

# LIVING LAND

## GUIDELINES

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# Summary

This Guideline has been designed as a tool for training and contains examples, best practices and information about youth employability strategies.

Towering changes took place in whole Europe and the world since we started working on this project. Global pandemic changed not only the health and living, schooling and working conditions but influenced a wholly new socio-economic context in which we all are still finding our way of living, working, cooperating, creating. Some things remained the same, of course, such as a new paradigm of society that is based on knowledge, data, connectivity – lifelong learning is a precondition for existing/surviving in the labour market now more than ever. Needed skills and competences change slightly, digital and so called transversal skills are much appreciated. Our Zeitgeist is manifested in the continuing innovation and application of innovation, sharing, spreading, using the matrices for creation and application of knowledge. Collaboration and finding inspiration and motivation for cooperation is a must. Creativity plays a bigger role to the society as it brings social and economic benefit, but only if partnered/accompanied with certain basic competences and skills: soft skills, communication skills with all stakeholders, digital literacy, ability to initiate concrete projects, remote team-leading, ability to adapt to changes, decision-making in the time of crisis, building resilience in individuals and teams.

For society, fostering dialogue among the various and different groups is essential in order to gain synergy of education/training, labour market development and reducing the unemployment in marginalised groups. This is significant for the youth NEET in particular, as often they are proclaimed "invisible" and "hard to fetch". ESL (early school leavers) rate is in correlation with the youth NEET rate and should be taken into account, though the numbers differ and are difficult to track and monitor universally across different countries. However, attention should be paid to this population as they are at risk for entering youth NEET status due to problems in emotional, social, school and work functioning.

What our project proved is that cross sectoral and cross institutional cooperation is needed regardless of the geographical position. Not all societies have equal rate of youth NEET, equal policies, mechanisms for youth NEET tracking and assistance, and even attitudes towards the way they deal with inclusion, cohesion, ecology, coherence, decreasing the gap between citizens and the public sector that should serve them, but it turns out we are all equal when we face needing our youth to "find their place under the sun".

NGOs from Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal show in this publication what society/public and/or professionals in these countries undertake in order to assist youth NEET population in labour market and life in general.

# Preface

The purpose of this publication is to ensure aid and assistance in working with the youth NEET population in the EU and elsewhere. In order to do that, we need to quote an official definition of youth NEET<sup>1</sup> as the term has not been everywhere widely accepted and in use:

The indicator young people of age 15-24<sup>2</sup> neither in employment nor in education and training, abbreviated as NEET, corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group and sex who is not employed and not involved in further education or training.

NEET as young people who were ‘neither in employment nor in any education nor training’ (European Commission, 2011b)<sup>3</sup>. The youth NEET indicator is built each year using the EU Labour Force Survey according to the following equation:

$$\text{YOUTH NEET RATE} = \frac{\text{Number of young people not in employment, education or training}}{\text{Total population of young people}}$$

**THE NUMERATOR OF THE INDICATOR REFERS TO PERSONS MEETING TWO CONDITIONS**

- They are not employed<sup>4</sup>.
- They have not received any formal or non-formal education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

**WE DISTINGUISH TWO SUBGROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEET STATUS, AS FOLLOWS**

- Unemployed - young people who are registered in the official register of unemployed persons.
- Inactive - young people who are not in the system of regular education, do not work and are not registered in the register of unemployed persons.

1 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:NEET>

2 According to the OECD, the age of the NEET group stretches up to 29 year olds. This is the case in Croatia.

3 This definition’s use of the term ‘unemployed or inactive’ mirrors the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) definition of this group.

4 *ibid.*





# Ethical considerations

## **TERMINOLOGY**

What is a youth NEET? To work with the term brings advantages and disadvantages to the table. A seventeen-year-old taking a gap year gets the same label of youth NEET as a twenty-one-year-old who has been out of employment for three years and is living on the street. It is not hard to see that this leads to a definition of youth NEET that is hard to work with when targeting vulnerable groups.

The term NEET itself, when used as a noun, defines a person as essentially not in employment, education or training. On the other hand, the term youth NEET gives this same person a property, something that can be added and shed, without the hint of permanence attached to it. While NEET is most often used as a noun (it could be argued it serves the legibility of a text), we want to make the case for NEET as a property, to reclaim the humanity of the people to whom that property is (sometimes) attached.

## **HUMAN SUCCESS AND VALUE**

Within a larger context, research, institutions, youth programmes, and social work around youth NEET is done from the (implicit) assumption that to be successful in life, one needs to be in education, employment or training. As NEET is mostly used in accordance with a negative stigma, it cannot be argued that the term is neutral. Your definitions of success and value should be taken into account a-priori to working with and researching youth NEET.

It could be argued that the focus on employment (education and training being regarded here as a means to the end of employment) is embedded in a larger neoliberal capitalist ideology of success. To problematise a youth NEET caring for a child and not “monetarily contributing to society”, for example, could be put into question by an alternative system that values care for others over capital. It should be taken into account that different views on the definition of success and human value are possible when deciding what the goals for projects are that aim to help youth NEET. And, that these definitions can vary strongly from person to person.

## **HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

In Europe a focus on our individual responsibilities to take care of our own lives as human beings has been on the rise in the last decades. It has to be taken into account that individualisation of problems puts the attention towards individualised solutions. Regarding youth NEET, the disadvantage of programmes focusing on individuals is that they leave out of sight the societal inequalities that are of a systemic nature and have a direct effect on who becomes a youth NEET at what moment. For example, inequalities in socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, schooling, family circumstances and (mental) health and wellbeing strongly correlate with the chances of having NEET status at one point in life (Nederland, Noordhuizen & Van Dijk, 2016).

Inequality in our societies is not solved by having more and more programmes focussing on youth NEET. If at a structural, political, policy and institutional level these inequalities are not targeted, youth NEET will be the blood that keeps flowing if you don't stitch the wound first. One should consider focusing not only on the excluded, but also at the entities that do the excluding.

## **INTERSECTIONS**

The heterogeneity of youth NEET and societal inequality at the base of it leads to another complex issue that is at stake. When working with this topic, one should become aware of the inequalities and different ways of exclusion that are at work in society and intersect with one another. Socio-economic status has been mentioned as a factor when risking youth NEET status, but class intersects with gender and ethnicity (and many more) meaning that we have to understand differences in risk for a white, low-SES pregnant woman compared to a non-binary person of colour, for example.

It is imperative to take these differences and intersections into account when working with youth NEET to refrain from homogenising youth and their separate circumstances and, most importantly, to be able to identify different needs. It has been commented upon that the umbrella term NEET is leaving those behind that are most in need of help. As policy makers often focus on bringing down numbers, it's (unintended) effect could be that programmes are focussed on helping short-term youth NEET with relatively simple problems. Long-term youth NEET with multiple, complex problems are then overlooked, excluded and become invisible (Bekker & Klosse, 2016).

## **VULNERABLE GROUPS WITHIN SOCIETY**

Especially people of colour and LGBTQI\*+ youth suffer from policies that focus on 'just' bringing down the number of youth NEET, when they are not implemented in a way that takes intersectionality into account. Black Lives Matter and other anti-racism groups bring to light the huge inequalities in society based on skin colour. Inequalities based on sexuality and gender identity have a major impact on people, including youth. Therefore, a special focus should be placed upon identifying these inequalities on a systemic level and designing our practices in such a way that they challenge, or at least don't repeat, the status quo.

## **METHODOLOGY**

One of the ethical considerations to take into account when researching groups of people is who is able to speak up and why. Especially in the event that vulnerable groups are the focus of research, researchers have to be very careful and aware of power relations, stigma and the possibility of voicing ones' experiences and opinions. Having space to speak up is a direct consequence of power structures and inequalities in societies, and it should be noted that it is very hard to navigate these power structures. To 'give a voice' to someone, for example, could be seen as very problematic, as in the giving and receiving space to speak up, the existing power relations are reiterated, instead of resolved.

Another issue at stake are the personal biases of the researchers conducting the research. All of the ethical considerations mentioned here as well as personal contexts and beliefs influence the researcher's choices. For example, beliefs about what constitutes the notion of success in life will influence the choices that are made for the best practices that are shown in this output. The researchers for this output are all white, are primarily cis and straight, and have a degree in education. This has had an effect on the methods, the results and the recommendations.

# Working in “the new normal”

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the pandemic has a "devastating and disproportionate" effect on youth employment, and the latest data show that young people also face major obstacles in continuing training and education, moving from one job to another and entering the labor market<sup>5</sup>. The position of youth NEET is worse than before 2020.

## **CROATIA**

The consequences of the pandemic and the crisis have already affected young people's position in the labour market, and will affect them in the long run and leave a mark on their future for years to come. The demographic changes, extreme emigration trends after the 2008 crisis put Croatia on the third place in terms of youth unemployment (just behind Greece and Spain). The pandemic crisis hit Croatia extremely hard<sup>6</sup> due to two major factors: tourism is the main industry of the country and usually tourism is the starting point for young people for their first jobs.

Without tourism not only youth in education system lost chance during the tourist season to earn their living for the whole year but those who worked exclusively in the tourism sector are heavily impacted as they are left with no options. The key problem is that young people who find themselves in the labour market generally have much looser employment contracts than older employees. A very significant number of young people work on part-time or fixed-term contracts that are easily terminated. This particularly goes for the tourism sector, with high fluctuation of the labour force.

COVID-19 could mark an entire generation as the crisis reduces youth employment prospects, they are leaving the country or are left unmotivated, passive and see no future. Education system, elementary and higher differently cope with the Covid-19 “waves” and remote learning, while children and youth suffer from the lack of normal socialisation. Urgent and efficient measures are needed.

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5 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/hr/headlines/society/20200709STO83004/covid-19-ka-ko-eu-zeli-sprijeciti-nezaposlenost-mladih>

6 As it has been proved, unfortunately, young people, ie workers under the age of 25, are almost three times more likely to lose their jobs than workers over the age of 25, because they make up almost a third of employees in the hardest hit sectors.

## ITALY

On a general level, it is possible to state that Italy has been a country particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic since 2020 spring. Beyond the implications on the national health, preventive and safety levels, the lockdown imposed between months of March and May 2020, and further on, in order to slow down the contagion curve has dealt a severe blow to an already fragile economy that was still in a recovery phase following the 2007-8 economic crisis. Many commercial activities, especially in the tertiary sector (i.e. catering, tourism), did not survive the mandatory prior closure, while others will carry the consequences for a long time.<sup>7</sup>

### WITH REGARD TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND THE IMPACT THAT COVID-19 HAS HAD ON IT, IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE SOME INFERENCES ON THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES:

- Professional, training and work placement internships have been temporarily suspended for a few months in spring 2020. This meant that a stable job placement (with a signed contract, with pension contributions paid, etc.) has inevitably been postponed, and in many cases the certainty of a subsequent placement at the end of the internship period is questioned.
- There has been an evident slowdown in job hiring in general. Many fixed-term contracts have not been renewed due to the economic uncertainty of the period, and students at the end of their studies are experiencing more difficulties than usual to fit into a career path, thus falling into the NEET category.
- A reflection is necessary on the phenomenon of Hikikomori<sup>8</sup> and passive youth NEET in general: the lockdown phenomenon, on the one hand, has inevitably increased the use of social platforms, chat rooms and IT tools in general for personal or work purposes, and thus has favoured social distancing, isolation, passivity. Young people who were not willing to undertake an active job search path before, found in the lockdown a secure base in which to "sit" in their general inactivity.
- The two-year pandemic and its consequences have worsened some already fragile situations and created others, impacting on mental health (that's why it has been called a "syndemic"<sup>9</sup>) and resulting, in better cases, in less motivation and school dropout (from secondary school and university as well), but also in an increasing level of suicide<sup>10</sup>.

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7 A consideration needs to be made regarding the methodologies and tools that have been used for the realization of this publication. The lockdown has in fact led to the closure of public administration offices to the public, making the workers inside them less accessible, and the rules on social distancing have imposed the limited number of access to many NGO buildings. Consequently, if initially it was planned to collect data with the semi-structured face-to-face interview mode, a review of the survey tools was necessary, through structured interviews in written form and qualitative and quantitative questionnaires from disseminate through the use of online channels.

8 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hikikomori>

9 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)32000-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)32000-6/fulltext)

10 Calati R, Gentile G, Fornaro M, Tambuzzi S, Zoja R. Preliminary suicide trends during the COVID-19 pandemic in Milan, Italy. *J Psychiatr Res.* 2021 Aug 21;143:21-22. doi: 10.1016/j.jpsychires.2021.08.029. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34438199

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

The current pandemic has impacted every single country and the Netherlands is not an exception. This will be especially visible in regions that are more dependent on tourism, as it is the case of Amsterdam. Most of the businesses targeting tourists have dramatically reduced their services. In addition, most of the food services and hotel industry were closed or restricted in its functioning. The first numbers on employment for youth (15-25) seem to suggest an increase in unemployment (2019: 9,4 %, 2020: 11 %), but that increase is not continuing in 2021 (8,4 % halfway through the year) (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021).

The health crisis has brought two main concerns. Firstly, the number of “ghost” youth might have increased, although recent numbers are not available. Secondly, youth that were at risk of becoming a youth NEET group might have increased youth NEET numbers because of the pandemic.

Finally, we can observe a widening gap between the privileged and vulnerable groups due to COVID-19. Since the long-term youth NEET is more likely to be part of a vulnerable group, this inequality increase reinforces the expectations of having more youth facing serious difficulties in the near future.

## **POLAND**

The situation due to the world pandemic mostly affected the economic sector in Poland. During spring 2020, the government made several decisions on lockdown (closing restaurants, theatres, museums, shops and shopping centres, hotels, etc.), so many people, especially those working in those sectors part-time without solid contracts, lost their jobs. Officially, there are no statistics, but by observing the situation, we can predict that many of these people were students or people before their 30's. Working in a restaurant, cinema, hotel, or store is still the most popular type of job for people at the beginning of their career path.

At the same time, we don't think that youth NEET population increased because of the pandemic; we would rather say that the unstable situation and possible lockdown could even strengthen the beliefs of young NEET people, that there is no sense in trying to change their situation. 2020 is not a good year for people with a stable life situation, who are working or/and studying, so definitely it is not easy for people who are unemployed and seeking a job.

## PORTUGAL

In Portugal, the major changes in the labour market due to Covid-19 are related to teleworking and the consequent policies fielded to defend workers under this new regime. As it is known, the restrictive measures adopted to contain the pandemic have lead millions of European workers to perform their professional duties from home. In this regard, a study conducted by Eurostat has demonstrated that the percentage of employees that usually work from home rose from the 5% of the past decade to an average of 12.3% after the beginning of the pandemic. In Portugal the rate of regular teleworkers in 2021 is even higher, settling around 13.9% of the employed personnel.

This trend is not likely to completely mitigate; on the contrary, the studies carried out on a national and European level demonstrate that teleworking will remain constant in many of the firms which underwent this transformation at the beginning of the pandemic. In particular, a survey conducted by the “Observatório da Sociedade Portuguesa” showed that 80% of the participants would be interested to keep working from home even after the pandemic, and almost the same rate prefers a mixed regime, alternating some days of the week at home and some others at the office.

The reasons that guide this trend are related to the perception of a major productivity by the employees under a teleworking regime: this is especially due to a major flexibility in the working schedule, a major autonomy, the possibility to work in a more comfortable and relaxed environment and the recovering of time lost in commuting. On the other hand, the workers recognize the limits behind a constant regime of teleworking. Among these, they count the greater difficulties of communication with the colleagues and the blurred boundaries between the working time and the breaks, which in most of the cases lead the employees to work for more hours than usual.

In this respect, an amendment of the Código de Trabalho has just been approved, forbidding the employers to contact the employees outside working hours, except in case of force majeure. The violation of this law can bring to a fine of 9690 euros, preventing the disrespect of the workers' right to rest.

At the moment, another law related to teleworking is in the process of approval, providing that the firms should pay for the additional expenses taken in charge by the employees who work from home. These expenses are especially related to electricity and internet, for which the employee will have to demonstrate an increase in power and costs from the start of the teleworking regime. However, businesses will be able to benefit from deductions, by including these expenses among the company's costs.

# Context Rationale

This Guidelines are a result of the project "Living Land Europe", a collaborative undertaking of five organisations from Italy (Consorzio Consolida Cooperativa Sociale), Croatia (iDEMO Institute for Democracy), the Netherlands (Stichting CAAT Projects), Poland (Fundacja Instytut Innowacji) and Portugal (Contextos - Cooperativa para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão Social CRL), carried out between 2019 and 2021.

The overall goal of the project is to support and enhance skills and competences of youth through a link and cooperation between social workers (in the PA- Public Administration) and youth workers (in NPO- Non-Profit Organisations). This means offering assistance to those who work directly with the youth NEET population: youth workers, social workers and various professionals in both NGO and public sector.

The situation is not same everywhere. The rate of youth NEET population varies from country to country. Even from various parts within the same country. Therefore, there is a need to extend the knowledge gathered, and assist to bridge the gap between professional, activist and field work where needed, whether that be lack of cooperation, lack of information, access or something else. Improving and building capacities of the target group is necessary in order to achieve socio-economic results that can be monitored and measured. It is obvious what skills and knowledge are needed for employability, but how to reach those who need training and education is an issue of major significance. Directions are needed.

The current situations in Italy, Portugal, Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland show differences and variants of problems related to the youth NEET population. This Guidelines aims at giving a tool that can be used in various contexts, which is its most significant feature.

## "THE GAP" IN ITALY

As far as the Italian situation is concerned, bibliographic research shows that this gap primarily concerns two aspects: the lack of dialogue, collaboration and synergistic work between school systems and the world of work – that is, the lack of alignment of skills, lack of care in projects of individualised orientation – and the inefficiency of projects and systems aimed at the youth NEET target in actually reaching these young people.

## THE DUTCH COMMENTS

The pandemic shows us that changes can happen quickly. Policies should be flexible to be able to deal with rapid increases in unemployment and participation in society. A strong welfare system seems imperative.

## POLISH SELF-REFLECTION

Polish research shows that the NEET group struggles with self-efficacy. Working on their sense of self-esteem and giving them the tools to deal with their lives seems to us to be conducive to supporting this group"





# Youth NEET in Croatia

The NEET rate shows that 13.6 % of the population aged 15-24 or 15.6 % of the population aged 15-29 were not in employment, education or training in 2018. In the context of the implementation of the European Youth Guarantee, the youth NEET population in Croatia is considered to comprise persons in the age group of 15 to 29 who are not working, are not in the system of regular education and are not in the adult education system (MLPS, 2014). Although this is lower than almost a quarter of the youth population being in NEET status during the crisis, it is still about 3 pp higher than the EU average. Only five EU countries had a higher NEET rate in 2018. Given the non-dual secondary education system as well as the low drop-out rate and the prolongation of higher education in Croatia, it is no surprise that just over half of the youth NEET population are those unemployed. However, a recent study by Tomić et al. (2018) indicates that there is slow school-to-work transition in Croatia as a majority of those that have finished (or dropped-out of) education are inactive for months after exiting education. But the NEET rate is the highest for the oldest age (sub) group (25-29), which is not surprising because the remaining two younger ages (sub) groups (15-19 and 20-24) are often still in formal education.

Eurostat reports that the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training was only 3.3 % in Croatia in 2018; the lowest rate recorded in the EU (EU-28 average was 10.8 %). The estimated rates of non-completion at the higher education level, on the other hand, range somewhere between 15 % and 20 % (Matković and Kogan, 2012; Tomić et al., 2018).

In Croatia like in some other Mediterranean and Central European countries, the largest group of youth NEET is composed of the long-term unemployed<sup>14</sup>. Some of this is a result of the economic crisis, but it also indicates deeper structural problems in youth transitions from school to work. In both Italy and Croatia, the percentage of young people who are discouraged workers is also well above the EU average. Although considerable gender variability is found at the member-state level, only in Luxembourg, Cyprus, Croatia and Finland is the share of young males higher than that of young women among youth NEET.

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14 Within the measures aimed at activating and outreach towards young NEET, a large number of unemployed persons up to 29 years have been provided with individual counselling, joined individual consultations or participated in workshops during 2017 (MLPS, 2017b). During 2017 and 2018, a pilot-project "Establishment of NEET tracking system", financed by the ESF, was implemented; however, it became clear that before a fully operational tracking system can be implemented, additional work needs to be done on both preparation and analysis of the available data (Tomić et al., 2018). The report states that interventions included exclusively the registered unemployed, whereas the inactive part of the NEET population has mainly remained hard-to-reach.

# Youth NEET in Italy

Italy ranks among the first countries by youth NEET percentage in Europe, with Greece and Bulgaria: following the data collected by Eurostat, on the total population of the 15-34 age range, the percentage of youth NEET increased from 18.8% of 2007 to 37.1% in 2020<sup>15</sup>.

Although it can be said that youth unemployment in Italy occur in higher percentages in the southern areas – 61.8% in 2007 and 55.9% in 2017, according to Istat<sup>16</sup> data; most youth NEET live in Campania region (556.349 units in 2007 and 555'032 in 2017), in Sicily (450.827 units in 2007 and 483.125 in 2017) and in Puglia (327.364 units in 2007 and 328.621 in 2017) – it's not possible to assert that youth NEET are a homogeneous phenomenon on the national territory<sup>17</sup>.

Even if in Italy the number of youth NEET is decreasing, about 40% of the total had a qualification equal to lower secondary school (middle school), or rather have not obtained a high school diploma or a certificate of professional qualification, and that's why is hard for them to be involved in active employment policies: the Lombardy Region which is one of the most developed and with higher occupancy has a good capacity on taking charge and activating towards youth NEET in general, but struggles to reach the lower educated ones - it has been estimated that only 17.4 % of them have been reached (Instat,2018).

At the same time, in the territory there has been a trend towards the exhaustion of the attraction for adolescents towards the historical places of extracurricular education as well as a progressive disinvestment of young people towards participation in public life (e.g. volunteering, local politics, association); on the other hand, there was an increase in virtual activities, mainly experienced privately.

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15 [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat\\_lfse\\_23&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_23&lang=en), access: 27.10.2021

16 ISTAT – Italian National Institute of Statistics (<https://www.istat.it/>) In the province of Lecco (Lombardy, Italy) in particular, the youth NEET in 2018 were the 8% of the population between 15 and 24 years. Early school drop-out fluctuated around 9-10%, and the irregularity in the course of study (e.g. loss of a year due to exams failure, change of field of study) was around 25%. Together with this, it is believed that the reduction of 4 percentage points compared to the previous year in the propensity of companies to hire people without a specific qualification, whose share does not exceed 19% (IX report of the Provincial Observatory of Job Market, May 2019, date). (Case study)

17 In Lecco (Lombardy, Italy) in particular, the youth NEET in 2018 were the 8% of the population between 15 and 24 years. Early school drop-out fluctuated around 9-10%, and the irregularity in the course of study (e.g. loss of a year due to exams failure, change of field of study) was around 25%. Together with this, it is believed that the reduction of 4 percentage points compared to the previous year in the propensity of companies to hire people without a specific qualification, whose share does not exceed 19% (IX report of the Provincial Observatory of Job Market, May 2019, date). (Case study)

# Youth NEET

## in the Netherlands

Of all youth in The Netherlands, only 4 % was NEET in 2018. This number has been stable over the last decade and as the lowest of all EU countries. In 2021, however, the rate has risen to 8,2 %<sup>18</sup>. Of youth NEET, almost 30 % is unemployed, more than 40 % is unable to work, and another 40 % gets an education or works within three months. 51 % does not have a qualification that is fitting for the job market (Perez & Lautenbach, 2018).

Dutch law dictates that youth up till 18 should be in school, usually high school or vocational training. After 18, youth are encouraged to participate, following the 'participation law'. This law tells municipalities to make sure youth up till 27 are encouraged to follow an educational track, or find work. (Perez & Lautenbach, 2018) Youth without a qualification have a harder time finding a job than those with a qualification. They have the lowest number of employment of all youth<sup>19</sup>.

Policies addressing youth NEET exist mostly on the local level of municipalities, as is stated in the participation law. Provincial level policies consist of a vision for the future, as well as looking for cooperation with educational institutions and companies. (Province of Noord-Holland, 2019).

On the local level, most of the field work is done by foundations, educational institutions or NGOs that are sometimes funded by municipalities. Programmes concern cooperation between these various organisations. There is a lot available in terms of funding and organisations.

Eurostat in July 2019 presented data that in Poland in 2018, there were 7 mln

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18 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Statistics\\_on\\_young\\_people\\_neither\\_in\\_employment\\_nor\\_in\\_education\\_or\\_training#Young\\_people\\_neither\\_in\\_employment\\_nor\\_in\\_education\\_or\\_training](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training#Young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training)

19 <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/44/jongeren-zonder-startkwalificatie-vaker-geen-baan>

# Youth NEET in Poland

736 756 people aged 20-34 years. 1 mln 268 000 of them were youth NEET who are not studying, not working. This number means that 16,4% of young people in Poland – almost 1/6 of them- was passive in the matter of job and education<sup>20</sup>. The differences between the Polish average and the EU average are insignificant - Poland is more or less within the EU average.

At the same time, statistics show that Poland's situation with youth NEET has been getting better year by year since 2013. One of the reasons is that, in 2012, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy implemented the Youth Guarantee initiative, which was a part of the Youth Employment Package developed by the EU.

Considering that the population of Poland is also getting smaller, those improvements are going still too slow, and the Polish job market needs to include youth NEET as fast as possible. Especially since the unemployment rate in Poland is the lowest in history and one of the lowest in UE, the job market needs a workforce.

Poland is one of the European countries where differences between men and women in matters of youth NEET are the biggest. In the age of 15-29, there are 16% women and 8% of men that are not studying nor working. For 58% of youth women NEET, the main reasons for being inactive are caring responsibilities. Another 26% give family and personal situations as a reason. Some of them would like to activate, but, e.g. it is difficult to find cheap and good kindergartens, find a job with flexible work hours, engage men in daily childcare. In third place - 8% the reason is a disability.

In Portugal, in 2021 – Q2, out of a total of 39,186 young people unemployed

20 <https://www.pulshr.pl/rekrutacja/neet-w-polsce-ponad-1-2-mln-mlodych-ludzi-poza-rynkiem-pracy,65159.html>, access 30.07.2020

# Youth NEET in Portugal

(<25), 9.7% are considered youth NEET - young people who are not working, training or studying (Eurostat ).

In Portugal, youth NEET has grown significantly since 2008 and reached a record number in 2012, when Portugal had 434,000 youth NEET, placing Portugal among the 10 OECD countries with the highest percentage of youth NEET.

Young people who are categorized as NEET are part of different groups with different personal, economic and social characteristics. Despite the heterogeneity, they have the same vulnerabilities, they are not accumulating human capital through the formal channels of education, training, and employment and they are more likely to accumulate disadvantages: low education levels, family history of poverty, they are more likely to regularly losing their jobs, having a poor history of labor market participation and participating in low-paid jobs.

To address this problem, several strategies have been adopted in order to reduce the number of youth NEET, by creating a set of programs to support the transition from the education and the training systems to the labor market, and also by implementing incentives for employment creation and investing in the reinforcement of vocational education and dual learning. Vocational education emerges as a clear alternative with the launch of several initiatives based on vocational training to combat youth unemployment and reduce the number of youth NEET.

In Portugal, youth NEET has registered a growing trend and is largely due to the exponential increase of youth unemployment rates, which in 2013 reached 40%, predominantly among young people with a relatively low education level. Moreover, statistics show the problem has grown in recent years among those with higher education, which reveals a structural problem that hinders the transition from education to the labor market, even among the most qualified.

At the grassroots level, it is important to mention the projects, carried out by NGOs, VET centers, among others, which through their projects and initiatives are helping youth NEET to improve their skills and employability.

# Target group analysis

## **THESE GUIDELINES AIM TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION TO THE FOLLOWING STAKEHOLDERS:**

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>DIRECTLY</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ youth workers</li><li>→ social workers</li><li>→ educators and trainers in NGO sector</li></ul>   |
| <b>INDIRECTLY</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ decision makers at the local /regional level</li><li>→ all interested in implementing a project for youth NEET population</li><li>→ youth NEET in all respective countries.</li></ul> |

### **CROATIA**

The target group in Croatia primarily consist of youth workers and educators belonging to different organizations in the field of education, whether they be within the system, private or those working for national and local employment agencies. They are usually situated in the capitals of 20 Croatian counties, although most activities take place in Zagreb. Hopefully, the guidelines will be used by those working in public administration in the departments for youth and employment and not only by those in non-governmental environment.

The research conducted showed the following: there are literally a couple of academic research projects regarding youth NEET since 2016, a few those carried out by a consortium of NGOs in partnership with employment agencies and a very few individual researches and articles prepared by students or academics. Academic sector contributes this way but cannot either replace or motivate the state agencies, ministry or county institutions to take certain steps to improve the situation. The interviews conducted showed that the key stakeholders working with youth NEET are professionals and enthusiasts in the associations/NGOs.

Since the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU, quality programs for professional training, retraining and additional training have been provided (through EU projects from the ESF fund, through the Croatian Employment Service, through local self-government units), as well as preparation programs for entering the labour market (unfortunately job clubs were project-funded and have no continuity of funding). Certain efforts are being made, but they are exclusively at the level of institutions. If an approach was applied through which institutions would cooperate with each other and really focus on the individual - then the results would be different.

The small but identifiable advantages in Croatia are that there are possibilities for some kind of outreach because of the obligations by the state to maintain various databases, registers and to monitor the diversity of statistical data. In addition to e-Matica there are ISAK / ISSP REST API, Croatian Pension Insurance Institute, Croatian Employment Service include, Croatian Health Insurance Fund, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Tax Administration, ISVU, etc. However, these are not sufficient, in spite of the above, Croatia lacks systemic solutions and clear roles for public institutions. NGOs cannot compensate for the lack of resources in programs and experts and/or incompetence of the state.

The key, burning issues related to work with youth NEET in Croatia are poverty, social exclusion and emigration on a general level. Strengthening the capacity of all stakeholders, and raising the responsibility of public institutions are equally important. It is also evident that it is crucial to develop specialised approaches for specific sub-groups than to ask for general recommendations.

Therefore, the access to and communication with the youth NEET are the most problematic issues, apart from engaging them once they are identified; furthermore the most important issue is the trust (mentioned by all interviewees) and individual approach, mentor-like approach, and clearly stated need for inclusion of all parts of society in order to address the issue which primarily means educating and informing the key stakeholders about the problem and create a strategy to deal with it together, from schools (education system in general), parents, employment agencies, social workers in social care centres, family doctors, churches, to the media.

These results speak for the need of better cross-sectoral cooperation, partnership and exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise by professionals in administration, NGO and private sectors. Interviewees included trainers/educators who work with the youth NEET in the non-governmental association, an education/counsellor who works with the Roma youth, a teacher and educator who works both in school and is engaged in NGO projects with youth NEET population, a psychologist who work with the youth NEET on project-based activities through various channels, a youth worker and a psychotherapist working with youth NEET.

The most important issue is the trust (mentioned by all interviewees) and individual approach, mentor-like approach, and clearly stated need for inclusion of all parts of society in order to address the issue which primarily means educating and informing the key stakeholders about the problem.

Working with youth NEET can be very demanding but also gives excellent results. Very often it takes a lot of time to work with them to take responsibility for their lives (in practice it has been shown that this step takes up to 10 meetings). Often youth NEET are passive or dejected, with the attitude that finding work is not possible and that everything goes through the “knowing someone”, they have very limiting beliefs about themselves and society and have the inherent learned helplessness that they most often acquire in the family. But, once they understand and accept that with their attitude and actions they can significantly improve their life position - a fruitful work begins that starts wonderful human stories about everyday struggles and successes.

The activities are mostly aimed at empowering them (youth NEET) and encouraging them to find the motivation and strength to start. It often turns out that they do not have enough "strength and motivation" for that and that they need guidance or mentoring.

Individual work with a trusted person has proven to me to be the most successful way to work with youth NEET. It is very important that the person working with this population has undergone education that can help them in their work (mentoring, soft and transversal skills, personal development, etc.).

## **ITALY**

The target group for Italy is made up of youth workers and educators belonging to different Lombardy organizations. These realities are local social cooperatives – along with other NGOs – engaged in youth policy projects and active citizenship, in medium-sized urban contexts (not Milan). Interviewees included a guidance counsellor, who works in particular with young disadvantaged people, psychologists and educators working with adolescents and migrants as well. Thanks to the interviews carried out with the various youth workers involved in projects in favour of youth NEET, it was possible to outline some shared ideas [see the Appendix section for an excursus on the full contents of the interviews, page N].

Being the young NEET perceived and defined first of all as people with a potential to be revealed, searching for them self, the youth workers interviewed argued that the most important thing is to create a relationship of trust with them, which allows them to regain their own dignity, to feel welcomed, listened to and understood. The appropriate approach seems to be that of suspension of judgment, in order to create a stable relationship between the young person and the operator, based on mutual trust and on the slow rebuilding of self-confidence and self-efficacy. A careful analysis of needs from a pedagogical point of view is also of primary importance, combined with targeted and personalized interventions, within which the subject must not be "pushed", but accompanied.

The success of a positive path lies in the success of the operator-young relationship, and in a good orientation towards the best possible hypotheses (not necessarily a job position, but the discovery of a new passion, inclination, attitude, volunteer experience or other type). The paths must be shared, and above all, young people must be given a choice; on the contrary, the impact of what are now considered the "good practices" of engagement for these young people will be just partial. It must start from the local reality.

#### **PERCEPTION OF YOUTH NEET FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF YOUTH WORKERS**

« Youth NEET show disinterest and distrust towards the institutions and the system in which they have to live.» (C.C.)

«The youngster may not know the opportunities for developing skills existing on his territory» (N.M.)

«In the common imagination the word "NEET" may correspond both to a person in a young age who has not yet "found his way" or, in a more negative sense, who just "lies down"» (D.F.)

«I've met young people – socially labelled as youth NEET – who have actually chosen not to be involved in predefined or structured training/working paths, but decided to live their youth travelling in search of the adult they wanted to become.» (V.C.)

**HOW TO ACT WHEN DEALING WITH YOUTH NEET**

«We try to create a setting in which they can feel reassured, not judged, and above all respected and supported in their choice. What we see as possible, compared to the resources and opportunities present, is not always what the child is ready to choose, and therefore the operator must have the ability to wait and above all to respect. However, it takes time, and a context / project that allows a relationship of taking charge and accompaniment.» (D.T.)

«It's necessary that young people themselves choose their own life project – but this may be a long path, that in my opinion must be accompanied by designed-ad-hoc educational experiences.» (V.C.)

«Our educational aim is to build fields of experience in which young people can test themselves while feeling welcomed and accompanied, and then re-signify together what has been learned from the path. By showing themselves they actually do have skills, confidence in the future will be easier to acquire.» (V.C.)

«I try to bring out what he/she is passionate about, what can arouse interest in them, and try to transform the idea of having a job, not only as an obligation to purposes of survival, but, as far as possible, as an activity that also satisfies other spheres of the person.» (D.F.)

**CRITICALITIES AT A LOCAL LEVEL**

«Young people must be supported by an entire community, and today Europe represents a big one. However, in my opinion, making a macro-social policy won't be enough: it's necessary that also local and territorial networks – those ones that closely affect young people in their daily lives – must be mobilized. [...] Local education projects, for example, are an excellent basis for the involvement of some NEETs.» (V.C.)

«The primary objective of the youth policies I work for is to involve and where possible make the young people of the area protagonists. Therefore, the attention of the local administration and associations sensitive to the issue of youth participation is of fundamental importance.» (C.C.)

«Probably the real NEETs do not reach the service, because if they did so of their own will, I believe that we could no longer define them as NEETs» (D.T.)

«The phenomenon of NEETs [...] also speaks of a lack of dialogue between different actors in the local area, who propose disconnected interventions, struggling to intercept the young people and to involve them. [...] A range of training interventions and alternative opportunities (volunteering, experiences abroad, cultural exchanges) should be built with a view to promoting and developing transversal skills and life skills.» (N.M.)

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

The research developed in the Dutch context focused on small initiatives started by professionals. We targeted mainly grass-roots projects that have been successful in establish solid networks and impacted positively the groups of youth they work with. Therefore, our results are useful for professionals that would also like to start their own projects in a more grass-roots oriented process. Our sub-research question is - How to improve the situation of youth NEET, when you are a small organisation, in an urban context?

To map the situation about the youth NEET in the Netherlands and to understand the best practices being applied on the field, we have made 5 semi-structured interviews. Each of those interviews corresponds to a different organization that is related with the target groups of youth NEET. The cases vary from independent NGOs (Improbattle), NGOs that are partially financed by governmental organizations (StudieZalen), foundations financed by the municipality (Permens), semi-governmental organizations (Centrum Jeugd en Gezin) and the municipality itself (Jongerenpunt Gemeente Amsterdam). The NGOs tend to do preventive work, while the governmental structures are intended as curative.

Despite the different between the cases, the outcomes of the interviews are very similar. The main points made during the interviews are also congruent with the desk research. Therefore, we believe that those points are valid and useful to be shared between other professionals and organizations in the field.

## **POLAND**

In Poland, most of the youth NEET population does not take advantage of the offers of employment offices. For these institutions, they are invisible, and these institutions cannot reach them. However, it should be noted that some employment offices do not wait for youth NEET to apply. They participate in local events, are present in schools, and cooperate with local NGOs, but unfortunately, this is not a common practice. Unfortunately, this is not a common practice. The lack of such activities is due to the lack of human resources in the employment offices. A good practice could be to use the Voluntary Labour Corps, a youth organisation created during the communist years to provide young people with vocational qualifications and civic education. Voluntary Labour Corps operate throughout Poland, with headquarters in each of the 16 voivodship cities.

The Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (POWER) co-financed by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund also significantly impacts the situation of youth NEET in Poland. Many of the supported projects aim at professional activation of the youth NEET population, people with disabilities, excluded people. These projects cover their professional training costs and financial support for the period during which they are in the project.

## PORTUGAL

The activities are mainly directed towards youth workers, social workers and educators, and trainers in the NGO sector. Youth experts, youth leaders, youth workers, and social workers are mainly from the universities, educational institutes, municipalities, and, also experienced organizations working in the youth field:

→ **DECISION-MAKERS**, the counselors from the municipalities (directly elected), the parishes representatives, the directors, and secretaries of the public institutes.

→ **REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS** - Youth organizations, education and training institutions, local and regional entities, such as the regional directorate of the National Youth and Sports Institute, the University of the Algarve, the regional directorate generals of Education, Culture, Economy, Agriculture and Fisheries, the institute of Employment and Training, among other public entities such as the Association of Municipalities of the Algarve and the Algarve Regional Coordination and Development Commission.

→ **YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES**: coming from the "Escolhas" projects network (from social and economically disadvantaged areas), and, also indicated by the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) on long-term unemployment situation.

It is expected that indirectly the following profiles would be targeted: young people that will be coming from public schools, universities, youth organizations, youth federations, informal groups, and public dissemination of open calls through the network and media.

# Model contents & methodologies

## → INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

The methodology used for the survey was of a qualitative-qualitative type: semi-structured interviews were carried out, carried out in person and subsequently transcribed and translated into English, and later - also due to the Covid-19 strike - the quantitative methodology of the questionnaire was chosen. A survey was then created through the Google Form host, then shared with the target group. The general aim of the interviews and survey was to collect a shared vision regarding the youth NEET phenomenon, highlighting the common ideas regarding the potential of the young people who are thus categorized, according to a pedagogical and educational approach. Other goals referred to understand the best way to relate to this kind of target, and to recognize the stakeholders involved in the phenomenon and reflect on their responsibilities.

## → GIVING A VOICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

In order to acquire information and evaluations of the young people about projects that are aimed to them - and that were assumed to represent good practices - in September 2020 a questionnaire was created using the Google Forms host, and shared to the target through social channels (Facebook, Informagiovani newsletter, LinkedIn, other media).

## → ART BASED DIVERSE METHODOLOGIES

These can be easily adapted to different youth groups, especially vulnerable groups. Comparison with the best practices of the grassroots organisations that target youth NEET has been carried out - the focus was on exploring the ethics and values that underline interventions, tools to motivate youth to engage in pedagogical and developing programs, and the practical tips to improve the relationship between professionals/youth.

## → APPROACH USED AND PROVED IN ERASMUS+ PROJECTS

that organisations either have participated in or have implemented, interactive and participatory approach fostering leadership and self-awareness.

## → TEAMWORK

All the contents have been commented, reviewed and improved through group discussions and online meetings. Teamwork and collaboration (giving / receiving feedback) were therefore an indispensable element for the realization of these guidelines.

## → EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH MARGINALIZED GROUPS

/ vulnerable groups in society, in the most possible participatory, taking into account specificities of each respective group and their various positions, challenges and needs.

## → BIBLIOGRAPHIC & DESK RESEARCH

Relevant articles and publications on the phenomenon, presenting statistical significant data.

# Model and learning processes

■ The basic premise is that trainings are **COLLABORATIVE, PARTICIPATORY** and **INCLUSIVE**. ■

## TERMINOLOGY

**A LEARNING MODEL** is a description of the mental and physical mechanisms that are involved in the acquisition of new skills and knowledge and how to engage those mechanisms to encourage and facilitate learning. ... The primary learning styles that exist are visual, auditory and kinesthetic (physical) learning.

**LEARNING PROCESS.** There are six interactive components of the learning process: attention, memory, language, processing and organizing, graphomotor (writing) and higher order thinking. These processes interact not only with each other, but also with emotions, classroom climate, behavior, social skills, teachers and family.

**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING** is commonly illustrated when groups of students/ participants work together to search for understanding, meaning, or solutions or to create an artifact or product of their learning. Collaborative learning activities can include collaborative writing, group projects, joint problem solving, debates, study teams, and other activities. The approach is closely related to cooperative learning.

**PARTICIPATORY LEARNING** implies an interactive learning process enabling individuals and communities to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes, and to share lessons learnt, so that they actively contribute and not simply provide information, but develop the capacity and knowledge of both.

**INCLUSIVE TRAINING APPROACH** values all kinds of contributions, regardless of backgrounds and appreciating the contributions of different value systems. Inclusive learning and teaching benefits all students by drawing on the strengths of students from different backgrounds. It is not about providing 'remedial' or 'special' measures for certain groups of students.

## ITALY

### **WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE: THE WATCHWORD IS "INVOLVEMENT"**

The local actions of services in favor of young people are inspired by the European Youth Strategy:

«By involving and enhancing the role of young women and young men, youth policy can contribute to successfully achieving the vision of a continent in which young people can seize the opportunities and recognize themselves in European values».

Through the actions and projects of Local Youth Policies, the participation of young people in city life is promoted, offering opportunities and paths towards greater autonomy, awareness and emancipation, supporting innovation and recognition of socio-educational animation. Managing Youth Policies means asking ourselves about the active role of young people in our cities and therefore going to the heart of how a society thinks and lives, first of all in a future perspective. The educational action, today, of Cooperatives, non-profit organizations and associations of this kind goes beyond mere socialization, aggregation and prevention, but it is a question of orienting services for young people towards actions that can allow them to increase their skills, experimenting in formative environments, taking part in the life of the community, taking on small and great responsibilities.

The strategic purpose of youth policies must be to "network", to create a system in which the community – school, associations, institutions, informal groups, local companies – interconnects itself in favour of young people, generating new growth paths. The aim is to remove the barriers between the aspirations of young people and the reference environment, in a logic of effective use of resources.

In this logic, it is believed that users must have an active, participatory role: the person does not simply use a service, but designs, produces, uses and evaluates it. A new sense of belonging is created, built around a welfare service. Also in the case of youth NEET, their involvement in dedicated projects is necessary for their enhancement, long-term engagement, and the success of the educational intervention itself.

**HOW TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE? THE NEED TO SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE**

In communication campaigns, the dissemination of material relating to events and initiatives aimed at young people, and youth NEET, must have widespread care and diffusion. But in 2020, with the advent of web 2.0, communication cannot be only paper: the methods used for the communication and dissemination of projects dedicated to young people must include both traditional means, such as flyers and information brochures, to be distributed in the most common places where young people usually meet (local pubs, cinemas and other meeting places), and web-based tools, such as the main social networks (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) and particularly popular websites (e.g. YouTube).

The contents on the web are accessible, easily shared by a wide audience, and allow a faster and cheaper coverage than traditional paper systems. It is a fast communication style, which young people are used to from an early age (e.g. commercials, text messages). Furthermore, web platforms, just like social media, allow for strong interactivity between producers and users of information: it is thus possible to make young people feel that their opinion is important, asking for comments, responding to quick surveys, saying theirs, then enhancing their reference.

Finally, the contents on the web are able to capture attention thanks to the effective synthesis of information – each post occupies a screen, it is necessary to say the essential using the connotative value of the terms – and the power of the images.

**THE “YOUNG ON DEMAND” EXAMPLE**

During the spring of 2020, in the middle of the lockdown period due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the “Young On Demand - out of the usual places, inside your room” project was launched in the Monza and Brianza area. The primary purpose of the project was to keep young people normally involved in the actions of local youth policies still engaged, even in a period when it was not possible to leave their homes; secondly, young people were invited to take part in stages, allowing them to experience their own room as a place to experiment, to express themselves, to stay in touch with their old friends and to meet new ones.

**CAG (CENTRI DI AGGREGAZIONE GIOVANILE) – YOUTH AGGREGATION CENTRES**

The Aggregation Centres are structures, made available to the municipalities, within which it is possible to carry out various kinds of activities, meet peers and adults willing to listen and help and where you can practice the pleasure of collaboration. They are places with free access, where young people can meet each other, have fun and even experiment in different ways, cultivating passions and talents - for example, many CAGs have soundproof rooms for testing musical instruments, as well as equipment table sports (table football, table tennis) or rooms used for the realization of manual workshops of various kinds. The Aggregation Centers are potentially the place within which opportunities can arise: protected places in which to experience relationships, creativity, commitment.

**EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOPS**

Offering young people practical workshops that are stimulating for them allows them to whet their interest and motivation. The workshops promote the sharing of knowledge and the development of skills, both technical and transversal. Young people can participate to acquire new knowledge, or they can be involved in the co-planning and co-programming of the same, starting from their passions and interests, so that they themselves lead paths open to citizenship and thus be bearers of knowledge, with a view to youth leadership and experimentation with autonomy. The workshops foster citizen participation processes, starting from the passions of young people, and thus creating opportunities and places to make them feel protagonists.

**INFO-POINTS AS COLLECTORS OF NEEDS AND IDEAS**

The territorial info-points for young people take on the information needs of young people in their entirety, tending to cover the main fields of interest concerning the life of the new generations (training, work, health, leisure time, sport, culture, travel). The information that is provided is generalist and multi-sectoral, across the board. The info-points are available to all young people without distinction, without cultural or psychological discrimination of any kind (e.g. towards ethnic minorities, disabled people, drug addicts, homosexuals) and without favouring a particular type of public (students, workers, etc.). Some precautions are therefore necessary: ease of access to the premises, welcoming the interview environment, possibility of contact via email, confidentiality, free services, prompt response.

Depending on the needs expressed by the profiling of each individual engaged user, information and promotional materials are distributed in the info-points of the main services in the area, as well as various services (guidance sheets, job boards, professional courses and so on). Through personalized interventions, it is necessary to carry out a "motivational recovery" activity, aimed at recovering energy, rediscovering skills and attitudes, strengthening one's self-esteem and facilitating teamwork. The co-production of the service means getting out of a situation of isolation, and sharing one's resources.

The direct conversation between the operator and young people is the most significant and safest way to correctly interpret the needs, and possibly to deepen the request. In the event that the project comes into contact with people who require more in-depth work, the territorial network of services will be used, promoting and facilitating cases of particular hardship and difficulty also through individual accompaniments. Finally, the info-points act as catalysts for projects: young people can propose their own ideas in these spaces to be developed on the territory, in synergy with the municipal administrations.

## POLAND

The methodology we use in Fundacja Instytut Innowacji work and in training we organise is based on the Art of hosting approach. The AoH is based on the assumption that people are the source of knowledge and part of the answer to any problem, the only thing is to provide them with a safe space where powerful conversations can occur, and they can harvest the results of the talks. It is a practical approach because it brings out a topic that is alive in a group of people and allows people to create essential outcomes. Most of the activities we do we organise in the form of a circle. The approach is democratic in its core and gives empowerment to participants, which is very important while working with the youth NEET population since, according to experiences of Instytut Innowacji, passivity is one of their characteristic features, and it is important to work on their proactive attitudes. AoH has much in common with non-formal education, and it takes whole handfuls from this methodology

## THE NETHERLANDS

CAAT projects uses as tools human rights education and participatory arts. Human rights education is based in experiential learning, participant-centred and designed to meet participants' needs and interests. The main difference with non-formal learning is its stronger focus on the activation of the engaged citizen, e. g., it invites the participants to actively promote human rights for all in their communities. The tools to activate the youth, if correctly adapted to the youth NEET group, has the potential to motivate youth to become more active in finding an alternative for their situation.

Participatory arts are an effective mean of engaging citizens in urban and community processes. These are forms of art that are co-created by everyone in the group, representing their voice and active participation as citizens. Advantages of these methods are:

- Dynamic and fun methods: playing collective games is central. The goal is to invite participants to get out of the cognitive level, embracing their emotions and instincts, being encouraged to experiment new behaviours / reactions in a safe environment.
- Boost creativity and alternative solutions - the invitation to enter an area where there is no right or wrong, becomes a playground where we can try different things, fail, celebrate our mistakes and discover other perspectives.
- A neutral language -art becomes the common language.
- Holistic perspective of personal development and connection with others -this process focus more on emotions, behaviours, instincts, playfulness and less on cognitive knowledge. Moreover, it fosters deep connections with other members of the group.

## PORTUGAL

CONTEXTOS leans on the fact that learning is a lifelong process, and that happens in many ways, places, situations and (young) people are becoming more and more aware of that fact. Learning is not any longer divided into a place and time to acquire knowledge (formal education in schools/universities) and a place and time to apply the knowledge acquired (the workplace).

Instead, learning has been more and more regarded as something that takes place on an ongoing basis from our daily interactions with others and with the world around us throughout our whole lives. It can take the form of formal (FL), non-formal (NFL), informal learning (IFL). The importance of NFL and IFL is growing being included in significant European Union strategies such as EU Strategic framework<sup>21</sup> having an objective to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training that aims EU to raise the overall quality of all levels of education and training in the EU and in more particular to promote the recognition of NFL and IFL.

Our methodological approach is based on non-formal education for the development of more inclusive and enhanced learning environments, where the participants can take an active role as actors of their own and of the group learning process.

According to the latest data published by Eurostat in 2020<sup>22</sup>, almost one third of young people between 18 and 24 years old (29.2%) were at risk of social exclusion. The long-term negative impacts of social exclusion are well known: political and social isolation, poor living conditions, unhealthy lifestyles, mental health issues, unemployment, etc. In Portugal, 26,6% of young people aged 18-24 were at risk of poverty and exclusion in 2019<sup>23</sup>. Although reliable data regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion is not yet available, many countries expect an increase in the rates.

Youth work can provide opportunities to mitigate the risk of social exclusion amongst young people. The EU Youth Strategy recognises its importance.

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21 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/about-eea/strategic-framework>

22 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10163468/3-16102019-CP-EN.pdf/edc3178f-ae3e-9973-f147-b839ee522578>

23 <https://on.eapn.pt/produtos/relatorios/>

**RECOMMENDATIONS PORTUGAL:****ACTIONS AND PLACES FOR CONTACT AND ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH NEET**

- To engage and empower disadvantaged young people, it is fundamental to provide safe spaces for discussion where they can meet peers, exchange their experiences, discuss solutions and organise themselves. These common spaces are beneficial for creating a sense of community, deconstruct stereotypes and build trust and understanding. Local authorities should facilitate the creation of such spaces by providing free venues or centres with funding and provide the equipment needed by local NGO's and informal groups willing to organise such meetings.
- Education plays a significant role in deconstructing stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. Human rights, diversity and inclusion should be transversal topics addressed in school curricula from an early age. Moreover, teachers-training programmes and other training programmes of professionals working closely with disadvantaged youth should incorporate notions and approaches such as intercultural dialogue, gender equality, mediation, etc.
- Local authorities should set up a fund to actively support initiatives that aim at community cohesion, mutual understanding, fighting hateful narratives and promoting inclusion and access to social/economic rights. Local authorities should engage/involve disadvantaged youth in decision-making processes that affect their lives through consultations and meetings with them, establishing local youth councils, or other youth consultative bodies allowing all young people, whether or not they belong to an organisation, to have a say in the policies that impact their lives, their future and the future of their communities.

# Training Modules

## addressed to professionals

### **FOR EFFICIENT RESULT-ORIENTED LEARNING THE FOLLOWING DIDACTICAL ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED:**

- Theoretical Lecture = input by trainer of trainers (ToT)
- Self-studying = individual study of trainees
- Written Works/Texts = training of structuring and developing of text material for promotion, portfolio and work descriptions to be used when working with the youth NEET
- Usage of the distance study elements = studying via online learning tools or social media
- Fieldwork = visits to community halls, co-working spaces, incubators, accelerators, studios, companies and other potentially valuable places;
- Adoption of Case Studies = trainees analyse and develop solutions for practical problems
- Solving of practical examples = shorter exercises on solving practical problems
- Workshop = an approach with concrete results for each participant, e.g. business plans, professional orientation plan etc.
- Teamwork = Training of a group orientated problem-solving process

### **BUT ALSO:**

- Celebrating mistakes - creating a safe place where participants feel free to explore and be creative without being judge
- Holistic perspective - focus the 3 H (Head, Heart and Hands). Educations is not only knowledge but it is to develop soft & social skills, work on the emotional level and a deep understanding of our values
- Learning how to learn - the art of reflection (individually and in small groups) identifying the competyences we have gained
- Walk our talk - to apply during the learning process our own lessons and materialised what we preach
- Encourage creativity and alternative solutions - encourage participants to reach for utopia, to think out of the box andto develop creative outcomes.
- Playful approach - learning should be fun, and we should focus on motivating p[articipants to participate and learn
- Defining next steps - at the end of the learning process identify what are the next steps to be taken in order to apply what we have learned
- Qualitative evaluation - besides the quantitative one, it is important to evaluate how we felt, what we have learned and alternatives to the process.

## **CLASSROOM PARTICIPANT TRAINING TECHNIQUES**

are suitable for training adults: active training, designed to be carried out both indoor and outdoor contexts. The activities should be 70% co-constructed by the working group, and only 30% based on the contents actually collected a priori from the joint work. Reversal of trainer-learner roles (peer-to-peer) should be considered. It usually starts with brainstorming techniques, whose inputs are subsequently commented within the group and become food for thought, alternating with moments of effective transmission of information, practical activities of group creative thinking, exercises, first-person experiments.

So called „ice-breakers“ (ice-breaking games and activities) are desirable to get to know each other in order to increase the level of engagement. In the beginning of every spot/matter/theme of formation, a request for expectations should be noted in order to evaluate, at the end of the training sessions, if attention and response has been given to all the requested contents.

Group discussions and self-assessment on knowledge of the topic and good practices are encouraged among participants. Examples should be shared with the methodology of narration; special guests – between actual youth NEET or ex-so who have been involved in actions and practices presented in the guidelines– should be invited, in order to answer eventual curiosity questions or in-depth interviews. All final outputs are to be shared (e.g. presenting a plan of a project in a schematized draft form to imagine a replicability in their own country).

## **DESIGN THINKING**

Design thinking events are configured as moments of confrontation, in a generative perspective, on various topics – for example, changes in the labour market compared to the past, today’s most demanded skills, and so on. These are challenging and participatory moments of reflection, limited to a few hours.

Design thinking events are particularly effective when it is possible to make various stakeholders in the area communicate with each other, such as representatives of local schools, associations and foundations, businesses, municipal administrations and citizen.

The activities are usually carried out in two phases: in the first there is a period of brainstorming, analysis of opportunities, definition of priorities and in general reasoned thinking on defined issues; in the second, called “creative problem solving”, those present are called to think and propose possible answers to what emerged in the previous phase, with a proactive look towards the territory. The exchanges and interactions between the participants generate new ideas and possible project paths for the future.

The aim is to compile templates containing "projects of projects", or draft actions to be developed in the future. By working in this way it is possible to consolidate the network of local services and at the same time give them a voice.

### **BARCAMP -AN ITALIAN SPECIFICITY**

A BarCamp event is characterized as a "non-conference": there is no audience but only participants in a discussion on one or more themes, with active methods borrowed from service design. The spirit is collaborative: anyone can take the chair, propose a topic and speak to others, contribute with the aim of encouraging free thought, curiosity, circulation and dissemination of ideas related to innovation and change.

The BarCamp has a structure that is as fluid as possible, usually managed with a blackboard on which everyone can go and attach his/her post-it with the topic he would like to deal with. It is, therefore, an open meeting and the contents are proposed by the participants themselves. At the end of the day, the results of each work table are then illustrated to the other ones, and everyone is asked to express an opinion, in order to arrive at a sort of ranking of the works considered most interesting and worthy of further (and subsequent) deepening.

The BarCamp is a meeting where the stakeholders of the network meet, who distinguish themselves from the users because they not only use this tool, but also produce content contributing to its feeding and maintenance. The main value is the relationship, that is the physical knowledge of the people with whom one can also share long-range projects.

### **WORLD CAFÉ**

A similar technique is the World Café one, which solicits the intervention of several participants by placing them informally on the same level.

The World Café is a simple and effective method of engaging in informal, lively and constructive conversations on issues and themes that affect the life of an organization or community. It is particularly useful for stimulating creativity and participation, when the purpose of the meeting is to generate proposals and ideas. The intimate and welcoming setting of a café is recreated, with tables suitable for 4-6 people each. The tables are freely arranged in a room and are equipped with materials for annotating, drawing, writing, to fix ideas.

The whole process can take from an hour and a half to 4 hours. Participants discuss topics in small groups and, every 20-30 min, at regular intervals, participants rotate from table to table thus forming new groups. At each table remains a host, a "facilitator", who solicits the intervention of all participants and summarizes the discussion. The technique is based on the realization of an incremental and circular discussion, a discussion that is enriched as the participants "rotate". The process ends with a plenary session in which the facilitators operate a facilitation intervention.

**POLAND ADDS...**

Training modules for professionals should include supervision. Professionals working with the youth NEET population encounter difficult situations, misfortunes sometimes even human tragedies, which makes these people vulnerable and prone to professional burnout. In addition to covering our target group, those working with them should also be supported so that the whole system is coherent and can change the attitudes and lives of those involved.

**PORTUGAL ADDS THE IMPORTANCE OF...**

- the need to acquire and gain a basic understanding of the concept of facilitation and different aspects of the facilitation process;
- the need to develop facilitation competencies in working with non-formal education;
- the need to experiment with different group facilitation methods and empower facilitators in implementing quality training activities using participatory methods;
- the need to share and exchange participatory methods, tools, and good practices in order to improve teamwork and group creativity;
- the need to learn the basics of graphic, visual and online facilitation;
- the need to improve communication and presentation skills;
- the need to raise awareness and have a good understanding of the process of group dynamics.

# Best Practices Examples & Recommendations

## ITALY

In Italy there are various initiatives, at national, regional and local level, aimed at young people who wish to experiment and acquire new skills. These are primarily social voluntary activities, projects that are placed at an intermediate level between training – school, professional and university – and the world of work, a sort of "gray zone" in which young people (especially youth NEET) can work at play within "protected" environments. Social volunteering is a tool for reactivating the potential of children and young people and an opportunity to see those talents that are sometimes not adequately valued recognized.

These initiatives serve the purpose to promote active and responsible citizenship, and represent important opportunities for both training and personal and professional growth for young people. Participation in these experiences takes place by voluntary choice, and allows young people to gain useful skills to enter the job's world, allowing them to experiment within a space of trust where they can measure themselves. These initiatives are financed at a regional or local level, borne by non-profit associations, and which involve the sectors of assistance, cultural heritage, education and cooperation.

The projects that, at the local level, have been perceived by young people as good practices are: the Leva Civica Regionale (Lombard Voluntary Civic Service), the Giovani Competenti ("Competent young people") project, pre-work experiences, targeted paths of active job search with internships, Cantieri Ecologici Ambientali Sovracomunali ("Supra-municipal ecological and environmental construction sites") initiatives, the Freeabile ("Free and skillful") programme & the Young Radio project.

Thanks to a targeted questionnaire [see Appendix section, page N] aimed at collecting the opinions, testimonies and thoughts of young people who took part in these experiences, it's possible to affirm that – at least on a territorial level – these practices can be considered good ones for empowering youth commitment and to improve both personal and professional growth of the target.

These projects turned out to be "good practices" when the voice of the young people was heard, and it was possible to bring out their points of view. Programs with collective management, identified and designed with the same young people, were evaluated as particularly successful. Furthermore, good coordination and supervision were essential.

On the contrary, two projects that are not considered sufficiently valid in Italy are the Servizio Civile Nazionale (National Civil Service, now Universal Civil Service) and the DoteComune (Municipality Dowry).

**THE REASONS WHY THESE PROJECTS ARE PERCEIVED NEGATIVELY CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:**

- Not very inclusive selection methods. Although projects to approach work should open up possibilities, the selection criteria are often very stringent and, in fact, the less "skilled" – such as youth NEET – risk being excluded regardless.
- The impossibility, on the part of the volunteers/interns, to send regular feedback to the competent authority regarding the progress of the experience, also in order to promptly report any critical issues, without having to wait for moments of tutoring (approximately every 3 months).
- Training contents that are not very usable in other work contexts, only suitable for increasing general culture.
- Very little chance of being placed with a regular contract at the end of the internship / volunteer period.

Reflections are therefore suggested, in order to make the possibilities more concrete and the school-work transition periods characterized by these projects more useful: primarily, projects should be managed more carefully, starting with a local plan.

The practice at a national level does not seem to guarantee a proper control of situations, neither for the selection part (and therefore access to the experience), nor for the care of interpersonal relationships within organizations accredited to host interns/volunteers, nor for the actual content of the experience. Moreover, it's necessary to improve the visibility of the offers through the channels used by young people (institutional sites alone are not an effective tool for engagement).

## THE NETHERLANDS

From the research in the Netherlands, we concluded the following: there isn't a model that fits youth NEET. Every case is unique, and it should be treated with flexible methodologies and interventions. Individual support/counselling/coaching is desirable, and the intervention should focus more on the opportunities and talents of those young people, than on the problems itself. A good and honest relation with the youth, creating a safe space, and working on their self-esteem are also important factors to take into account while working with them. It was also identified that working with parents and extended family can be a determinant factor for a successful intervention. The cooperation between services in an informal manner, where people in the field have personal contact with each other seems to be a key point common to the different cases.

### CASE STUDY THE NETHERLANDS : MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Five semi-structured interviews were held with different organizations, from independent NGOs (Improbattle), NGOs that are partially financed by governmental organizations (Studiezen), foundations financed by the municipality (Permens), semi-governmental organizations (Centrum Jeugd en Gezin) and the municipality itself (Jeugerpunt Gemeente Amsterdam). NGOs tend to do preventive work, while the governmental structures are preventive as well as curative.

The outcomes of the interviews are exceptionally similar, despite organisational differences. The main points made during the interviews are congruent with the desk research, which suggest validity of the data.

The Netherlands has a well-coordinated network of services that supports every youth until the age of 18 years-old. This network, as well as unknown numbers of "ghost youth", make the number of youth NEET until 18 comparatively low in the Netherlands. After the age of 18, the situation changes. There is some still support and intervention with this group until the age of 27, but services like the "Centrum Jeugd en Gezin" stop their intervention. As Abdelhamid from Studiezen explained, the system is made for the average Dutch youth and discriminates the ones that have a different background. Those are discouraged to pursue a high level of education, and later they have more difficulties in getting a job that pays enough. The temptation to engage in illegal activities increases.

For young women, stronger gender roles of some cultures can influence their inactivity. Other factors like lower social and economic background and the lack of adequate parental support increase the risk for youth NEET.

Regarding possible interventions, every interviewee agreed that there isn't a single model that fits youth NEET. Every case is unique, and should be treated with flexible methodologies and interventions. Individual support/counselling/coaching is desirable, and the intervention should focus more on the opportunities and talents of the young person, rather than on their problems. A good and honest relation with the youth, creating a safe space, and working on their self-esteem are also important factors to take into account.

It was also identified that working with parents and extended family can be a determinant factor for a successful intervention. The cooperation between services in an informal manner, where people have personal contact with each other, seems to be a key factor common to the different organisations.

In terms of policy suggestions, there is a consensus that negative labeling does not help the youth. There is also a need to decolonise the system and prepare the education sector to be more understanding of POCs and to include more creative methodologies. We should invest more in prevention, according to our interviewees, as well as to reinstall youth centers, make access to basic human rights possible (like shelter) in Amsterdam. The language used on policies and services should be simplified to be more accessible for all.

## RECOMMENDATIONS THE NETHERLANDS

Based on the interviews we identified the following suggestions for change:

- **A FLEXIBLE STRUCTURE AND ADAPT THE PROGRAMME TO EACH YOUNGSTER.**  
Long term youth NEET might have difficulties in adapting to the main system. All interviewed professionals have stressed the need to have a flexible structure that can easily be adapted to each case.
- **FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE - TALENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, PROGRESS - AVOID LABELLING!**  
Many of the youth that are now in a NEET situation have been labelled as “problematic”, “at risk”, with fewer capabilities to succeed, etc. This negative labelling can have strong negative consequences in the youth’s self-esteem or in the way other professionals interact with them. All case studies indicate the need to focus on the positive instead, by reinforcing every achievement, even if small. This is a reminder that there are multiple intelligences and capabilities that are not always recognised in the mainstream education or professional systems.
- **DECOLONISATION OF THE SYSTEM**  
Policies are oftentimes defined by white males. Those policies value some forms of interaction, knowledge and culture that are the dominant in western societies. Any alternative forms of behaviour and customs are seen as less adequate. This can be problematic when we talk about groups that come from a different background. The education and employment system should be critically analysed to remove oppressive structures
- **BIGGER INVESTMENT IN PREVENTION**  
The Netherlands used to have a better prevention network in the past according to our interviewees. There were many youth centres that played a central role in connecting youth from different backgrounds. They could advise and refer each individual case to other structures that could support the ones in need. There are many great initiatives nowadays, but the network and support is not always present.
- **POLICY MAKERS SHOULD LISTEN TO YOUTH AFFECTED & LANGUAGE SHOULD BE SIMPLIFIED**  
Policies should reflect the reality and include the voices of the ones that are going to be affected by them. The process of defining new policies should be more participatory and inclusive. For this to happen we need to simplify the language used.

**POLAND**

The Voluntary Labour Corps (Polish Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy, OHP), <https://ohp.pl/o-nas/voluntary-labour-corps> - is a state-run organisation working to prevent the social exclusion of young people. Their target groups are teenagers above 15 years of age and young people under 25 who are unemployed or at risk of social marginalisation and exclusion. Except for working on the employability of young people, their goal is to work on upbringing youth. The organisation operates throughout Poland with a structure of 721 units and branches.

The main tasks are: supporting the educational system through social, professional and economic activation of young people, organising activities to improve professional qualifications or retraining, supporting initiatives to counteract unemployment, helping in job seeking and organising international youth exchanges.

OHP is one of the main executors of the "Youth Guarantee" programme, a European Union programme to combat youth unemployment. It was implemented in 2014 for people under 25 years of age - not in employment, education or training (NEET youth).

Every year ca. 700.000 young people use services of The Voluntary Labour Corps.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on interviews and desk research, Fundacja Instytut Innowacji prepared a list of recommendations:

- It is essential to recruit participants for the projects carried out actively
- For youth NEET institutions, it is crucial to cooperate with companies and entrepreneurs
- Mobile activation points or mobile advisors appear in the countryside – many youth NEET do not visit cities
- Schools and educational institutions should have obligatory career counselling opportunities
- Visibility of job centres is often poor when it comes to social media, e.g. Facebook.

At the policy level:

- Programmes that include beneficiaries in youth NEET situations should be long-term.
- To provide participants with more financial support to finance their professional development
- To adjust educational offers, courses, and trainings to actual trends and needs of young people.

## **PORTUGAL: CASE STUDY**

CONTEXTOS has identified employability, social inclusion, and youth empowerment projects, which it believes and identifies as good practices coming from the third sector financed by European programs and public funds, for example, Portugal 2020 - Social Innovation.

### **ALGARVE 2020**

In 2013, ECOS promoted "Algarve 2020: a youth proposal" a participatory based project that aimed to a new culture of youth participation into the decision-making process regarding the involvement of young people and local municipalities in the region of Algarve (<http://algarve2020.ecos.pt/>). The project involved several different youth organisations, 16 municipalities and several regional authorities, in a total of more than 40 entities and close to 1000 youngsters have participated directly in the project. In 2015, ECOS implemented its follow-up "Algarve 2020: a youth contract" that allowed the creation of the 1st Regional Youth Action Plan of Algarve and the involvement of 93 different organizations. This project has been shared as best practice in several countries around Europe. The project proves that youth can make a difference by actively contributing as a key actor on the economic, social and political development of the Algarve region. The 1st Regional Youth Action Plan of Algarve has clear strategies and measures to tackle youth unemployment. Moreover, the document is being used to develop other initiatives at local/regional level.

### **ILUMINART ACADEMY**

The ILUMINART Academy intends to train and guide young people towards self-concept, adaptability, and knowledge of professional contexts, based on a non-formal education methodology, using artistic and circus techniques. Target Group: youth NEET and young people at risk of social exclusion.

→ <https://ailuminarte.pt/>

### **GABINETE DE EMPREGABILIDADE JOVEM**

APPJ - Associação de Promoção de Públicos Jovens is an IPSS (Private Social Solidarity Institution), based in Azores since 2007, intervening with socially vulnerable youth. Youth Employability Office - from 18 to 29 for young people in a youth NEET situation but with a focus on young people in a situation of great social vulnerability, with low schooling and little definition of their life plans.

**PROJECT SEARCH**

Project Search is a collaborative employability program that provides a unique model of school transition to work for young people with disabilities. The program combines real-life employability training and independent living skills and placement support through active collaboration with the education system, employers and rehabilitation services. Coordinator: Cooperativa Focus

→ <http://www.cooperativafocus.pt/>

**FAZ-TE FORWARD**

Project whose objective is to increase employability and socio-professional inclusion of youth NEET (who are not in employment, education or training) or finalist students looking for their first job, particularly in a situation of greater vulnerability, living in the Metropolitan Area of Porto, through an intensive and personalized training program that includes training, coaching and mentoring and will cover, over 3 years, 150 young people, in 5 editions/groups.

→ <https://fazteforward.org>

**MENTES EMPREENDEDORAS**

The Leadership Fellows program is an opportunity to get out of your daily life (young people) and invest in personal development creating an impact on the community. Through initial training and step-by-step monitoring, the Fellow goes through the challenge of exercising his leadership skills, among others, helping high school students to implement projects with an impact on the community and develop their skills.

→ <https://www.mentesempreendedoras.com>

**CASULO - CASULO**

This is a social innovation incubator that aims to support young entrepreneurs and institutions in the municipality of Loulé and the Algarve region in the development of project ideas or social businesses that simultaneously promote youth employment and more effective responses to social issues.

→ <https://casuloloule.com>

**SAPANA - TALENTS ON THE MOVE**

This is a 9-day program focused on self-knowledge and self development, with the main drive on employability, either with one's own project or as employee.

→ <http://sapana.org>

# Results of desk top research

## **ITALY - THE YOUTH NEET LABELLING ISSUE IN ITALY**

According to the latest ISTAT data (October 2019), referring to 2018, in Italy youth NEET represent 23.4% of the total of young people of the same age present in the area (over two million young people). 47% of youth NEET are aged between 25 and 29, 38% are 20-24 and the remaining 15% are between the ages of 15 and 19. Most of the Italian youth NEET have a secondary school diploma (49%), while 40% have lower levels of education. The 11% of totally inactive young people with university degrees make an impression. Furthermore, it is reported that 14.5% of youth NEET in Italy are foreigners.

Then, 41% of youth NEET are looking for their first job, 19.5% define themselves as not available to work - three-quarters of the cases are women, engaged in care or maternity, mostly foreigners - while 25% are defined as looking for opportunities (mostly males; the share of under 20s is high), and 14.5% are classified as disengaged.

It should therefore be noted that in Italy, the umbrella-term "youth NEET" does not make a real distinction between those who are really inactive (people who do not study and do not work, but do not even look for opportunities), and those who are engaged in an active job search. Similarly, the world of youth NEET also includes young mothers, people with disabilities, discouraged people, marginalized young people and ones who are looking for education and training opportunities (data from Need4Neets, Fondazione l'Albero della Vita Onlus). Finally, it should be noted that there is no clarity on the categorization as youth NEET or not of those young people who in fact do not produce income in the eyes of the State and who are not included in formal training contexts, but who are still involved in projects aimed at the youth - for example, young volunteers from the National Civil Service and related projects.

Therefore, some limits arise around the concept of youth NEET in Italy: can the refusal to follow training courses, for example, also be considered a manifestation of the need for a different school? Can the non-search for a job, on the other hand, be considered as the rejection of an increasingly alienating and precarious job? Hypotheses that deserve further study.

Finally, another note deserves the concept of "youth unemployment rate" as it is understood in Italy. In fact, as a rule, the unemployment rate relates the "unemployed" to the "workforce", made up of employed and unemployed people. The basic idea is to measure how many do not find work among those overall available to work.

Those people currently not interested in accepting a job offer are therefore excluded from this denominator (because they are studying, or are completely dedicated to family duties, or due to illness / disability, or other), as well as those who could be interested and available but for various reasons they are not actively seeking (for example the "discouraged", or those who, after looking for a long time for a job, have resigned themselves to unemployment).

The youth unemployment rate, however, conventionally refers to the young population in the strict sense, i.e. that between 15 and 24 years old. One of the limitations of this expression is therefore the fact that in that age group many young people still study, and therefore the high levels that this rate can reach still refer to a very limited subset of young people.

### **THE "GAP" IN ITALY**

Ideally, on the way from school to work, it should be:

- lower the number of those who have left the education system without being able to access the productive world with an adequate contract;
- the time in which we find ourselves in this situation is short;
- linked to personal reasons rather than to obstacles and inefficiencies encountered in the transition process.

The factors that explain the accentuation of the youth NEET phenomenon in Italy compared to other countries are essentially three:

- Many young people find themselves, after leaving the training system, lacking adequate skills and lacking the experience required by companies.
- Many others, despite having high training and high potential, do not find positions up to their abilities and expectations (especially in the less dynamic and developed areas that do not allow adequate enhancement of human capital, with consequent exit from the condition of youth NEET only going elsewhere or accepting a downward adjustment).
- The inefficiency of the useful tools to guide and support young people in their job search also weighs heavily, in particular the matching between supply and demand (data from Rosina A., March 2020, I NEET IN ITALIA).

These limitations make the transition from school to work a labyrinth for many young people with a high risk of taking longer than necessary to complete it, or even getting lost. All this not only decreases the possibility of moving from unemployed to employed, but increases the risk of progressively slipping from short-term unemployed, to long-term unemployed, to discouraged inactive, to finally sink into the quicksand of social exclusion.

The fact that the share of youth NEET has been able to increase in such an abnormal way is also linked to two Italian specificities, without which it would not be explained how this condition did not explode as a social drama: the first is a cultural model that makes a long dependence of adult children on their parents, the second is the large share of the underground economy within which undeclared work proliferates (data from the Italian Committee for UNICEF).

As regards the first aspect, the Italian situation falls within a "Mediterranean" type model – characterized by a prolonged stay in the family of origin and by a synchronic relationship between the abandonment of the family unit and marriage, with an expansion of time interval between leaving the educational system and leaving the family of origin – in which the condition of youth in the country is characterized by a latent connection between the educational / training system and the business system, and by the lack of adequate support in the transition phases (the moment in which school dropout can emerge and there is a low work experience in young people).

These shortcomings weigh in particular on families who take care of young people who are unable to acquire elements of autonomy. The great economic crisis that began in 2008 has worsened this situation even more, further postponing the autonomy projects of young Italians and further extending the transition to adulthood, already characterized by the extension of education and training courses, and difficulties in integration in the permanence in the labor market (Istat 2019; Rosina A., I NEET in Italia).

As regards, however, the second aspect, among those who say they are not interested in a job, there are those who are waiting to open a business or are evaluating possible options or carrying out help activities in the family, but there are also those who carry out continuous irregular work (especially in the southern regions). Furthermore, even in the group of those who say they are not looking for work because they are discouraged, although they are willing to accept one if it is offered, there is a part of young people who occasionally carry out illegal work or activities that slip into the sphere of petty crime. Many alternate the condition of youth NEET with odd jobs: they are those who flounder in the gray area between precarious work and non-work.

Finally, the criticality and fragility now risk being amplified with the impact of the health emergency caused by Covid-19. According to the data of a representative survey on 2000 residents in Italy between 18 and 34 years, carried out between the end of March and the beginning of April 2020 by the Observatory of the Toniolo Institute, 41% of the youth NEET interviewed replied that they had postponed the research of work and 33.8% of having abandoned it. The risk of slipping into the spiral of discouragement and disengagement is therefore further accentuated.

## **MINORITIES**

The Italian situation is also affected by the difficult integration of young immigrants. It has already been said that 14.5% of youth NEET in Italy are foreigners, of which about 10% are non-EU citizens (data from La Repubblica Economia e Finanza of 30 April 2020, Polchi V.). According to ANSA data of July 2020, the employment rate of young people born abroad is lower than that of those born in Italy: considering the totality of the foreign population aged 15-29 residing in Italy, the percentage of youth NEET is 31, 2%, and worrying is the figure relating to female unemployment (40.6% among foreign female youth NEET).

The country of birth affects the possibility of young people to find employment, with greater difficulty for young immigrants. According to Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), among young people linked to an immigration background the unemployment risk factor increases to 70% compared to their peers living in the country of origin.

## **INEQUALITIES AND THE YOUTH NEET WORLD**

From an analysis of data dating back to 2015 carried out by the Italian Committee for UNICEF, it is found that, in young people between 15 and 24 years of age, the risk of entering the NEET condition increases as you go down the steps of social stratification. Certainly, the difficulties increase for young people if they start from a disadvantaged situation: Italy has the highest intergenerational transmission rate of wealth, with one in two young people inheriting the economic condition of their parents.

Often, therefore, the condition of NEET is determined by inequalities, which reduce the chances of breaking the mechanisms of poverty and social exclusion; and from contexts – family, cultural, economic, social – that do not invest adequately in the potential of children and their future. It is the revival of a social status inherited from the family to which one belongs and from the social context in which one lives.

According to data from Eurofund (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), for example, young people with a low family income are more likely to become NEET than those with an average family income, and have parents who are unemployed states increases the likelihood of becoming NEET by 17%.

Another aspect that caused the increase in youth NEET in Italy was the onset of the economic crisis. In fact, 2008 marked the beginning of the global crisis, although Italy had already shown signs of recession in previous years. From an economic point of view, Italy has recorded a decrease in gross domestic product, an increase in inequalities in the distribution of income, an increase in public debt, an increase in unemployment and in the percentage of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion. (data by L. Bosi & L. Zamponi, Resisting the crisis. The paths of direct social action).

Also from a social point of view there have been some effects linked to the period of the crisis: to pay the heaviest bill were some already weak sections of the population, that is to say poor, sick and unemployed. Other surveys show that there is a correlation between exposure to the economic crisis and social deterioration, and this in fact has aggravated the general condition of youth NEET (data from The silence of NEETs, UNICEF Italy).

#### **THE LOCAL PLAN – THE SITUATION IN LOMBARDY**

In Lombardy the numbers are lower than in the rest of the country – youth unemployment is 20.8% and youth NEET at 13.1% (data from October 2019, <https://www.secondowelfare.it/>) – but they clash with a paradox: more and more companies are unable to find the professional profiles and skills they need. In the last year (2018-2019) approximately 120,000 positions remained uncovered. Even in the driving region of the country, therefore, there is something that does not allow young people to enter the world of work properly. At the regional level, the most encouraged measure to combat youth unemployment is the Youth Guarantee program, the limits of which have already been highlighted. The reasons for this situation can be traced back to our school system, which today represents one of the weak links in the value chain between training and work, but also to employment services aimed at young people, which could be improved given the gap between demand and supply of skills.

To investigate the phenomenon more closely, in 2019 the "Work Pass" project of the Aeris Social Cooperative (MB) produced an output, an exploratory type of research in order to investigate the perception of the world of work by young people 18-29 in the province of Bergamo, which reached N = 220 subjects. However, only 6% of the sample could be considered as belonging to the youth NEET group, and this highlights a local difficulty in intercepting young people in this category. The research showed that the perception of employment opportunities in the province of Bergamo was high, but that the world of work was generally difficult to access by young people. It was also noted that, according to young people, the territory does not offer homogeneous opportunities, but only for some specific sectors (industry, AN). However, a certain awareness emerges (internal locus of control) of the fact that success from a professional point of view depends on themselves and not on external variables, even if the data varies negatively if we consider the answers of the unemployed, more inclined to believe that a job is found "by seizing the right opportunities". A larger-scale survey could bring out new aspects on how young people in the area envision their insertion into the Lombard job market.

## **BEST PRACTICES ITALY**

Below are some examples of projects aimed at young people that represent some local practices for Italy – Lombardy (provinces of Lecco, Bergamo, Monza Brianza & Como).

### **LEVA CIVICA REGIONALE**

The Lombard Voluntary Civic Service is an initiative co-financed by the Lombardy Region Authority and by the Local Authorities and it's an experience capable of combining the active participation of young people with opportunities for educational and employment growth. The Leva Civica projects are aimed at unemployed young people between 18 and 28 years, who are introduced into non-profit organizations through individual internship projects. The aim is to increase youngs' training and professional skills through knowledge and participation in the projects and services of the local community, developing a sense of civic duty and encouraging the processes of autonomy. The Leva Civica experience has variable duration (from 9 to 12 months), and requires a weekly commitment of about 20-30 hours. Classroom training, a monthly reimbursement of expenses and the certification of the skills obtained at the end of the internship are provided. The Leva Civica project is active in all Italian regions, through specific calls. → <https://rb.gy/mpt5kk>

### **GIOVANI COMPETENTI - "COMPETENT YOUNG PEOPLE"**

Giovani Competenti is a program that is active in the province of Lecco (Lombardy, Italy), and it's aimed at young people between 17 and 26 years. The partners of the project are local associations born with the purpose of promoting and developing the territory, local museum systems, cooperatives and parishes; young people who apply for participation collaborate with voluntary associations, educational services, libraries, tourist offices, etc. This experience represents an opportunity for orientation and learning for the young people involved and, at the same time, the opportunity to bring new and fresh energy to institutions at the service of the community. Group training and individual tutoring are provided. → <https://www.livingland.info/esperienze-micro-imprenditoriali>

### **PRE-WORK EXPERIENCES**

Pre-work projects are summer initiatives promoted in the province of Lecco (Lombardy, Italy) and aimed at groups of adolescents (15-19 years). The young participants, led by adults - both professionals and volunteers - are involved in specific work tasks such as the redevelopment of public spaces, the cultivation of social gardens, support in the activities of farmhouses and local pre-alpine refuges. These experiences, characterized by an educational and socially useful dimension, have a twofold objective: to favour the acquisition of typical basic skills that are needed on a job (punctuality, teamwork, respect for authority, self-organization of work, time management) and promote socialization processes. The proposed activities also aim to promote the discovery of new interests. → <https://www.livingland.info/esperienze-pre-lavorative>

**TARGETED PATHS OF ACTIVE JOB SEARCH WITH INTERNSHIPS**

Educational experience of approaching the world of work aimed at youth NEET (unemployed young people, not enrolled in training courses) of the Lecco area, between 17 and 27 years old. Following a selection, young people are introduced to a free training course of eight meetings, aimed at increasing skills in the active search for work. At the end of the course, if young people have not already found a job independently, they attend a full-time internship, for a period of three to six months, in companies, cooperatives or businesses in the area, with a monthly allowance of 500 EUR. Thanks to the internship, those participating in the project have the opportunity to increase their professional training and to get in touch with the world of work, putting themselves to the test in selected companies according to the aspirations and interests of the young people.

→ <https://www.livingland.info/tirocini-individuali>

**CANTIERI ECOLOGICI AMBIENTALI SOVRACOMUNALI -“SUPRA-MUNICIPAL ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRUCTION SITES”**

These are days for the promotion of active and responsible citizenship and youth civil commitment, held in the summer period in the province of Bergamo. The proposed activities mainly concern environmental recovery. Through these activities, carried out in groups and with the supervision of adults, young people try themselves with skills that will be useful in the world of work, such as teamwork, punctuality, respect for colleagues and superiors, respect for tasks.

→ <https://www.aziendaisola.it/index.php?area=18&menu=8&page=118&lingua=4>

**FREEABILE -“FREE AND SKILLFUL”**

The recipients of this intervention are young people aged 16 to 25, with compulsory schooling fulfilled, in a situation of fragility and resident in the province of Bergamo. The objective of this intervention is to carry out a series of coordinated actions, aimed at increasing the employability of young people, through educational, training, internship and work experiences, compatible with the actual potential of each. The young participants are referred by the social services, taken in charge by an educational team and sent to an individual work project.

→ <https://www.aziendaisola.it/index.php?area=18&menu=8&page=118&lingua=4>

**YOUNG RADIO**

This project is a tool for youth promotion and leadership. The aggregative and socializing functions are enriched by artistic, technical, journalistic and cultural experimentation. The project engages about 60 volunteer youngs, who animate the radio with about 22 hours a week of live streaming. Young Radio themed projects are carried out in different fields (school, libraries, etc.) or laboratory activities (artistic, integration, didactic, cultural). While not an action directly designed for youth NEET, the project is aimed at the active involvement of young people in the province of Monza Brianza, who can experiment in a protected and at the same time varied context, discovering skills and new passions.

→ <http://www.youngradio.it/>

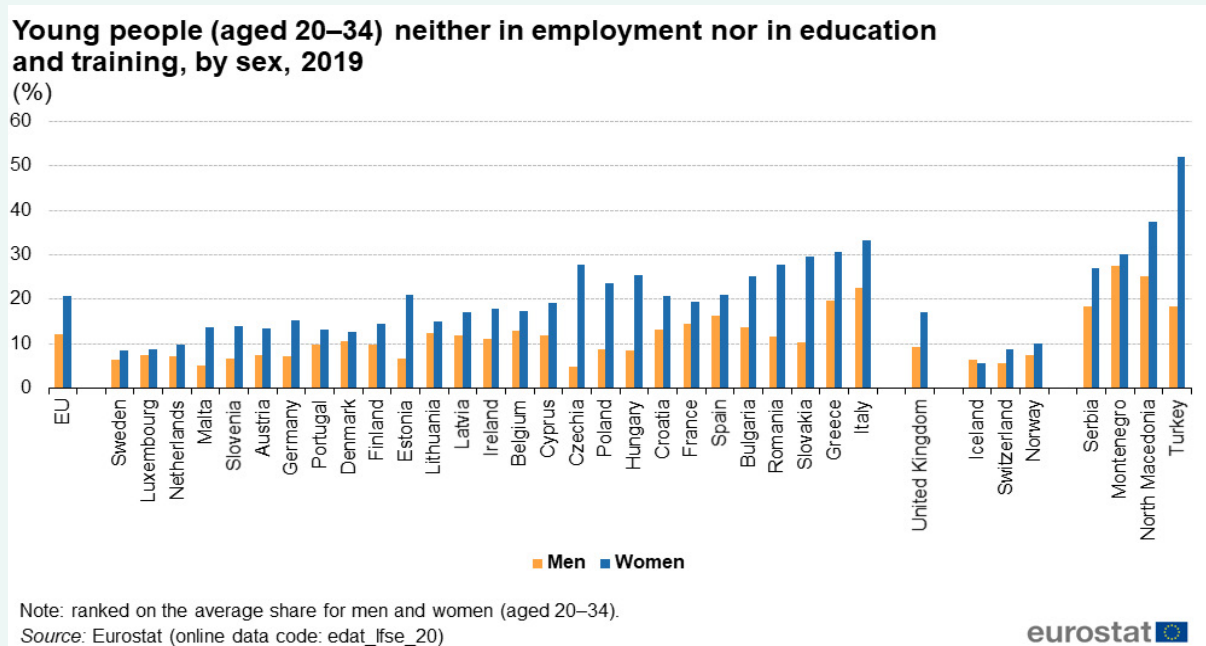
## THE NETHERLANDS

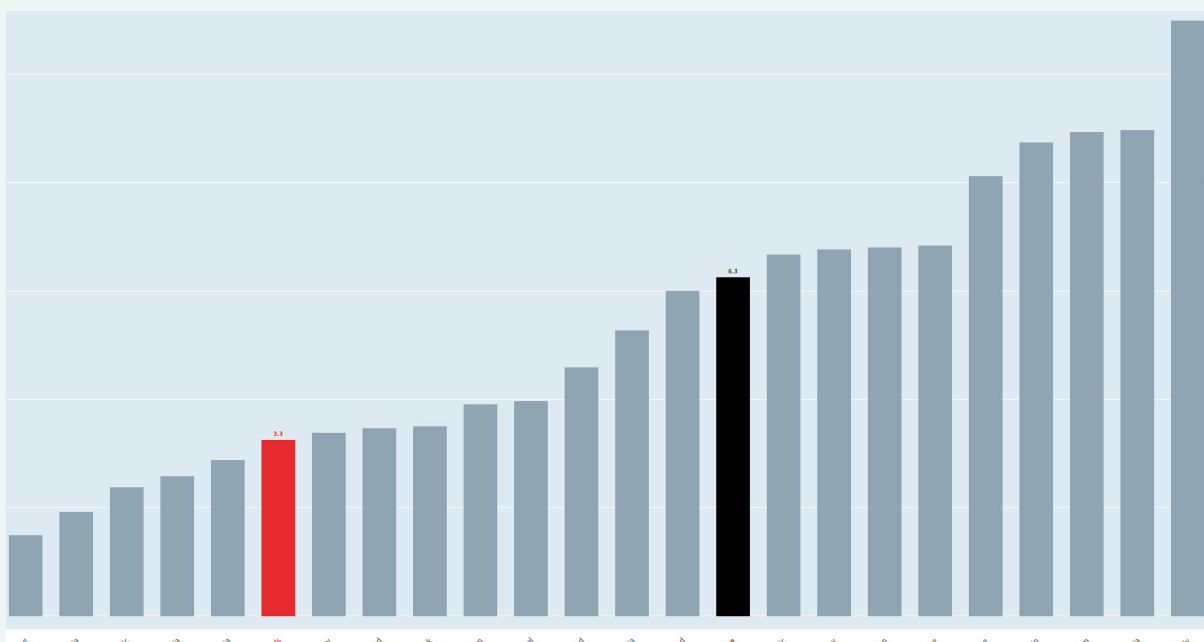
### KNOWN AND UNKNOWN NUMBERS

In the Netherlands the percentage of youth NEET is – officially – one of the lowest of Europe. Looking more closely at the demographics of those young that get this label, of youth between 25-29 who are born outside of The Netherlands a staggering 23,5 % was considered NEET in 2016 (Bekker & Klosse, 2016). Until the age of 18, the percentage is indeed very low, but after the school-going years, NEET percentages rise in the category of 25-29-year-old 'females' especially.

Around half of youth NEET are temporary NEET due to family situations, temporary contracts or involvement in youth institutions. The other half are longer term NEET and need more attention, as they lose touch with society due to personal, contextual or societal reasons (Nederland, Noordhuizen en Van Dijk, 2016).

In the recent decade, numbers of 'ghost' youth have been rising. 'Ghost' youth are not registered in the system anymore, leaving them very vulnerable, as they don't have access to social welfare, health insurance or even the right to vote, and without ID they cannot enroll in education or sign a contract. Although the demographics vary considerably, these 'ghost' youth most often are above 23 years old, live in a city, are from a non-Dutch background and have a partner and children (Nederland, Noordhuizen & Van Dijk, 2016). Because 'ghost' youth are not registered, estimations for the number of youth NEET that fall in this category vary a lot, but a number of at least 10.000 seems to be plausible (Nederland, Noordhuizen & Van Dijk, 2016).





Youth not in employment, education or training, 15-19 years olds, % in same age group, 2018

### ‘GHOST’ YOUTH

To understand this term it is imperative to understand the basis of the Dutch registration system. Every person living in the Netherlands should be registered in the register of persons (Basisregistratie Personen, BRP). Without this registration a person is officially not part of the system, which leads to multiple problems getting a place to live, education, health care, welfare or a job, amongst others<sup>24</sup>.

### CAUSES AND EFFECTS: COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE & CHILD CARE

In the Netherlands, children between 5-16 years old are obliged to go to school. If they don't, the parents or caretakers are breaking the law. It is also obligatory for youth between 16-18 to follow some kind of education, if they haven't already got a diploma that gets them started on the labour market (Rijksoverheid Nederland, 2020)<sup>25</sup>.

Organisations like child care (Jeugdzorg) and the officials monitoring the compulsory school attendance (leerplichtambtenaren) are there to make sure youth receive schooling and care until the age of 18. The low number of youth NEET in this age category can be explained due to this monitoring system. It is after the age of 18 that problems usually arise, because the law and child care are not serving those above 18.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/privacy-en-persoonsgegevens/basisregistratie-persoonen-brp>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/leerplicht>

**EFFECTS OF LEGISLATION**

In 2009 a new law for social welfare for those under 26 years old was installed, introducing a mandatory activation programme for those who (applied to) receive(d) welfare. This measure had, in contrast to its intended outcome, no effect on the total number of youth NEET, but it did push 24 % of youth under 26 out of welfare, without having found employment (Cammeraat, Jongen & Koning, 2017).

For those who live with parents who receive welfare, an extra threat is a measure that was installed in 2015, cutting parents' welfare with 30 % after a child living at home turns 21. The – often untrue – assumption behind this measure is that this adult child provides part of the household income. Parents who cannot survive on this cut of welfare remove their child from the register with extreme consequences, or tell them to leave home, resulting in homelessness and debts.

**EFFECTS OF YOUTH SALARY ON EMPLOYMENT**

Youth between 14 and 20 are subject to a minimum youth wage depending on their age. From 21 years onwards, youth receive the minimum wage for adults. The minimum youth wage at 20 is around 80 % of the minimum adult wage. At 18 the wage is only 50 % of that of 21 years and above (Rijksoverheid, 2020<sup>26</sup>). Although not a lot of research is conducted on the topic of the effect of minimum wages on youth NEET status, it could be suggested that:

- firstly, youth younger than 21 are relatively attractive for employers, but might lose their attractive cheap status when they turn 21, which might lead to unemployment, especially as youth often have temporary contracts;
- secondly, youth younger than 21 might receive such a low income that providing for themselves or a family becomes a problem, while at the same time 18-year-olds are 'adults' according to the law, with adult living costs.

**PERSONAL, CONTEXTUAL OR SOCIETAL CAUSES**

Long-term youth NEET often don't feel connected to society. Personal problems such as a lack of motivation, addiction or psychological problems are mentioned most as causes (Nederland, Noordhuizen & Van Dijk, 2016). A vicious circle could be an effect as low self-esteem, depression and isolation increase feelings of lack of motivation and disconnection.

**STRATEGIES**

Different strategies should be incorporated to work with this target group. Preventive measures are there to prevent youth from obtaining NEET status and are implemented at a young age to prevent drop-outs. Strategic measures are incorporated at the policy level to create job opportunities for youth. Reintegration strategies are the measures that are taken to help youth NEET get an education or a job (Bekker & Klosse, 2016).

26 <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/minimumloon>

## **POLAND**

In Poland, a group of youth NEET population increased from 16,1 % in 2019 to 16,7% in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the increase. According to experts, being in a group that is not learning, working or in training can lead to being economically inactive now and inactive in the future. The longer someone stays out of the labour market, the harder it is for them to enter it. Their competences will not be sufficient to match those of others competing with them in the labour market. Also, the lack of professional experience will be challenging to enter the labour market. Specific to Poland is that men are predominant in the age group up to 24 years, while in the older group, women are predominant. In 2020, 23.7% of young Polish women and 8.8% of young Polish men were neither working nor in education.

This is related to the upbringing of children and difficulties in later entering the labour market. It is not always possible for women to find a place in a public nursery or kindergarten, they often cannot afford a private one or would have to spend their entire salary on it, or in the case of women from rural areas, there are simply no such facilities in their localities. The cultural context should also be taken into account - in Poland, it is still common to have a traditional family model in which the man provides for the family, and the woman takes care of the home and the upbringing of children.

Transport exclusion often plays a significant role in their inactivity for both genders coming from rural areas and towns.

# Shared integration / interaction approach in the employability and youth engagement rationale

## ITALY

### **PROMOTE ACTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP.**

Active citizenship and participation are concepts on which the European Union has expressed itself several times, inviting member states to carry out active policies aimed at young people that favor the full expression of a European citizenship, based on the values of democracy and solidarity.

Promoting participation, the social inclusion of young people, and active citizenship means enhancing their role in society and creating stimuli to expand the space for action that they must have within it. The planning of a specific activity involves for young people the development of the ability to detect needs in the context that surrounds them and to activate networks to achieve the objectives.

European institutions, systems and programs now need the collaboration of the education sectors, formal and non-formal, and should fulfill the task of providing innovative pedagogical tools, methods and approaches. The goal is to guarantee all young people full participation in the life of their community and of Europe in general.

### **PRE-WORK EXPERIENCES AND SOCIAL VOLUNTEERING.**

The younger generations represent one of the riches of our society and volunteering can be a school of participation and responsibility, an opportunity for vital and stimulating encounters and relationships. It is aimed, in particular, at relating, enriching and strengthening collaboration between institutions, the third sector and young people, stimulating a fruitful exchange between those who have "structured" experience and skills and those who, like the world youthful, is naturally strong in an innovative spirit, active and led to solidarity relatedness.

Young Italians greatly appreciate the opportunity to combine the social value of the volunteer experience with the opportunity to acquire new skills in the field, also deriving an individual benefit from the experience. During social volunteering experiences, you learn through experience, that is, through the interaction between a person and the physical and social environment. Learning involves the development and improvement of key and transversal skills, and becomes visible in a change in a person's attitudes, way of thinking, acting and being.

To deal with the phenomenon of youth NEET in particular, it is considered necessary to intervene on a social and educational level. It is necessary to explore some of the needs of today's young people:

- The need to imagine a possible future, looking for and finding "one's place in the world";
- The need to know and experience the constructive and competent side of oneself, but also to live the experience of error and failure, inserting a context that tends to anesthetize the experiences of the new generations;
- The need to find adult reference points capable of welcoming, accompanying and offering models that are more than parental ones;
- The need to share life experiences with peers and to belong to a real group, in the face of an everyday life increasingly characterized by loneliness and dominated by the virtual.

#### **STARTING FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE YOUTH GUARANTEE PROGRAMME**

Youth Guarantee is the first active policy intervention aimed at combating the youth NEET phenomenon. It is the European plan to fight youth unemployment established in 2014, thanks to which funding was provided for Member States with unemployment rates above 25%, funds that have been invested in active guidance, education, training and insertion to work.

In detail, the measures provided for by the Youth Guarantee are: welcoming (taking charge), orientation, training, accompaniment to work, apprenticeships, internships, support for self-employment, professional mobility within the national territory or in EU countries.

Youth Guarantee in Italy was activated through the Employment Center and the Accredited Bodies that have joined. The entry requirements were:

- to be unemployed;
- at the time of joining the project, to be between 15 & 29 years old;
- not to be enrolled in education, professional training or academic courses;
- not having a civil service or an extracurricular internship in progress;
- to be in a condition of regularity on the national territory.

The measures implemented thanks to the Youth Guarantee program had multiple purposes and could bring the following results: work placement of at least six months, activation of an internship of at least three months, reintegration into education and training courses for young people between 15 and 18 years. Thanks to the Youth Guarantee, a young person therefore had a basket of customizable services to get out of the NEET status.

**THE ACTUAL IMPACT ON ITALY**

According to the monitoring data (ANPAL 2018) as of 30 September 2018 (well over 4 years from the introduction of the practice) over one million young people were taken in charge. Among those ones, the 56% (less than 50% of the group with high profiling, or evaluated as more vulnerable) actually received an active policy intervention such as internship, employment incentive or training. Of the 560,000 who have completed the project, 288,000 were employed, but this datum is less than 30% of those taken in charge. It is certainly not a total failure, but it is far from being an indisputable success. Too many young people have not been reached (especially the most vulnerable). Too many of those who have registered in the programme have not been taken in charge or have not received an appropriate intervention. For too many, the intervention was unable to provide a real insertion into the world of work, especially among the most vulnerable. And in any case, in Italy the project was not able to bring Italy closer to the European average with respect to the incidence of youth NEET, leaving our country in the worst position in the ranking.

**FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL**

Transnational mobility is certainly a valid response to European and national challenges. Mobility is not limited to improving professional prospects, but also expands the network of relationships and changes attitudes towards Europe. Mobility significantly influences the future choices, social and working life of young people. The new generations today see Europe as the new challenge from which to start again, close to that idea of a Union without borders, in which they can move freely and where they can build their own path of life.

**THE EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE**

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a long-term international volunteer experience abroad that allows young people aged 17 to 30 to live for up to 12 months abroad by working in a non-profit organization (assistance to the disabled, youth animation, arts and culture). The projects are funded by the Erasmus + program, and have the aim of improving the skills of young people. EVS, in addition to constituting a significant experience of transnational mobility that allows you to increase your experiential baggage, also wants to be an effective practice to bring young people closer to the world of work.

**A PROGRAM THAT WANTS TO BE INCLUSIVE**

The EVS, in fact, is open to everyone: in fact, there are no discriminatory requirements to participate, neither educational qualifications nor citizenship. There are only age limits (30 years) and only those who are legally resident in the country of departure can participate. Participation is free for volunteers and does not include requirements relating to educational or professional qualifications, sex, religion, language skills. The EVS is based on the principle of inclusion and favors the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities, who face economic, cultural, social and geographical difficulties, and / or young people with physical and mental disabilities.

**REMARKS**

In 2016, on the occasion of the twentieth year of EVS, a monitoring was carried out in Italy which saw the participation of over 500 former volunteers (SVEIiamo l'Europa, 2016, [www.agenziagiovani.it](http://www.agenziagiovani.it)). Thanks to these testimonies, it is possible to make some observations:

- It is women who participate most in European Voluntary Service projects, representing 70% of the total number of volunteers. This data is positive, if compared with the numbers of youth unemployment in Italy, which always shows the female part as the one most in difficulty in placing.
- Over 60% of young people carrying out their experience of EVS are over 25 years of age. This means that joining the project takes place at a more "adult" age, possibly after the completion of studies or while waiting for a job placement corresponding to one's education and training path.
- 65% of participants have a university degree, 32% a diploma or professional qualification. This means that only 3% of the participants have a middle school certificate as a qualification.
- Of the former volunteers participating, at the time of the monitoring 49.8% declared to be engaged in a work activity, about 30% in training activities (university or internship), and about 20% fell instead in the category of youth NEET.

**CRITICAL ISSUES**

Participation in the program itself concerns all young people, but for many of them access is particularly difficult: we are talking about the most vulnerable groups, defined with fewer opportunities or at risk of marginalization and which policies often fail to reach. As the data shows, most of the time this opportunity is accessed by young people who already have specific skills (diploma, degree) or who are mature enough to explore new horizons with an educational and growth perspective. On the other hand, it would seem that, despite the accessibility and free access of the project, young people with fewer resources, once again, are difficult to engage. Future plans should, therefore, give priority to the greater social inclusion of all young people, in particular towards groups at risk of marginalization, the youth NEET, and young people from migrant backgrounds. Greater participation in European citizenship can lead to an easier transition into adulthood and integration into the labor market.

**INTERVENE ON THE PEDAGOGICAL LEVEL**

Youth organizations, socio-educational animation and networks are entrusted with the task of acting as an engine for inclusion, of helping young people and volunteers to be involved, of leading positive social changes in communities. The result of greater involvement, information, and promotion at the local level could lead those who have dropped out of school, or youth NEET, towards new opportunities and new learning paths in the field of formal and informal education, allowing them to acquire useful skills for future work. Working with young people not only promotes inclusion, but also helps young people to discover their talent,

to develop the skills to deal with a complex social, cultural and political environment, to live a satisfying life on a personal and professional level. In this context, education systems, youth organizations, socio-educational animation and volunteering play a strong educational role and assume an essential function, so that young people can develop their full potential and become protagonists of these changes.

### **THE NETHERLANDS**

To be able to integrate the findings of our research with the broader scope of European citizenship, it is most useful to look at the attitudes of professionals towards youth NEET. To obtain Europe wide, inclusive programmes, active listening, outreach, flexibility, and creativity are tools that youth workers and training facilitators should develop.

To make EVS and other European projects more accessible to the most minoritised groups, a few suggestions are made:

- diversify professionals, especially in terms of SES, class, and education level;
- actively approach grassroots organisations that work with youth NEET to invite them to European programmes;
- make sure application requirements are inclusive and open towards all that show motivation;
- develop ethical and critically reflective attitudes towards offered programmes to identify possible exclusion mechanisms.

## POLAND

The Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of

- employment
- continued education
- apprenticeship
- traineeship

-within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

All EU countries have committed to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in a Council Recommendation of April 2013. Poland was one of them but since 2013 there are only two projects that we can find an information about which were strictly connected to YG.

### **EXAMPLE OF A MEASURE SUPPORTED BY THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE**

Among initiatives within the YEI-funded priority axis 'Young people on the labour market' are the two projects for youth NEET run by the Voluntary Labour Corps (Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy): 'Idea for yourself' (Pomysł na siebie) and 'Equal labour market' (Równi na rynku pracy):

- The project 'Idea for yourself' aims at improving the situation of youth NEET aged 15-17 by bringing them back into education or training and helping them in the acquisition of professional qualifications. It targets 1,320 young people.
- The project 'Equal labour market' aims at young people aged 18-24 that are in particularly difficult situations due to family and social situations (families with long-term unemployment, socially disadvantaged, dysfunctional), are not in employment, education or training (youth NEET), lack formal and professional qualifications and professional experience or possess qualifications that are not required by the labour market. It targets 6,180 young people.

Both projects were run in all Polish regions (YEI and ESF funding) from 1 August 2014 until 31 December 2015. The budget allocation for these two projects accounts for almost EUR 16 million.

**PORTUGAL**

COVID-19 has resulted in the loss of work or a reduction in income for young adults aged 15 to 29. Despite the fact that youth unemployment is decreasing (14% in February 2022 compared to 18.2% in the first quarter of 2021), young people are still twice as likely as the rest of the working-age population to be unemployed (where the average is 6.2 percent). NEETs accounted for 12.7 percent of young people in the European Union in the fourth quarter of 2021, or about 9 million young people.

**THE EUROPEAN YOUTH GUARANTEE (2013)**

In the EU, one out of every eight young adults is not in education, employment, or training. To assist young people in finding work, the EU's Youth Guarantee ensures that all young people under 30 who sign up will obtain a job, apprenticeship, education, or training offer within four months. Since its inception in 2013, more than 3 million young people have taken advantage of an offer each year, totaling more than 36 million persons supported.

Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, DiscoverEU, EU Youth Dialogue, European Youth Week, Youth Guarantee, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Traineeships, and Your First EURES Job are just a few of the nine options provided by the EU for young people that will be enhanced. Furthermore, in 2022, the ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) initiative will be established to assist cross-border professional mobility for those who are "not in employment, education, or training" (NEETs).

Given today's and tomorrow's challenges, youth guidance should be reinforced. The number of lifelong career orientation activities offered in schools (both elementary and secondary) should be expanded, and resources should be provided.

**PREVENTIVE APPROACHES**

- Providing all young people with career guidance
- Professional Employer Services and schools work closely together.
- Making youth-specific information sessions.
- Teachers' participation.
- Providing information on different career options.

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# Interviews - samples of questionnaires by countries

## **CROATIA**

### **INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS**

- In what environment / context do you work with the youth NEET population?
- What kind of activity does this work / volunteering involve?
- Tell us about your engagement and impressions in working with this population.

### **EXPERIENCE**

- In your experience, who are the main stakeholders in working with the youth NEET population? who else should be involved?
- In your opinion, what are the burning issues related to working with youth NEET groups in croatia?
- What assistance is offered to youth NEET groups, and from whom, in order to improve their status in society? do you know any good example - if yes, please provide (without personal data).

### **BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Please describe how best to reach individuals from the youth NEET population?
- Can you list some methods and / or approaches in working with this population that have proven to be more effective than usual?
- In your opinion, what measures could be improved, abolished or introduced in order to establish a successful operational model of working with youth NEET groups?

These questions were followed by an option to add an “open type” comment, in order to give a chance to present an obstacle or an issue not covered with the questions.

## ITALY

### SURVEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT PRE-WORK EXPERIENCES

- What pre-work experience at the local level did you participate in? (choose one)
  - a. Leva Civica (Lombard Voluntary Civic Service)
  - b. Volunteer National Civil Service
  - c. Giovani Competenti (Competent young people)
  - d. Living Land Summer Pre-Work Experience
  - e. Other – please explain
  
- How old were you when you participated in this experience, and in what condition were you (i.e. student, unemployed)?
  
- What is your current condition?
  - a. Student
  - b. Intern
  - c. Worker
  - d. Unemployed
  - e. Other – please explain
  
- Which Association / Cooperative / NGO did you come into contact with to access this pre-work experience, and how (i.e. through friends, youth service offices, searching on the Net)?
  
- In which territory/province did you serve?
  
- What did you do in your pre-work experience?
  
- What skills do you feel you have gained or increased thanks to this experience?
  
- Do you consider this experience useful within your life plan (enrichment from a training, social, working point of view)? If so, how?
  
- Would you recommend this experience to another person? Is there any thing you would change in its organization?

The questions were preceded by a brief introduction of the aims of the "Living Land Europe" project, by the request for informed consent to use the data collected through the survey, and by the e-mail address of the researcher, to contact in case of doubts or clarifications.

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

### **INTERVIEWS LIVING LAND YOUTH WORKERS: TO COLLECT THE BEST PRACTICES WITH YOUTH NEET IN THE NETHERLANDS**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- To understand the Dutch system supporting interventions for the youth NEET population
- To understand the different organisations that work with youth NEET
- To identify the typical profile of a youth NEET in the Netherlands
- To describe what it means for a youth once they are identified as NEET
- To identify possible causes for the low number of youth NEET in the Netherlands compared to other European countries
- To identify the main methods used in interventions
- To gather different ways to engage/motivate the youth NEET population in activities
- To identify the main needs and specifics of the youth NEET population
- To gather advice/tips from the youth workers for other professionals who work with youth NEET populations
- To collect advice for small NGOs or groups of professionals that would like to intervene in this area
- To collect suggestions for (necessary) policy changes/advice (Dutch and European level) according to the youth workers in the field.

#### **SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS**

##### **GENERAL OUTLINE ORGANISATION**

- Maybe we could start by going back to when you started working with youth NEET. What motivated you to do so and for how long have you been doing this type of work? (introduction)
- For what organization do you work? What is the structure of the organisation? How did they/you start to target this youth group? Do you target also other youth groups?
- How long are youth on average involved in the activities/programmes your organisation offers?
- What methods do you use to address and activate youth NEET?
- Do you collaborate with other organisations/people in the field? If yes, what does it look like?

**DEFINITIONS AND NEEDS**

- In the Dutch context what does it mean if a youth belongs to the youth NEET group? What are the consequences of this 'label'?
- What do you regard to be the needs of youth NEET?
- In the Dutch context it seems that we have much lower percentage of youth that is considered NEET when compared to other European countries. Why do you think this could be the case?

**ADVICE & BEST PRACTICES**

- What advice/tips would you give to professionals or small organisations that want to work with youth NEET?
- For you, what are the best practices/methods to help youth NEET with their needs?
- Is there any special case that you would like to share with us?
- Finally, is there any policy change that you would like to see? It can be on the local, national or international level.

**END:** thank the interviewee and ask if we might speak with any youth they work with, and in positive case to schedule that interview.

## **POLAND**

### **QUESTIONS**

#### **MAIN AIMS**

- To recognise situation of opportunities for youth NEET
- To learn about different approaches and methods of activating young people
- To define what is the most difficult in matters of working with youth NEET, but also on organisational level
- To get some recommendations for the future

#### **INTRO**

- What activities are currently carried out by the Foundation in matter of youth NEET and who are participants?
- Is there any project you are particularly proud of?

#### **DAILY WORK**

- Important part in the context of youth NEET is the young person's willingness and motivation to take action - how does the Foundation try to reach youth NEET with its offer?
- Do youth NEET need to submit by themselves, or organisation tries to reach them in other ways? How does it look like?
- What are your methods to boost motivation of your participants during the process?
- What actions you take are the most effective? Why?
- Were there any ideas/specific actions/projects that failed in past? Why?
- What is the most difficult in your work with youth NEET? Why?

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- What actions and changes could be helpful in changing situation with youth NEET and activating young people?

## PORTUGAL

### QUESTIONS

- Maybe we could start by going back to when you started working with youth NEET. What motivated you to do so and for how long have you been doing this type of work?
- For what organization do you work? What is the structure of the organization? How did they/you start to target this youth group? Do you target also other youth groups?
- How long are youth on average involved in the activities/programs your organization offers?
- What methods do you use to address and activate youth NEET?
- Do you collaborate with other organizations/people in the field? If yes, what does it look like?
- In the last years the number of young people consider youth NEET in Portugal increased what do you consider was the cause for this situation?
- What type of activities did you do to help the youth NEET integrate in the job market?
- What is the biggest challenge the youth are facing when trying to integrate in the job market?
- What type of activities do you think a small association can implement when working with people NEET?
- How do you see this situation evolving in Portugal in the next years? Do you think we will see an increase or a decrease in the unemployment number of youth people?

# Case studies

## ITALY

### **CASE STUDY 1: SERVIZIO CIVILE NAZIONALE - NATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE, NOW UNIVERSAL CIVIL SERVICE**

[results emerged from the questionnaire addressed to the youth target and from an interview in particular with an Informagiovani operator]

#### **STRUCTURE**

It is a 12-months period of volunteer work (partially paid thanks to a monthly reimbursement of expenses) in which young people are involved in services for the weaker sections of the population (elderly, children), as well as in sustainable tourism promotion projects, civil protection, enhancement of the historical and artistic heritage. The Civil Service provides for some mandatory training sessions and a quarterly tutoring system. It is an action that takes place on a national level, involving numerous non-profit organizations. The notice of participation is issued once a year. → <https://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/>

#### **PROGRAMME**

The experience aims to act as a link between the world of training and that of work, offering an intermediate experience, where the young person can experience all the typical dynamics of an organization - roles, employer / worker dynamics, management of the monthly salary - while remaining included in a "protected" contest.

#### **PARTNERS**

- Non-profit organizations (Social Cooperatives, Associations);
- Municipalities and public services (i.e. libraries, law courts);
- Schools and childcare services.

#### **YOUTH NEED**

- Young people between 18 and 29 years old are involved;
- It is not necessary to have a specific qualification;
- It can only be done once in a lifetime.

#### **POINT OF VIEW**

The practice doesn't seem to be as good as its purposes. The testimonies that have been collected, in fact, present numerous criticisms of the Civil Service system.

Together with positive testimonials (for example: «I have gained many skills, the civil service has helped me a lot to deepen my knowledge and my goals»; «For me it has been a wonderful experience, I would highly recommend it»; «I would recommend this experience to many of my peers, I think it can be an excellent opportunity for growth and maturation»), unlike the other pre-work experiences reported as good practices, they do emerge comments such as: «The only thing

I feel I have learned is not to let me push around: to set my limits in order to not being exploited»; «The civil service is used to replace workers. At the end, there are no possibilities for inclusion. At 29 you should have a job, not be a volunteer, since then a world of internships awaits you!»; «I would change the transparency. Writing calls and projects that are not then implemented in their entirety is terribly incorrect. Using volunteers outside the tasks foreseen in the projects is just as bad»; «I don't think it was useful»; «In hindsight, no, I don't consider this experience useful for my life project».

Moreover, D.T. from Lecco's Informagiovani, interviewed by telephone on 24.09.2020 in this regard, affirmed that «The National Civil Service, which should be an inclusive opportunity, specifically aimed at youth NEET to involve them and put them into play, actually excludes them from the selection. In the rankings, for example, the degree diploma often gives a higher score, clearly damaging those who have not completed their studies».

## **CASE STUDY 2 DOTE COMUNE (MUNICIPALITY DOWRY) [DESK RESEARCH]**

### **STRUCTURE**

Internship to be carried out within a municipal office or service (i.e. communication, event organization, technical and environmental sectors, administrative offices). The internship is paid through a monthly reimbursement of expenses of approximately € 300. At the end of the internship, the intern is expected to take a final exam to obtain the certification of the skills indicated in the Training Project (<https://www.dotecomune.it/>).

### **PROGRAMME**

DoteComune is a program that is committed to welcoming training resources, with the aim of transferring knowledge and skills through a dedicated Training Project. In Lombardy, DoteComune is recognized as an active labor policy measure, and is considered "good practice" in five regions of southern Italy. The action was also implemented by the establishment of the DoteComune Academy service, which aims to act as a vehicle for meeting and knowledge between the trainees in the municipalities and the partner companies of the system. DoteComune has involved over 5,000 trainees from 2012 to date.

### **PARTNERS**

- Municipalities (municipal offices and services);
- Partner companies of the Academy service.

### **YOUTH NEET**

- The internship is aimed at unemployed citizens over 18 years old;
- It is not necessary to have a specific qualification.

**POINT OF VIEW**

Of the respondents to the questionnaire addressed to young people in the area relating to pre-work experiences, none declared to have taken part in the Dote Comune initiative. This leads to assumptions:

- the initiative is not always equally active in all municipalities. In larger municipalities (e.g. Milan) there are more opportunities than in smaller provinces;
- the initiative is not given particular visibility. Furthermore, by consulting the specific website and in particular the selection procedures, it is possible to assert that, also in this case, a higher qualification corresponds to a higher score in the ranking; youth NEET with a failed school path could therefore be excluded regardless of the possibility of taking part in the experience.

It should be emphasized that, even if the experience is positive - that is, there is the opportunity to participate in a DoteComune initiative and the selection is successful - there is no, at the end of the internship period, the opportunity for job placement, as access to public offices is governed by public selection competitions.

Finally, always consulting the dedicated website, it is clear that the opportunities to access this work approach experience are (momentarily) suspended following the Coronavirus lock-down period.

**THE NETHERLANDS****CASE STUDY: STUDIEZALEN – AMSTERDAM****STRUCTURE**

Stichting Studiezalen is a non-profit NGO.

**PROGRAMME**

Location where children and young people can study and be guided weekly in a safe, relaxing and cozy environment in their own neighborhood. They have a few locations in Amsterdam, intentionally place in more deprived neighborhoods. Through a combination of Life Coaching, homework support and talent development, it is offered a tailor-made approach for every child, in which the needs of the child always come first.

**PARTNERS**

They work in strict collaboration (meaning they always have personal contact direct with professionals and they rather communicate via phone than emails) with:

- local schools, with their social services as psychologists and social workers
- child protection institutions such as the Bureau Jeugdzorg and Leerplicht
- the municipality

**YOUTH NEET**

Most of their intervention is prevention of youth NEET with students. However, through knowing the extended family, they meet the youngsters that are NEET and were not seen by other services. When they see these youngsters they are also invited to come to the centers and they are also offered a life-coach. Their experience is that 20% of the children in a vulnerable neighborhood are at risk. The reasons for that were already displayed:

- Discrimination in the school, teachers not prepared to fully understand and develop these kids,
- Segregation between good and not so good neighborhoods/schools.
- There is no significative role model.
  
- They have the need to do money fast, thus they will look for a not so qualified job and do not keep on studying, later they lose that job and become unemployed.
- They might have a lot of issues with insecurity, low self-esteem.
- Their parents or other older people in their lives do not give them the best support, no one ask them about their day, their problems.
- Lack of social capital
- Different cultural background
- Low educated parents, or their also lack skills to cope with situation
- Existence of family or personal debts
- They might lack some soft skills in terms of communication and interaction with others, and this is very penalized in the Dutch society.
- The labeling associated to these youngsters, especially in the media.
- The political parties' discourse (many times using discrimination, racism and islamophobia) and lack of interest in solving systemic inequalities.

**BEST PRACTICES**

- Be flexible with time and structure. If younger kids might need a bit more structure, teenagers and young adults have their own rhythm and it's nice to find it and respect it. Youth come when they want, they leave when they want.
- Involve the parents as much as possible. Parents are invited to come from the first week and they receive frequent feedback from the activities with their children. There are also many opportunities for parents to come by and talk with the coaches.
- Each case is a case, even with parents' involvement. Adapt to the case instead of expecting the youth to adapt to you.
- Focus on the positive points and talents of youth. Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool.
- Time is flexible and there are no obligations but there are strong rules, made with them, that need to be respected. In case something happens, this is not ignored but rather treated very seriously.
- Make time for the youth, be truly interested in their life and demonstrate an attitude of comprehension. They notice when we (youth workers) are not authentic or not fully in the moment with them.
- Start from the local level. Walk in the neighborhood. Understand where the youth lives. Think local, be local. Maybe in the neighborhood there are other role models that can support the youth.
- Also related with the last point, build a grassroots network. Check what other possibilities, organizations and services are at a local level, work with them.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE ON POLICY LEVEL**

- More equity instead of equality from the government.
- More investment is needed on vulnerable schools and vulnerable neighborhoods.
- Teachers need more training regarding the risk groups.
- We need better schools especially in the vulnerable neighborhoods.
- Food at schools and projects should be good quality and free.  
A healthy body for a healthy mind.
- Better welfare for the families that are struggling – research shows that these families live in average 8 years less.

**OBSERVATIONS**

The passion and dedication of Abdelhamid Idrissi about the topic were evident.

## POLAND

### CASE STUDY 1- EDUCARE ET SERVIRE FOUNDATION INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT ANTONI KAMIŃSKI

#### PARTICIPANTS

- Youth NEET under 30 years old - especially people with disabilities.
- Unemployed above 30 years old.

#### ACTIONS

- Courses for people with disabilities in fields of hotel services and catering assistance - school.
- Trainings, further education courses are offered, individual recognition of the participant and referring him/her to a six-month internship, in cooperation with the Labour Office in Rzeszów.
- Creating the NEETaktywizacja (NEETAILABILITY) platform where youngsters can look for opportunities in their area.

#### RECRUITMENT

The Foundation recruits people for its trainings and courses, so it is rather young people who are interested in the offer to take part in something than the Foundation looks for such people. Young people look for information about the projects on the Internet, call or come personally.

#### EFFECTIVENESS

The president's observation shows that about 50% of people participating in trainings and courses offered by the Foundation are getting active and starting work. However, there is also a group of people who, despite undertaking subsequent courses and trainings, remain passive on the labour market.

#### THE SCHOOL

The Foundation runs a school for people with mental disabilities, these are people who can complete their education at the post primary level. You can learn in fields - hotel service and catering assistance. A school in which there are approx. 40 students and almost the same number of staff are very prosperous, there is financial support from the government. 100% of the students have passed vocational exams for the last 4 years.

At the same time, the industry in which the school educates students is quite specific. It is e.g. tourism, where many companies employ seasonal workers, from the so-called "street" and companies often have resistance against employing school students who have the appropriate qualifications. This may be due to the fact that students of the school - people with disabilities, may sometimes need a mentor who will guide them in their duties at work, and employers do not understand it/do not want it. Therefore, the aim of the Foundation for the future is to establish its own guesthouse/hotel, where the school graduates could work.

**SUCCESSFUL PROJECT**

In 2005-2012 the Foundation organised a project in cooperation with the hotel school in Majorca. NEET students went to a 6-weeks course combined with language studies, during which they learned in the field of gastronomy and hospitality. Some of the people who took part in this project still work in this field.

**OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

In Poland, projects are one-offs, most often it looks like someone gets into some training, does an internship, the project ends and further development is not monitored. This instrumental treatment does not come from the bad will of people who want to support such people, but from the system in which Labour Offices work. It would be good to continue monitoring and activating a person after the end of such an internship, even if something goes wrong, a person won't finish a training, etc.

If the training does not take place in cooperation with some company, it is unfortunately often doomed to failure. An interesting topic of dual education - that is, vocational training combined with practice.

In order to become active in this field, it is necessary to have practice, and the schools must focus on the specialisation of their students in specific professions. Revalidation, i.e. grinding these strengths, motivating.

**NEETACTION PLATFORM**

The main goal of this project was: 'Development and implementation by min. 50 entities across the country, until 30.09.2019, in cooperation with the Transnational Partner, new solutions and instruments, based on the tools and practices used in the UK, to increase employment opportunities for unemployed young people who do not participate in education and training (the so-called NEET youth), which in effect will help these people to undertake / maintain educational / professional activation.<sup>27</sup>'

A target group here were organisations, institutions, youth workers from Poland whose main goal is professional activation of young people and social integration, but also NEET people in age between 18-29.

One of the main products was an IT platform dedicated to research about youth NEET and activation - a data base of projects, institutions, actions, entities working on behalf of youth NEET activation, also with a library and useful instructions, links for young people and organisations.

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27 <https://neetaktywizacja.pl/Home/Page/1>

As far as the NEETActivation platform is concerned - the main partner of the project withdrew and Educare et Servire Foundation as a supporting organisation was left alone. There are things that need to be worked out. In the project of creating the platform, the plan was to engage among others. The plan was to involve 50 organisations from all over Poland to join the platform in order to provide training offers and opportunities for young people. Training was conducted in different parts of Poland for the representatives of these organisations and although they were received with great enthusiasm, it was difficult to coordinate such a complex project and to take care of so many people.

## **CASE STUDY 2 - SUSTINAE FOUNDATION INTERVIEW WITH THE RECRUITER ANETA DUCH**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

They particularly work with people with disabilities, but also with students, graduates up to the age of 29, including those who have left the prison, an educational institution, a special school - the so-called difficult youth

### **RECRUITMENT**

The search for project participants is more about looking for contact with places, centers where youth NEET can be located. At the same time, there is quite a lot of competition on the so-called market when it comes to offers of projects and initiatives activating NEET. The good side is that there is money for it from the government youth NEET European Union so it is motivating.

Recruitment of such a person consists, among other things, interviewing him/her and estimating his/her motivation, whether e.g. he/she will be able to get involved for a longer period of time or will be able to spend a year on a project. This is also important from the side of the Foundation, which, apart from the good of its clients, has to take care of its own good - they care about the participants, who will be trustworthy and will not give up a given project, because there are funds, e.g. from the European Union, which have to be accounted for.

### **CHALLENGES**

Difficult situations that happen when recruiting new participants are e.g. when a recruiter sees that a person is mentally disabled and is not able to take part in the project to which he or she applies. It is difficult to say 'no' then, but unfortunately, it is necessary to indicate that we invite you to another edition or project.

The POWER activation program - there are always funds for projects for youth NEET, but this money is not flexible enough to really help. E.g. internship rates are not encouraging, there is also a limited choice of training courses - funds for the possibility of the students to get a driver's license, which is such a basis, unfortunately the Foundation cannot simply "give" such money for a driver's license - you must be part of the existing framework created by the government.

**MOTIVATION**

The challenge in this work is to motivate and maintain it for the duration of the project. It can fall down for various reasons - e.g. young people's ideas are different from what such a project looks like, unfortunately often young people are claiming and passive at the same time. They would like to get a certificate, complete a course, get a job offer or an internship here and now - without any effort from their side. It is difficult for them to take the initiative. During the course of the projects, these people need their motivation to be stimulated, the recruiter rarely interferes in the process when people are already in the program - this is what career advisers and intermediaries do, but she tries to keep asking them how they are doing as far as possible.

**OBSERVATIONS**

It is clear that there is a low activity of people with disabilities in the labor market, some of them only finish primary school, which is unfortunately not enough for the current times.

### **CASE STUDY 3- FUNDACJA REGIONALNEJ AGENCJI PROMOCJI Z ATRUDNIENIA / FOUNDATION OF REGIONAL AGENCY FOR EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION**

**INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR ADAM BŁASZCZYK**

Director Błaszczuk pointed out that he does not want to talk about details of how Foundation work looks like because there is a lot of competition among foundations and projects dedicated to youth NEET and it's not easy to recruit them for these projects. This is why he would prefer not to share methods they use or details of corporations they have.

**RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

In a mixed model, both the participants apply for the projects themselves, and the Foundation uses its institution's databases and cooperates with intermediary agencies - without details

**MOTIVATION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Director said that the staff knows how to do it and knows how to do it

**PARTICIPANTS**

Depending on the project, there are requirements, e.g. at least 5 people with a disability certificate, but generally, these are different groups that qualify as youth NEET

**CHALLENGES**

At the legal level there is a financial problem - in terms of payments, remuneration for internships, scholarships for participants, various restrictions related to the rules of the projects. On other hand there are excessive expectations of young people regarding the activity. They expect salaries and money inadequate to their qualifications, skills and knowledge.

# Impressum

## **PROJECT: LIVING LAND**

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In preparation of this publication all partners contributed. It represents the joint effort of the experts / professionals from five different organisations from Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal.

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