the visits they had before- <http://www.vagus.sk/index.php/dobre-dobre>

The day closed with an **improvisation theatre** led by **Funnylicious**, which challenged the participants to stand out of their comfort zone and use their imagination and improvisation skills in order to create an artistic moment in front of the group- <http://funnylicious.eu/>

Future cooperation

On the last day an open space session focused on identifying possibilities for **future action and partnership**. A number of spaces to discuss specific topics were announced, with participants able to form their own spaces at the start of the session. The offered spaces were:

- Individual guided reflection
- Erasmus+ questions
- Role of SALTO Inclusion

Participants added more topics, focusing mostly on the design of future projects and partnerships:

- Training for youth workers
- Short Term EVS
- Working with refugees
- NEET local realities
- Apprenticeships
- Young Roma
- Emotional Intelligence



Generally participants appreciated space for networking resulted in the identification of several **partnerships for future projects**. Some participants were very specific about their next steps:

“I have 4 concrete actions I will take: 1 training with Anna, 1 visit of Frank, 1 group exchange with Veronika and Reija, 1 meeting with Sylvia. → Success!”

“I gained 2 new partners for future projects. I learnt about SALTO know-how, resources”

“EVS group Exchange – going to apply. Even though we come from different countries we have the same problems and it was nice to hear different methods and ways to do work elsewhere”

Feedback from evaluation forms

Individual participants emphasized different aspects of what they take from the conference. Most of them testified they gained new **insights** about the variety of NEET situations and their effects on young people. Several noted there are a lot of **similarities in tackling NEET issues** in different European countries.

“Even though we come from different countries we have the same problems and it was nice to hear different methods and ways to do work elsewhere.”

“There are also a lot of differences but everything is possible to overcome through devotion every youth worker has.”

“Poverty does not discriminate. However, there are opportunities and resources to be used.”

Almost all highlighted the **value of sharing different approaches, methods and examples of good practice** and appreciated the involvement of young people presenting their own experiences. Some participants stressed the importance of actively involving young people in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of all projects that target them.

“We need to work with young people as partners. They must be involved in the process from the very beginning.”

While each of the three visited organisation was regarded as a personal highlight by at least one conference participant, the visit to the low-threshold youth centre, MIXclub seem to have left the strongest impact on several visitors.

The most **appreciated information** the participants received was about the **Erasmus+ programme**, including **funding opportunities** for projects targeting young people in NEET situations. Several highlighted the usefulness of **SALTO resources**. For some it was important to clarify basic terms in the very beginning of the conference, others appreciated discussions about the available resources and opportunities as well as challenges of cross-sectorial cooperation.

Other comments:

“I found new perspective of my own work. I made new potential partnerships. I got a better idea how to support YP in NEET situation.”

“I have more knowledge and experience about NEET people. I have lots of new contacts for my future projects.”

"I found new experiences and met potential organisation for next work. Thank you. It was great."

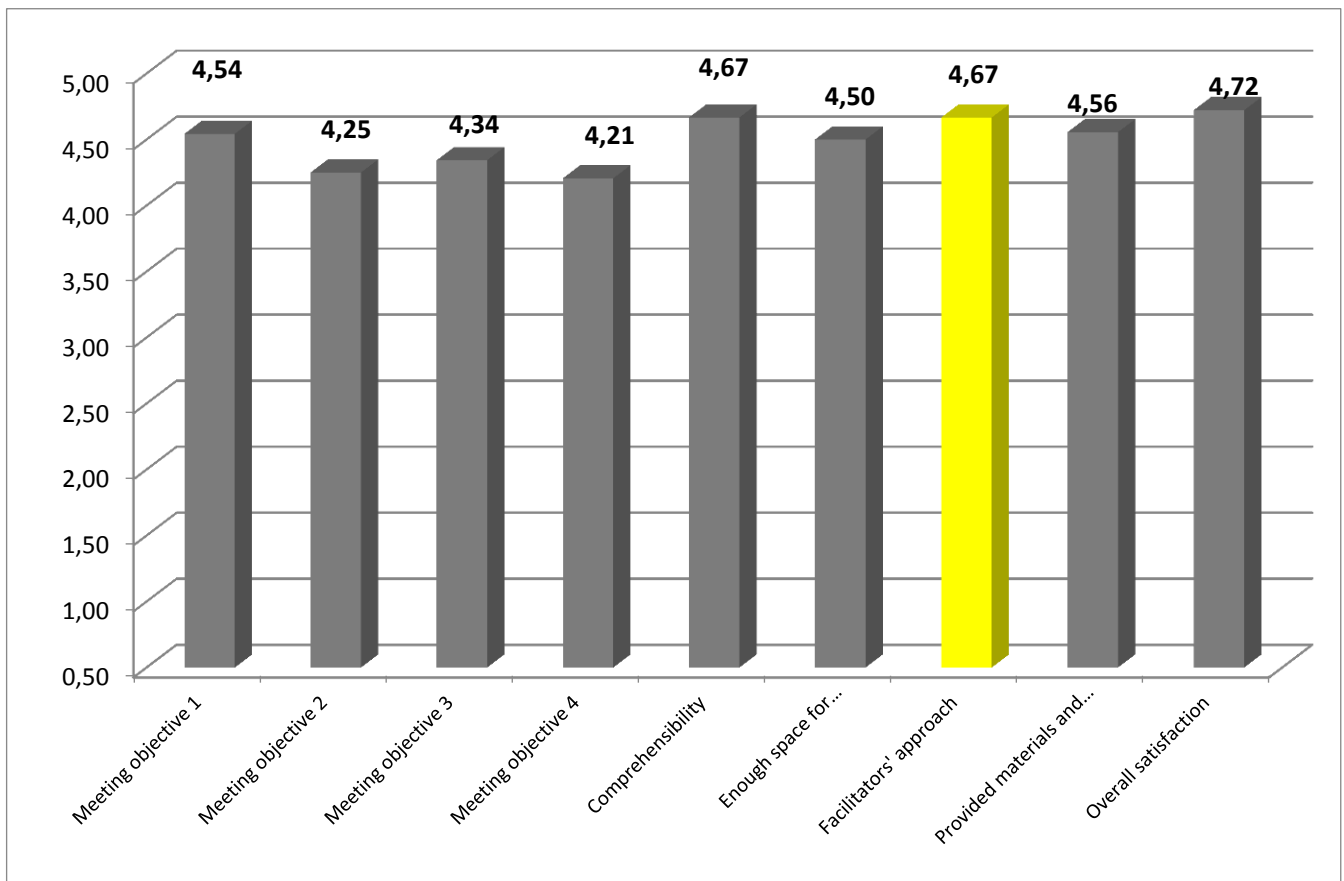
"I gained more info about Youth in Action programme, saw different approaches to YP in NEET situation and got good advice what to do next to work out good solution back home".

"Very satisfied in general with the conference, with the topic, groups, programme, field visit, cultural programme and practical way of the conference".

On the other hand, the participants would have liked more networking, more time for the conference, a mid-evaluation, more people from business, more field trips to tangible NEET organizations, more best practices.

The **overall satisfaction** of the participants rated **4.5 points out of 5**. At the same time the **satisfaction of meeting the objectives** of the conference rated **4.34 out of 5**.

The mean scores from the final evaluation forms, are summarized in the plot below:



Evaluation graph for SALTO "On Track" conference, 13 - 16 April 2016, Bratislava