

ON TRACK

Different youth work approaches for different **NEET** situations



This study has been carried out and written by Ian Goldring on behalf of the SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre.

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Erasmus+

ON TRACK

Different
youth work
approaches
for different
NEET situations



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...‘Support and Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme’. The European Commission has created a network of eight SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres to enhance the implementation of the EU Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, which provides young people with valuable non-formal learning experiences.

SALTO's aim is to support the implementation of the European Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme with regard to priorities such as Social Inclusion, Cultural Diversity and Participation. SALTO also supports co-operation with regions such as EuroMed, South-East Europe or Eastern Europe and The Caucasus and co-ordinates all training and co-operation activities, as well as information tools for National Agencies.

In these European priority areas, SALTO-YOUTH provides resources, information and training for National Agencies and European youth workers. Most of these resources are offered and disseminated at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net. Find online the European Training Calendar, the Toolbox for Training and Youth Work, the database of youth field trainers active at European level (Trainers Online for Youth or TOY), links to online resources and much, much more... SALTO-YOUTH actively co-operates with other actors in the European youth field, among them the National Agencies and Co-ordinators of the Youth in Action, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, European youth workers and trainers and training organisers.

THE SALTO-YOUTH INCLUSION RESOURCE CENTRE WWW.SALTO-YOUTH.NET/INCLUSION/

The SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion Resource Centre (based in Belgium-Flanders) works together with the European Commission to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme and through that to contribute to social cohesion in society at large. SALTO-Inclusion also supports the National Agencies and youth workers in their inclusion work by providing training, developing youth work methods, disseminating information via its newsletter, etc. Besides this focus on inclusion, the SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre also carries out horizontal tasks on behalf of the whole SALTO network, such as the Trainers Online for Youth (TOY) database, SALTO-YOUTH.net website developments, publications (for example Making Waves booklet about visibility, dissemination and exploitation of project results).

 For more information and resources, have a look at the Inclusion pages at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	8
1 BASIC STUFF TO CLARIFY FIRST	10
Key employment-related terms and concepts	11
Key labour market trends	17
Key EU policies and programmes	19
2 THE NEET STUFF	24
Basic NEET definition, concepts, policies and data	25
Different paths to a NEET situation, different paths away	32
3 GOOD STUFF: APPROACHES TO NEET SITUATIONS, HOW AND WHY THEY WORK	40
They stay when they have a say	41
Eco-Herbal: creating opportunity where there was none	47
Kamers met Kansen = 'Rooms with Hope'	51
Studio Moio	57
Skuhna: making migration appetising	62
Fáilte Isteach	66
International exchange and young people with disability	70
Zavod Manipura	73
Cyprus VET reforms	75
Helping youth workers to better prevent	80
Key Takeaways	85
Annex: References	90

FOR WARD



By **MASSIMILIANO MASCHERINI**, Research Manager for 'Employment and Change' (EMPC)

At the **European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions – EUROFOUND**

Young people have been hit very hard by the economic crisis. Since 2008, the young part of the European population has seen their living conditions deteriorating and despite some improvements being recently recorded, youth unemployment rates are still spiralling to dramatic levels in some Member States.

As losing a generation is not an affordable option for Europe, in order to better understand the vulnerabilities that young people are facing in their transitions from school to work, new indicators and concepts have recently entered the European policy debate. In this context, the concept of NEETs (young people Not in Employment, Education or Training) is now central to the European policy debate, and reducing the share of NEETs is the target of the European Youth Guarantee.



As we discussed in our 2012 report on NEETs¹, at the European level, the NEET indicator has an immediate value as a measure additional to the unemployment rate. The use of a concept like NEET helps to attract attention to young people's problems and the multifaceted nature of disadvantage – integrating particular subgroups such as discouraged workers, young mothers and those with disabilities into the policy agenda, rather than marginalising them under the traditional 'inactive' label.

However, and despite it being relatively easy from a statistical point of view to capture the NEET population, some confusion still remains in the understanding of the concept of NEETs.

Firstly, being relatively new, the concept is sometimes misinterpreted in media or policy debates. It is used with different meanings, mixing together labour market needs, risk of disengagement or discouragement of youth. Despite referring to a highly heterogeneous population, that includes various subgroups, each of them with its own characteristics and needs, the acronym NEETs is sometimes used just to label the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach, in a way that seems to confer stigma.

Then, most importantly it should be emphasised that the heterogeneity of the NEET population has important implications when designing policy responses. In fact, while Member States are right to set targets to reduce the overall number of NEETs, interventions must be tailored to the needs of the various subgroups who require different forms of intervention in terms of welfare provision, training and labour market policies. For this reason, policies to tackle the NEETs problem will involve a range of different initiatives and actors, targeting a range of subgroups.

Partnership among all labour market actors, educational providers, (public) employment services, employers and youth workers is the key for designing and implementing effective holistic approaches aimed at re-integrating NEETs into the labour market, education or society.

Given the relevance recently acquired by the term NEETs in the policy debate, I welcome this publication, which with a very practical approach contributes to clarifying the meaning of the concept of NEETs and helps to remove confusion over its use for policymaking, by providing examples of how differentiated approaches to NEETs may work in practice.

¹ Eurofound (2012), *NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To manageably discuss NEET issues one needs a minimal familiarity with **employment-related concepts** (such as the difference between being unemployed and not being counted in the active population, or how unemployment is counted and measured) and with certain **long-term trends** (such as shrinking dependency ratios due to population aging, or rising job instability well predating the 2008 economic crisis).

NEET can be defined simply – Not in Employment, Education or Training – but this definition is so loose, **the acronym is more of an umbrella term for many different situations and people**, than a clear or meaningful description of any one specific condition.

While the term is used frequently by policy makers, and its use has become inescapable, using the term – given the ambiguity of what or whom it refers to – can often be unsatisfactory. Moreover, there are those who consider the term stigmatising, and its use thus ill advised (for this reason this publication favours the term **‘in a NEET situation’**, rather than use ‘NEET’ as a noun to describe a type of person).

All the same, the term NEET is likely to be in use for some time, and youth work needs to deal with it.

The predominant profile of young people in a NEET situation changes from country to country across the EU. They can be typically low skilled or higher skilled, more male or female or gender irrelevant, with or without work experience, in the inactive population or registered as unemployed – depending where in Europe.

There are several significant risk factors for entering a NEET situation: educational attainment, immigration or ethnic background, income, health, family and/or home environment, or location.

Accordingly young people can arrive at a NEET situation having followed very different paths, and so the pathways out of their NEET situation will also vary. This means, in youth work there will be no single right NEET strategy or approach. For instance, support needed by young migrants, is different from what young people with handicaps need, is different from what youth living in remote economically depressed areas need, and so forth.

Rather, practices need to be developed that are suited to each distinct 'flavour' of NEET. This can be complicated by the fact that 'flavours' combine – one youngster can easily mix, say, income, family, health and minority issues. Nonetheless, **getting away from seeing NEET situations as an amalgam is an important step, for youth workers to become effective at working with them.**

Some key elements of effective approaches do emerge consistently:

- **Partnership** is essential – particularly **across different sectors**, with different roles and different strengths to draw on – based on an understanding of one's work as part of a larger ecosystem of actors affecting youth.
- Better **adapting learning environments** and approaches to the needs of young people is one of the most effective ways to reduce disengagement.
- Intervening **early** is fundamental; a NEET situation is a spiralling dynamic, worsening with time.
- **Remote** areas, easily forgotten from the centre, need to be kept in focus. Moreover, the activation of young people, consulting and involving them is key to keeping remote areas viable for them, and thus viable at all. Young initiative and ideas will ultimately be key to any economic diversification and renewal.
- Young people need to be looked at **holistically** or in terms of multiple causal factors; employment outcomes cannot be neatly detached from other matters, such as home life, health and so forth.
- Change of **environment** can have a powerful impact on a young person, but measures like sending young people on exchange programmes need to be part of a larger **pathway in place before and after** the exchange experience.
- Likewise, **capacity building** for youth workers needs to have its own pathway, not be a succession of unrelated training actions. Also, learning to measure outcomes and demonstrate achievement is a particularly useful capacity to acquire in youth work.
- Young people in a NEET situation should not be seen as problems to be solved, rather the focus needs to be on their **value** and the skills and talents they can potentially develop. They should be **active** agents in whatever process they engage in. As such, they are not only learners, but people to learn from.

INTRODUCTION

Why this publication?

It comes out at a time when the topic of NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training) has come to be the subject of much discussion across Europe and a priority issue for policy makers at various levels.

One of the results of this 'trending' of the issue is that European youth workers find themselves increasingly being asked, or required, to be part of some sort of solution for NEETs, to contribute to doing something about the phenomenon of rising numbers of NEETs.

While at first glance, the acronym seems fairly straightforward; discussion of the topic can get slippery and unwieldy. Many in the youth field find it difficult to come to a clear understanding of the issue or just what they are supposed to do about it, while others may object to the term itself as stigmatising.

Happily, there is some good research available that can be used to grasp better the phenomenon of NEETs in Europe, notably by Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions).

However, this more macro view of the NEETs issue – statistics, findings, labour market policy, etc. – has to be translated down to the practical level of what youth workers actually do.

This publication is for them and anyone else who is interested. It seeks to **clarify some concepts that are basic to grappling with the NEET issue in an informed way**. The central rationale is that a 'NEET' is not one thing, but an umbrella term for a broad range of situations, produced by very different causes – requiring correspondingly different approaches from youth work.

Given the heterogeneity of NEET situations, for its part SALTO Inclusion has decided to focus on NEET situations that are involuntary and associated with being underprivileged, off the system's radar, disengaged and/or at risk of long-term damage through scarring.

To reinforce this understanding of NEET situations as a range of quite different circumstances and causes, the reader is presented with a selection of case studies meant to convey this variety in NEET situations and in what a suitable response is.

Written with practitioners in mind, the case studies try to give some idea as to how similar approaches might be implemented elsewhere, by someone interested in doing something along the same lines.

It was not feasible to provide a case study corresponding to every possible NEET situation. Rather this publication seeks to bring some clarity to what is often an unhelpfully woolly debate, and provide enough examples of how differentiated approaches to NEET situations might work in practice – to get the ball rolling in the right direction.



BASIC 1

BASIC STUFF TO CLARIFY FIRST

A/ Key employment-related terms and concepts

First, to set the stage for the next issue, let's introduce and clarify a few key background concepts.

WORKING AGE POPULATION

The definition varies from country to country, but typically around 16 to 65 in developed countries (though retirement ages are widely on the rise, due to demographic issues).

Not all the 'working age population' is in (paid) work or wants such work. They may be students, those doing unpaid house work or care giving, not seeking paid work for whatever other reason, or unable to work due to health issues and the like.

ACTIVE POPULATION

Also known as the 'economically active population', this is the portion of the Working Age Population that is either:

- 1) **In paid employment** – that is, the officially 'employed'
- Or
- 2) **Is actively *seeking* employment** – that is, the officially 'unemployed'.

Employment and unemployment rates are typically calculated as percentages of each group over the active population.

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

People are defined as '**actively seeking employment**' if they have applied for a job in the recent past.

This is where things get tricky; how recently a person needs to have actively applied for a job, and how they demonstrate it, varies from context to context. Typically a person might need to have applied for a job, in some way, in the last month or so, and/or be registered as a job seeker at an employment centre.

DISCOURAGED WORKERS

The above generic definition of 'job seeker' fails to take into account '**discouraged workers**' – people who have given up looking for work, due to repeated rejection as applicants and negative expectations about being able to find work, though they would work if they could.

In many contexts, people need to register at an employment centre so as to receive unemployment benefits, and when these benefits run out they may perceive little incentive to continue registering in such centres. By ceasing to register they are no longer counted as 'actively seeking employment', though they likely still want a job.

Everyone should be aware that these standard employment definitions can lead to mistaken perceptions:

- 1) Unemployment can look **bigger** than it really is, as 50% youth unemployment might sound like half a country's young people are unemployed, when in fact many might be in school or otherwise occupied – that is, the situation is not as bad as the figure might seem to imply.
- 2) Unemployment can look **smaller** than it is, as many more people might not be working but want to work, than are officially registered as 'actively seeking employment' – that is, reality is worse than what the figures might seem to imply.

The '**labour force participation rate**' is the proportion of 'active population' (employed and seeking employment) over the 'working age population'. This rate is sometimes used to identify 'discouraged workers'. If the proportion of active population over working age population suddenly shrinks, it can be construed to indicate a rise in discouraged workers no longer being counted in the active population. The purpose of such calculations is to reveal statistically hidden unemployment.

UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ISSUES

'Underemployed' refers to those people who are considered by official statistics to be among the 'employed', but who in fact work significantly less than they want and/or need to. For instance, there is currently some controversy in the UK around people being counted as employed who are working on so-called 'zero-hour contracts'².

There are other important **qualitative** issues, and longer-term considerations of opportunity, around what it means to be 'employed':

- How much does the work pay? What standard of living does it allow?
- Under what conditions do they work?
- How does it correspond to the employee's qualifications? Are they 'Overqualified'?
- What future prospects is the employment likely to lead to?
- Etc.

In short, how employment data is obtained, measured and categorised varies from context to context, and this is not the place to go into an exhaustive technical comparison of employment-related number crunching across the EU.

The takeaway is to be clear on what is actually **meant** by the most common terms used in talking about employment and unemployment rates, and to be aware of the limitations of these basic concepts and categories.



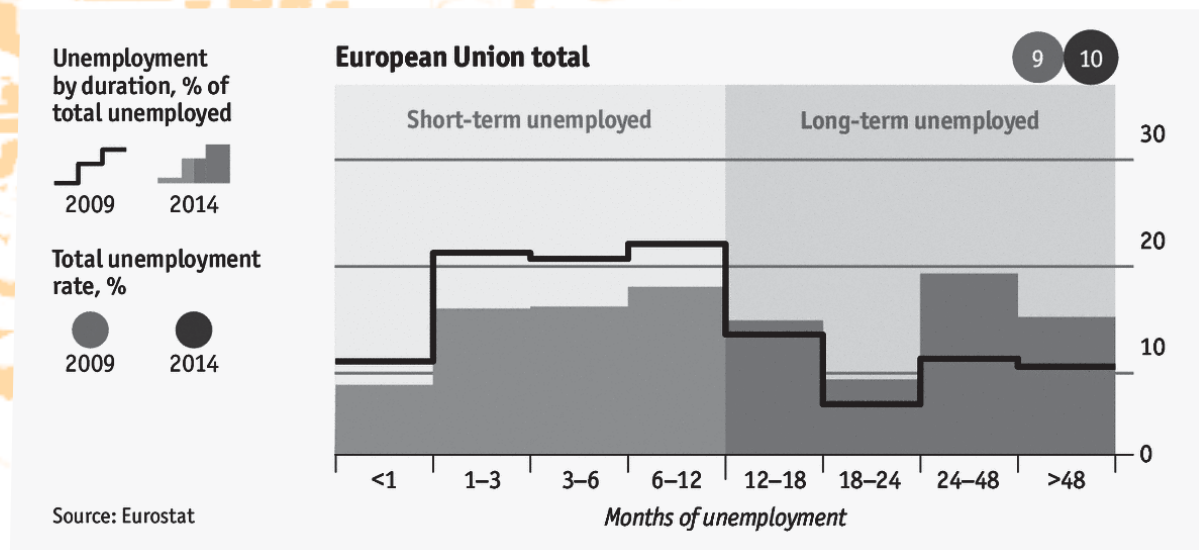
² Under a 'zero-hour contract' an employee agrees to be available for work if and when required, but the employer is under no obligation to provide a minimum amount of work or salary; the worker might get anything from full-time employment to nothing, or 'zero hours'.

B/ Unemployment:

As for **unemployment**, there are different types and causes of unemployment, and it is important to be able to make some distinction between these:

LENGTH OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Short-term and long-term experiences of unemployment are two very different things; long-term unemployment is obviously a much harder and more damaging experience. To understand the magnitude of the problem one has to know not just the real number of unemployed, but also how the total breaks down in terms of period of unemployment.



The Economist website, July 28, 2015

At the time of writing, average period of employment (see accompanying graphic) was **growing** consistently across the EU, while overall numbers of unemployed were relatively stable:

- 10% for 2014, versus 9% for 2009, though with great country-to-country variation.
- Even in those countries where unemployment had declined, period of unemployment has continued to lengthen – this is cause for concern.

CONJUNCTURAL UNEMPLOYMENT

This is unemployment caused by a temporary set of events (a temporary economic dip, bad weather affecting crops or tourism, etc.), which is expected to pass and be of little significance in the long-term.

STRUCTURAL UNEMPLOYMENT

This, very general, term refers to lasting problems (shifts in technology, production, demand or demographics, growing or changing competition, social issues feeding unemployment, etc.) that will not simply go away on their own, and thus need to be addressed actively by policy and action, if change is to be affected.

The key problem with **conjunctural** unemployment is that it can gradually become **structural** unemployment, if it goes on too long. Europe's growing numbers of long-term unemployed, even in those countries where overall unemployment has decreased, would seem to indicate that this morphing from fleeting conjunctural unemployment to long-term structural unemployment is already happening, to some degree.

CHURN: FULL EMPLOYMENT OR SYSTEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT

These overlapping concepts open the door to as yet unsettled debates in economics. The general idea is that a minimum of unemployment is inevitably experienced at any time, just because of how the system works – people changing jobs, people graduating and beginning to look for work, competition dynamics in the labour market, etc.

The answer to what a given society's ultimate potential is for 'Full Employment' depends very much on whom you ask, when, and where. Nonetheless, the concept hovers around as an issue to be aware of.

SCARRING AND HYSTERESIS

Hysteresis, the term used by economists, or 'scarring', the term used in the general press, both describe a phenomenon, whereby long-term unemployment – particularly during the formative years of a young person's life – has significant negative impacts on people who go through it, well after the initial unemployment is over.

People's **work skills and confidence deteriorate**. They experience more problems of **unemployment, social integration, depression, health**, and so forth – for the rest of their lives.

This negative impact on individual lives is also felt by society as a whole, in terms of increased long-term demand for unemployment insurance and various social and medical services, or in terms of a poorer performing work force.

Being NEET then, is to be directly in line to suffer the consequences of scarring. The help and support youth **work can provide** to young people going through a NEET experience, can – and should – do a lot to lessen the negative impact of scarring or hysteresis on young lives (and by extension, on society as a whole).

DEMAND AND SUPPLY MEASURES

Leaving more extensive economic debate to other people and fora, for the **purposes of youth work** actions related to the unemployed, it is useful to underline two basic drivers of unemployment: supply and demand.

- **Supply-side** employment issues refer to situations where there is, at least potentially, demand for workers, but the **skills and qualifications of those seeking work do not match** what is required. This might be technical or language skills, certain types of experience, and so forth. Supply-side measures target these lacks by improving the supply of human (and other) resources, through re-training, improved facilities and infrastructure, etc.
- **Demand-side** employment issues refer to an economy's capacity for growth and job creation. In a situation where demand is lacking, there **are not enough jobs for all, whatever the qualifications** of the job seekers. Demand-side measures seek, broadly, to stimulate growth and investment.
Supply and demand factors are **always both present**, in some combination, though one might be more dominant in a given moment or context.
- In a situation where **supply** is the main problem, there is demand for employees but a lack of suitably qualified job seekers. In such a situation, the question becomes **how to help a young person access** that available work. This can be about improving different types of skills, confidence, overcoming health or social problems or discrimination – all kinds of things, many of which youth **work can contribute to effectively**.
- If the problem is primarily one of **demand** – such as in countries like Greece, Spain, Croatia and Ireland after 2008 and the 'Great Recession' – supply-side measures, like training, still have their place, but you can count on facing a certain population dealing with unemployment, as there are **not enough jobs** for everyone. In a primarily demand-related situation, debate typically swirls around issues like monetary, fiscal and investment policy – things about which youth work can't obviously do much.

However, youth work can do a lot of good in supporting young people who are coping with unemployment, long-term unemployment and frustrated job seeking.

C/ Key labour market trends

Labour markets in most of the developed world have been evidencing certain long-term trends that well pre-date the economic crisis unleashed in 2008. To put the NEET issue in its true perspective, it is necessary to frame it within those long-term trends.

LABOUR MARKET POLARISATION

Also described as 'hollowing out', labour market polarisation is the gradual concentration of jobs at the low skilled/low pay and high skilled/high pay ends of the spectrum, with fewer and fewer jobs in the shrinking middle.

This unwelcome trend has been going on in the developed world for quite some time. At what point it started, and where, is something debated in specialist circles, but the general verdict seems to be about at least a decade before the crisis, maybe more. CEDEFOP, an EU agency, which as part of its brief has to monitor labour market trends, says "occupational polarisation has emerged across Europe since the end of the 1990s."³

YO-YO TRAJECTORY

Young people's experience of the labour market was increasingly characterised – with variations of degree place to place – by precariousness. Obviously the crisis did a lot to worsen many young people's chances of holding onto a steady job, with clear prospects for the future.

A lot of young people were already experiencing "yo-yo" trajectories, whereby they find themselves repeatedly in and out of short-term work, unemployment and training or education – unable to secure a stable entry into the labour market or to advance on it. This translates into a discouraging life experience of going back and forth between autonomy and dependence⁴.

³ CEDEFOP, Research Paper No 9, Labour-market polarisation and elementary occupations in Europe - Blip or long-term trend?, 2011

⁴ I. Goldring and Y. Guidom, Inclusion Through Employability, Youth Work Approaches to Unemployment. 2011, SALTO-Youth Inclusion Resource Centre www.salto-youth.net/InclusionThroughEmployment

MORE AND MORE YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEET SITUATIONS

By definition NEETs have existed since at least the late 1980's when the term was invented in the UK. NEETs came to be identified as a problem across Europe, whose numbers were growing, well before the economic crisis emerging in 2008.⁵

DEPENDENCY RATIOS

Dependency Ratios are the **number of people working to support the number of people who are not working** – typically because they are either too young or too old to work.

“Projections indicate that old age dependency ratio (ratio of individuals aged 65 or above to working age population) will reach 38.3% for EU 27 in 2030 and 50.2 % in 2050, up from 26 % in 2010.”

- **EU-Council of Europe youth partnership policy sheet** – Employment – Özgehan Çenyuva, PhD, Centre for European Studies at METU-Turkey member of Pool of European youth Researchers

Because European societies are aging, the overall size of the **working age population is shrinking**, in relation to the rest of society – this means less and less people who might potentially work, to support more and more people who do not work. This trend already poses serious problems for the sustainability of public expenditures as they currently exist, and more specifically for pension and healthcare systems.

This problem only becomes worse if, out of the, already shrinking, working age population:

- Less and less **people are working** – because of their NEET situation
And/or
- People are working **less effectively and productively** – because of the harm caused to them by hysteresis/scarring, resulting from having gone through a NEET situation.

All this means the NEET phenomenon has wide societal, economic and political ramifications in the medium and long-term, which in turn pushes the NEET issue up political agendas.

⁵ Ibid

D/ Key EU policies and programmes

Such political agendas are found in all 28 EU Member States and in regional and local administrations across Europe – going well beyond the scope of this publication. What follows is an outline of the main EU policy frameworks and programmes related to youth and touching upon the NEET issue:

- The **EU youth Strategy** is a very general overarching policy framework concerning youth opportunity and participation, a kind of conceptual lasso around initiatives in eight areas: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, and creativity and culture.

☞ EU youth Strategy: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/

- **Youth on the Move** is one of the seven flagship initiatives of ‘Europe 2020’. It is a set of policy initiatives regarding education and employment for young people.

☞ Europe 2020: <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/>

☞ Youth on the Move: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=950&langId=en>

- **Youth Guarantee** is a policy meant to ensure all young people up to 25 receive a quality job offer, further education, apprenticeship, or a traineeship within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. It is implemented by the member states and the EU essentially monitors and encourages this implementation. It is not being taken up by all member states, and is in very different states of development where it is being implemented. However, it is something with good chances of growing and establishing itself widely in the long-term.

☞ Youth Guarantee: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/youthguarantee>

Information on implementation country-by-country:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1090&langId=en>

- The youth **Employment Package** (YEP) supports Youth Guarantee and a Quality Framework for Traineeships.
- **Youth Employment Initiative** (YEI) is the financial support given through the EU **structural funds** to regions with youth unemployment rates of over 25%. €6 billion has been allocated to this for 2014-2020

☛ YEP and YEI: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/youthemployment>

- **Erasmus+** is the main EU programme for education, training, youth and sport. It has a 14.7 billion budget for 2014-2020. It offers a range of support and opportunities for youth work, notably 'Erasmus+ Youth in Action' (which gets 10% of the budget) as well as the European Volunteering Service (EVS), which are both elements of the larger Erasmus+ programme.

Youth in Action is the EU's mobility and non-formal education programme for youth. It offers support to young people to set up projects with an international dimension (e.g. group exchanges, voluntary service, youth encounters, group initiatives), as well as funding support activities for youth workers.

Each country has a 'National Agency for Erasmus+', and **youth work is well advised to communicate and cooperate with their relevant National Agency.**

☛ Erasmus+: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/>

☛ National Agencies:

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/national-agencies/index_en.htm

☛ EVS (part of Erasmus+):

https://europa.eu/youth/EU/voluntary-activities/european-voluntary-service_en

☛ EVS Database (listing organisations accredited to run EVS projects):

https://europa.eu/youth/evs_database

☛ SALTO-Youth's summary of Erasmus+ and its Youth in Action dimension:

www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/seeyia/erasmusplusyia/

- Finally, it is important to know that (as of the time of writing, and for the foreseeable future) youth **employment is a transversal priority** in all EU programmes and projects – essentially meaning actions and projects that favour youth employment, in some convincing way, have better chances of being funded.

OTHER FUNDING AND PROGRAMMES

First of all, regarding funding it has to be said that in many cases, better addressing NEET issues is more a matter of **adapting current practices within the same budget** restraints, rather than obtaining new funds.

That said, obtaining funding and non-monetary support – for example materials, use of spaces and facilities, donated manpower – is pretty important. With funding strategies, one re-encounters the central problematic of the NEET concept; it can be about so **many different things**.

As the type of actions aimed at the NEET issue can be so varied, the **sources of possible funding are similarly varied**. For instance, financing for NEET-related actions and projects might come from funds for education and training reform, agriculture or rural development, migrants and anti-discrimination, health, social inclusion, employment, economic development, urban areas – and so on and so forth.

PRIVATE SECTOR SOURCES

Private sector donors – so-called **Corporate Social Responsibility** or ‘**CSR**’ – have great potential as a source of funding and other support for the youth work sector, largely because it is an underexploited option at present. Often youth workers will express that they feel ill equipped to pursue CSR – that they don’t have the contacts or the communication style for dealing with the private sector.

However, youth workers might be more equipped than they imagine – for example, they may already have relationships with **small neighbourhood businesses**, or know someone who does. Often, working through **intermediaries** who do have the desired contacts and *know how* is the way to go.

The case studies, found further on in this publication, on **Studio Moio**, which draws on a variety of private sector funds and means of support in the Netherlands, and **Fáilte Isteach**, which is supported by the Arthur Guinness Foundations in Ireland, illustrate some of the ways CSR can be drawn on.

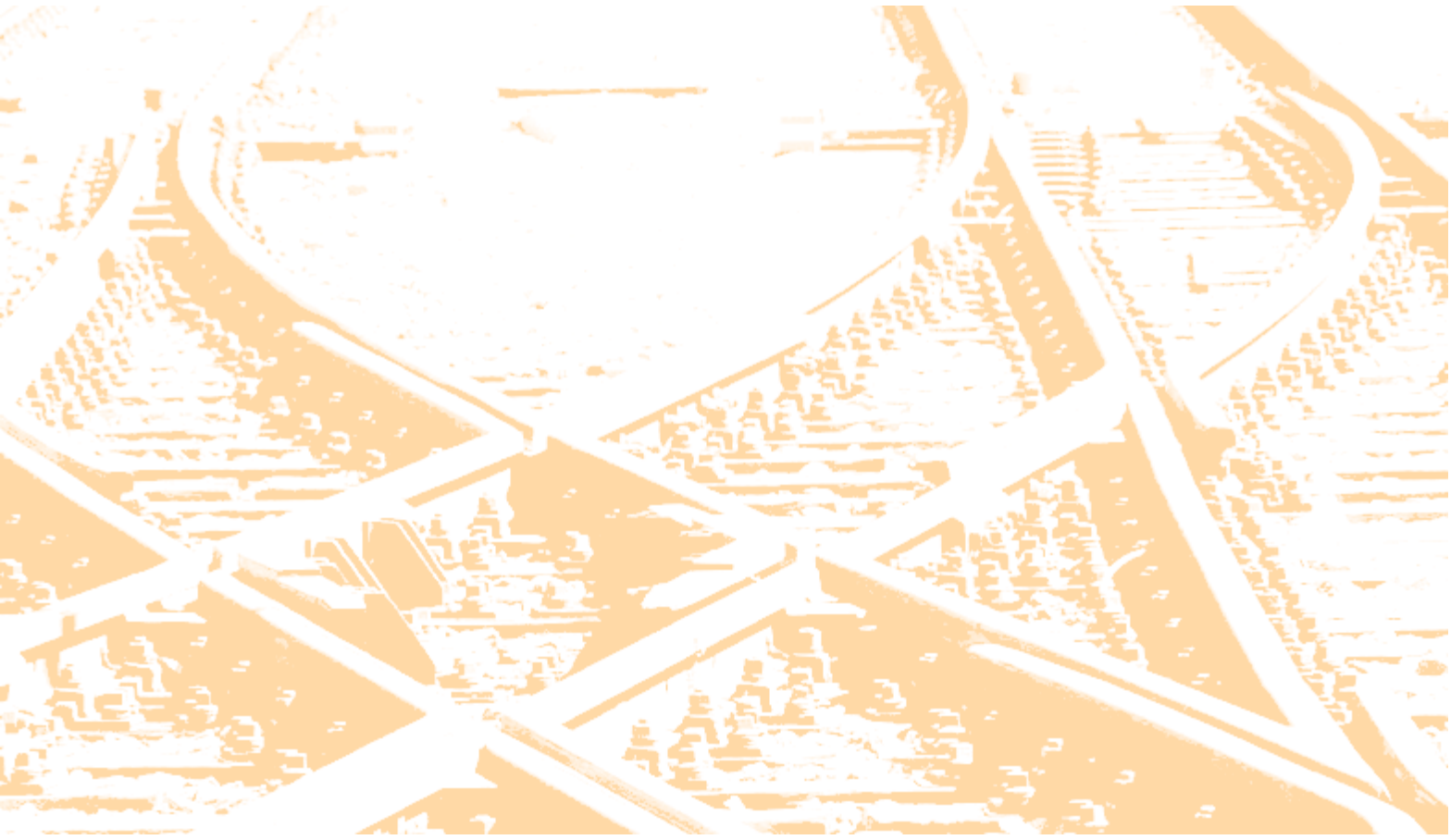
VARIOUS PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT SOURCES

Grants from the **EEA (European Economic Area)** and **Norway** may be an option for some. These are concerned with reducing disparities and are available in 16 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. This was a source of funding for one of the Estonian case studies in this publication – see: <http://eeagrants.org/>

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation also provides some funding for Eastern Europe, see: www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home.html

Likewise, **national** regional and local public administrations, as well as larger donating charities (such as the King Baudouin Foundation in Belgium, or the Prince’s Trust in the UK) may be sources of support to consider.

The European Foundation Centre, a platform representing many European and international foundations and corporate funders, might be a useful reference or starting point for some: www.efc.be/. However, national reference sources on foundations and corporate donors are likely to provide a more exhaustive account of what’s available in any given country.



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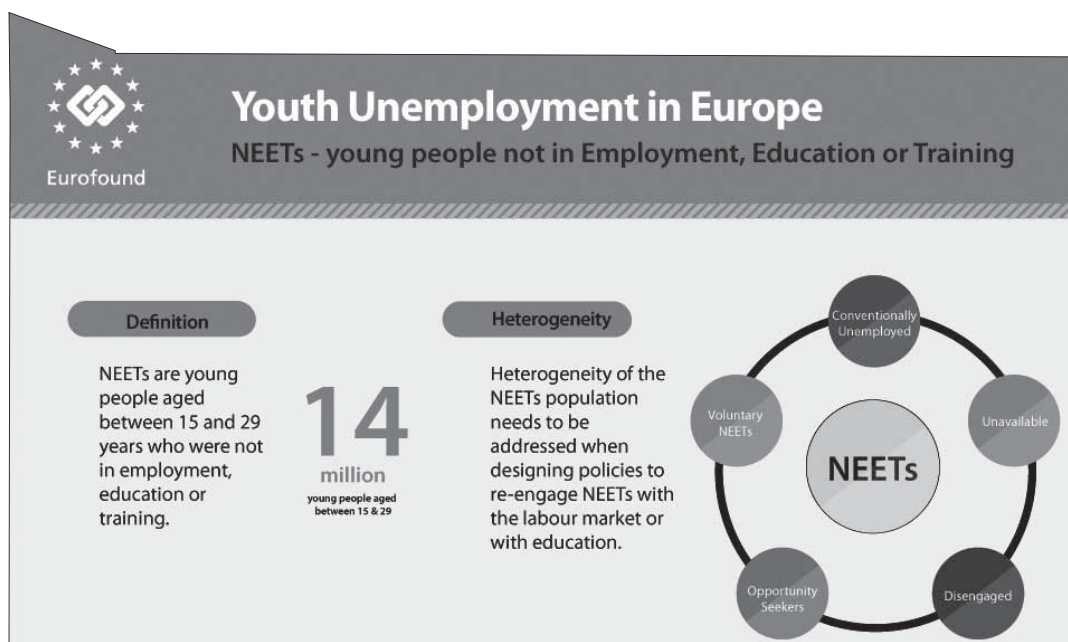


THE NEET STUFF

A/ Basic NEET definition, concepts, policies and data

So, just what does 'NEET' mean?

NEET is a very loose umbrella term; it simply stands for young people 'Not in Employment, Education or Training'.



From Eurofound's 'NEETs Infographic', 2012

A **false NEET** is a person who is technically in a NEET situation, but **voluntarily**. These are people who do not view their own 'NEET' status as a problem for themselves. They might be people who don't need and/or want to work, or have some other project they are pursuing (political activism, starting a music group, building a houseboat, preparing to go back to school, whatever). In some cases they may have gone abroad to travel, do volunteer work, or some such, and are still counted as doing nothing at home, as no records are kept of who leaves the country.

The key thing about a 'real' NEET situation is that it is **involuntary** and the person is stuck in it. Typically they evidence no significant personal project for the future.

Accordingly, **SALTO-Inclusion's** NEET-related work is focused on NEET situations that are involuntary and associated with **vulnerability** and **disengagement**. There is a wide spectrum of such NEET situations. They can stem from some particular underprivilege or barrier, or simply the common effects of scarring/hysteresis resulting from conventional experiences of unemployment.

The term was invented in the UK in the late 1980's and spread from there. As its use has grown, it has come to mean somewhat different things in different settings.

As with other youth-related concepts **age definitions** are a common variable, as what age brackets are counted as 'youth' varies from place to place and among different organisations. This variation in age definition is one of the major reasons for very different estimates of NEET numbers – do you count ages 16-24, 16-25, 18-25, 20-30? Etc.

What's considered in defining who is in a NEET situation has experienced some variation by place and over time. For example, in some Asian countries, things like 'Not doing housework', 'Not having family responsibilities', 'Not preparing to enter a company', or 'Not being married' are factors considered.

Policy discourse and public commentary around the NEET issue generally happens in relation to some discussion of youth unemployment as a larger issue around the NEET one. NEET situation young people are talked about as a sort of hard core or worst-case indicator of youth unemployment. However, it's worth reminding that NEET is about more than simple unemployment; being also about 'Not in Education or Training', NEET situation numbers must, by definition, always be greater than regular youth Unemployment numbers.

In the **EU**, the concept of NEET has emerged as a comparable key indicator, the type of thing that can be monitored by Eurostat, and it has become a priority policy issue.

Youth on the Move – a Europe 2020 flagship initiative launched in 2010, as a comprehensive package of policy initiatives on education and employment for young people – puts clear emphasis on the problem, citing the presence in the EU of 7.5 million young people in a NEET situation (aged 15-24) as part of the rationale for the initiative⁶.

For its part, the 2012 Employment Package '**Towards a Job-Rich Recovery**' pushes the use of ESF funds to support the 'Youth Guarantee' as a tool for integrating NEET situation youngsters (under age 25) into the labour market, or into some sort of training or education.

Prioritisation of the NEET issue as an EU issue is also reflected in increasing focus given to NEET-related projects and actions by programmes like Erasmus+ or the attention given to the subject by an organisation like SALTO-YOUTH (leading to this publication itself).

PROBLEMATIZE THE TERM NEET

Despite the term's rising popularity some question its use, and there are good reasons to – yet it retains some valid use in the right settings:

One name for too many things: In terms of the value and utility of the term – it includes too many very different situations to mean very much, at the practitioner level.

Dealing with specific young people with all kinds of differences among their distinct situations and selves, it is even possible that the use of the term NEET can become counterproductive – by making a **false amalgam** of all that difference.

Stigma: Some consider the term NEET has a stigmatising quality and shouldn't be used for that reason.

In some circumstances, it is questionable what utility there is in telling people, particularly those who speak languages **other than English**, that if they are not employed or in school or in some training, that spells 'NEET', in English.

⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=950&langId=en>



'True, but so what?'

- **Used at macro level and by policymakers:** The term does have some value, as a general category, at policy and macro level – where one looks at national or EU employment figures, projections of economic productivity, measurements of the active population and so forth. At that macro level of calculation, the relative minutia of different individual stories and localities don't normally need to show up in the pie charts.

If one is going to interact with, or be affected by (think 'funded by'), policymakers and institutions that by nature are concerned with the macro level, it is in one's interest to understand the NEET term and issue, and how it relates to these people's concerns and priorities (think 'ask them the right way for funding').

In short, the term is pretty imperfect, but it's not going away any time soon and so it's best to be familiar with it.

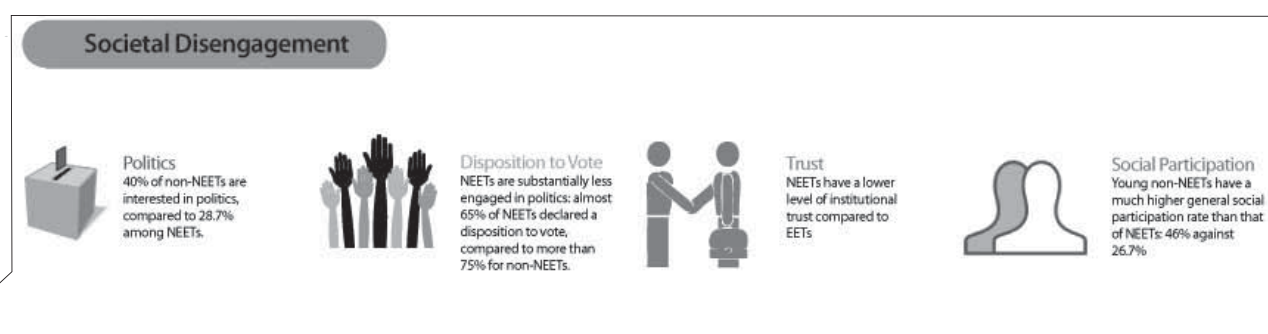
THE IMPACT OF BEING IN A NEET SITUATION, OF HAVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN A NEET SITUATION

The NEET phenomenon produces a range of bad consequences, which are all fuel for arguments for doing something about the problem.

These negative impacts can be roughly divided into two categories – those that affect the people who experience being in a NEET situation, and those that affect society as a whole.

1) In terms of harm for **individual young people** (see accompanying infographic), NEET situation young people are characterised by:

- Less social and civic participation
- Less political engagement
- Less trust in other people and institutions



From Eurofound's 'NEETs Infographic', 2012

NEET situation young people are “at high risk of marginalisation and exclusion from the labour market, especially the longer they remain outside the world of work⁷”. That is, the longer the situation goes on the worse it gets.

Long-term unemployment is commonly associated with myriad issues of depression, isolation, loss of self-confidence, poverty, prejudice, etc.

Moreover, long-term experiences of unemployment, particularly in more formative years of life, lead to **hysteresis**, popularly referred to as scarring (see earlier chapter). That is, the damage done to the rest of a person’s life after suffering long-term unemployment, such as further employment problems, income problems, psychological and health problems, social interaction issues, and so forth.

Bottom line: **it is clear that being in a NEET situation is seriously harmful to young people** in multiple ways, in terms of their present and their future.

2) The costs and damage for society as a whole come in multiple forms as well.

In economic terms the main ones are:

- The costs of the various support programmes and benefits that go to the unemployed.
- The lost income to the state of taxes that would have been paid if the person were employed, and the reduced future tax take from a person whose future earnings are reduced by the damage done to them (hysteresis) by the experience of unemployment earlier on.
- The loss in potential economic output and productivity of people who don’t work or work below their potential.

⁷ OECD Employment Outlook 2011,

Some have tried to monetise this damage, so as to help make it easier for people to grasp. These calculations are all debatable as they are based on hypotheticals and numerous methodological choices. Nonetheless, they do serve to get some palpable understanding of the scale of economic impact to be concerned about:

- **€153 billion per year:** A Eurofound figure, published in their 2012⁸ report on the NEET issue estimated the costs at EU-level to be €153 billion for the year of 2011, or more than 1.2% of EU GDP.
- **€14,000 per NEET situation:** Another Eurofound calculation, released in their July 2011 newsletter, “looking just at the costs of social welfare payments and the contributions to gross national product (GNP) that these young people are unable to make, puts a preliminary figure of the cost to society of €14,000 per NEET situation, of which €11,000 represents unpaid contributions and €3,000 represents benefits payments”.
- **£28 billion:** The 2012 ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment⁹ calculated losses of £2.9 billion per year for the UK Exchequer (Ministry of Finance), £6.3 billion a year for the economy in lost output and a projected cost to the Treasury, looking only a decade ahead, of approximately £28 billion.

Add to this economic impact the problem of **shrinking dependency ratios** (see previous chapter) – a cause for which governments need to take in more, not less, tax money, and get as many working age people as possible working, as productively as possible – and the reader will see a problem.

More and more NEET situations are the opposite of what governments need to cope with declining dependency ratios. What they don't want is a reduced portion of the working age population actually in work. It is a further problem if many of those that do re-join the labour market are underperforming, due to the damages of hysteresis/scarring.

⁸ Eurofound (2012), NEETs – *Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*

⁹ Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), *The ACEVO Commission on youth Unemployment, youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford*, London, 2012

Aside from economic impact, there are plenty of other more 'qualitative' things a person might choose to worry about concerning the NEET issue, for example a decline in the health of democracy, due to the rising disengagement of NEET situation young people from it.

Such issues could be elaborated upon and debated endlessly – **the take away point here being that young people falling into NEET status is a problem of major concern for society as a whole.**



B/ Different paths to a NEET situation, different paths away

The message threaded throughout this publication is that NEET situation youngsters are a very heterogeneous bunch. NEET situations change from person to person and from country to country.

1) DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, DIFFERENT NEET SITUATIONS

Eurofound¹⁰ research identified four basic clusters of countries, in terms of what their typical NEET situation was:

1

Continental and Nordic countries, including Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

Low NEET rates (except UK), low skill level, female NEET situations below EU average, most NEET situation young people are inactive but have previous work experience, lower share of discouraged workers/more voluntary NEET situations.

2

Southern Mediterranean and eastern European, including Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia

High NEET rates, female NEET situations above EU average, most NEET situation young people are inactive and lack work experience, higher skill levels, many discouraged workers/involuntary unemployed.

3

Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain.

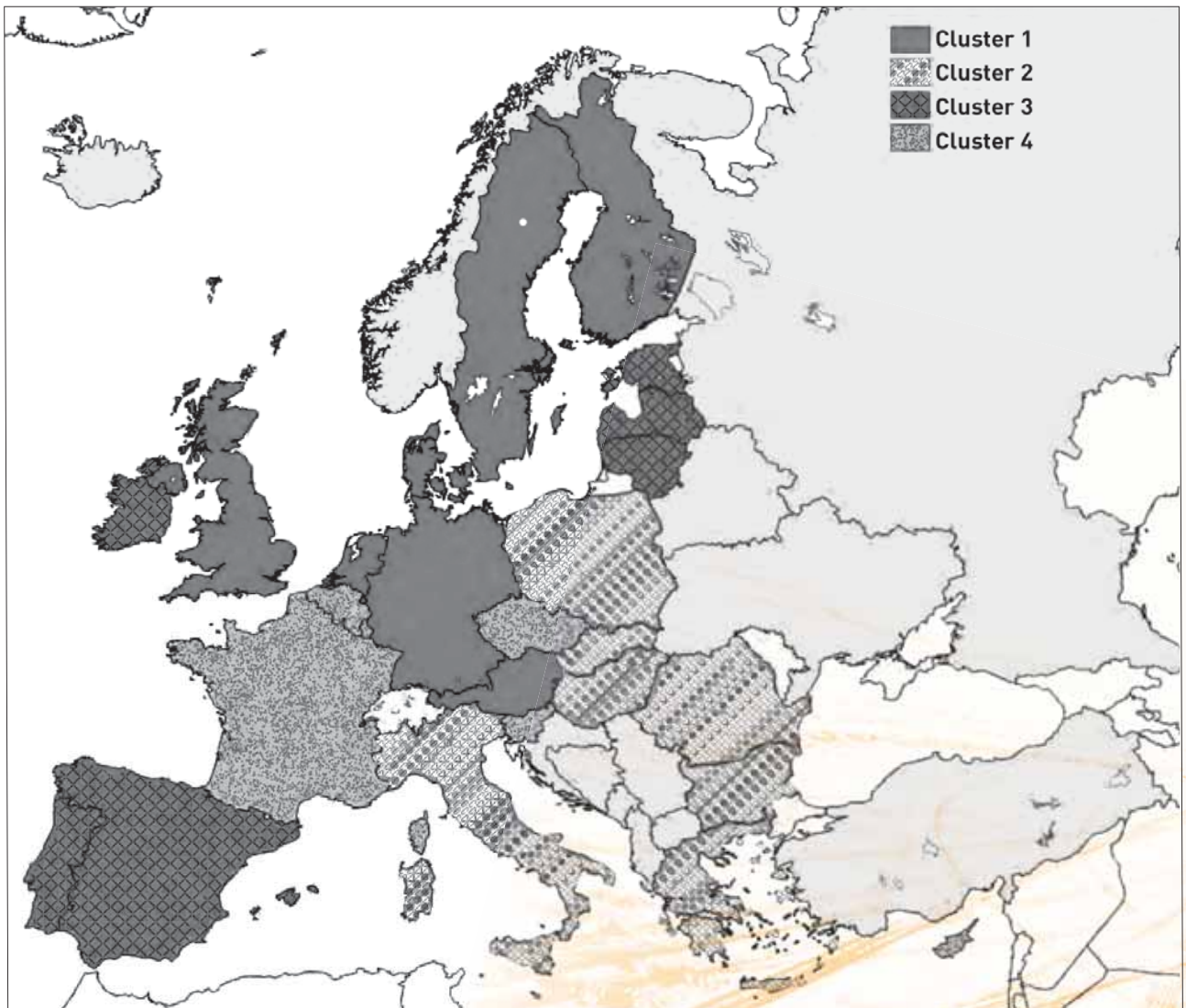
High NEET rates, mostly unemployed, majority of NEET situations are men, with work experience and skilled, many discouraged workers/involuntary unemployed.

¹⁰ Eurofound (2012), NEETs – *Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*

4

Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Luxembourg and Slovenia

Low NEET rates, majority of NEET situations are female, mostly unemployed, with work experience and only medium skilled, lower share of discouraged workers.



NEET country clusters – Eurofound (2012), NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe

2) TOP RISK FACTORS FOR ENTERING A NEET SITUATION

EUROFOUND RISK FACTORS

In terms of diversity among NEET situations, Eurofound's research¹¹ identifies a set of different risk factors (see accompanying infographic), or routes to a NEET situation:

- The most important variable: **Education**. Young people with low levels of education are three times more likely to enter a NEET situation than those with tertiary education and two times more likely than those with secondary education.
- **Immigration** is a major factor: 'immigration background' youngsters are 70% more likely to enter a NEET situation.
- Young people living in **remote areas and small cities** are up to 1.5 times more likely to enter a NEET situation, compared to those in medium-sized or large cities.
- Those with self-defined bad or very bad **health** status and/or some kind of **disability** are over 40% more likely to enter a NEET situation.
- Young people in **low-income** households are more likely to enter a NEET situation, however this factor is often mixed with other factors and thus not as easy to understand in isolation.

Family background and intergenerational issues:

- Parents having been **unemployed** correlates with a 17% increase in probability of their children entering a NEET situation..
- Children of parents with a low level of **education** are up to 1.5 times more likely to enter a NEET situation than those whose parents have a secondary level of education, and up to two times more likely than those whose parents have a tertiary level.
- Children of divorced parents are 30% more likely to enter a NEET situation.

¹¹ See: Eurofound (2012), NEETs – *Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*

Risk Factors



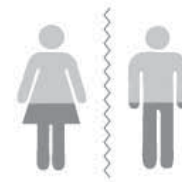
Education
Young people with a low level of education are 3 times more likely to become NEET compared to others.*



Immigration
Young people with immigration background are 70% more likely to become NEET compared to nationals.



Disability
Those declaring of suffering some kind of disability are 40% more likely of becoming NEET compared to others.



Divorce
Young people who suffered the divorce of their parents are 30% more likely to become NEET.



Unemployment
Having parents who experienced unemployment increases the probability of being NEET by 17%.



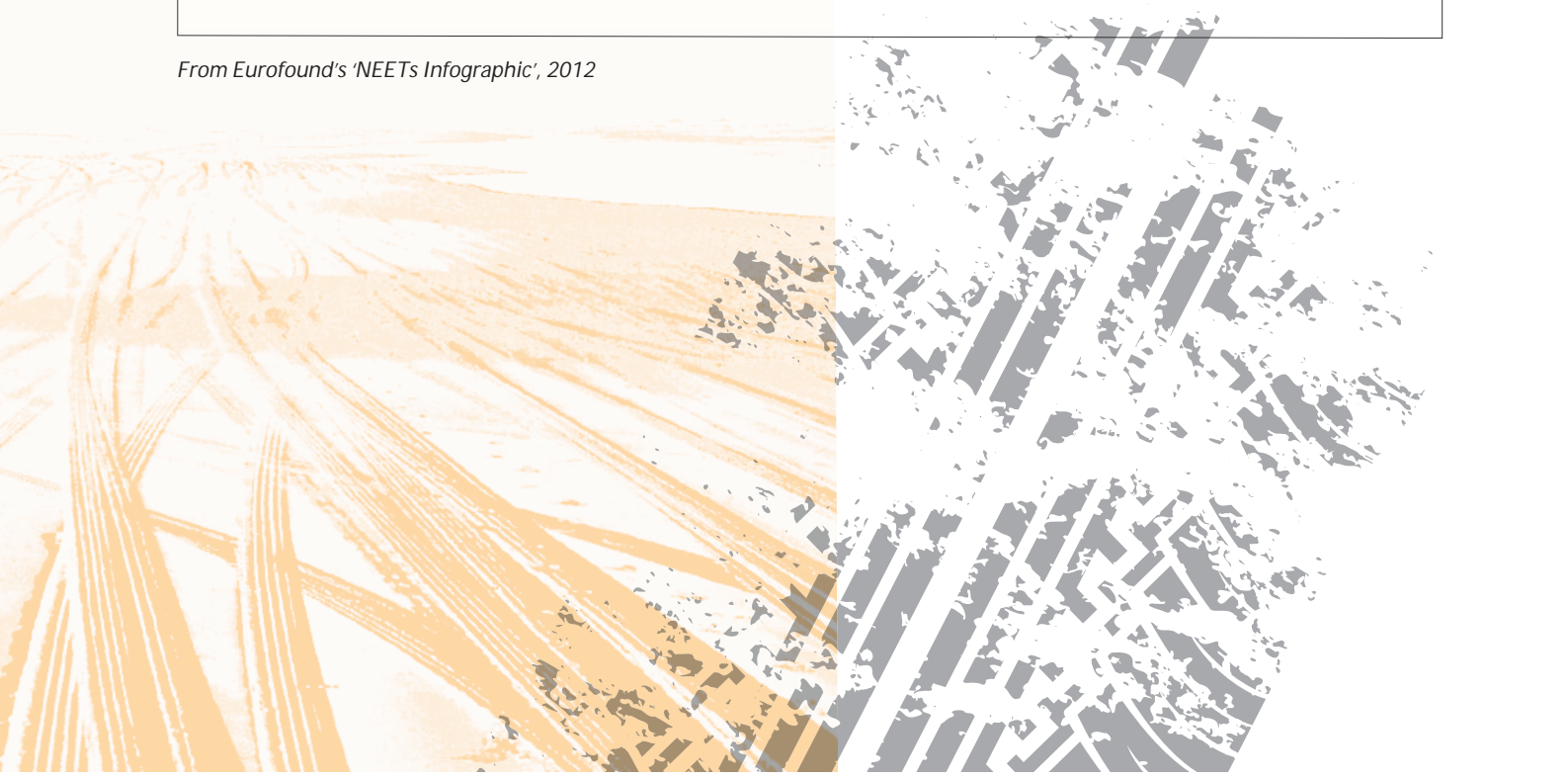
Household Income
Young people with a low household income are more likely to become NEET than others.



Location
Living in remote areas increases probability of becoming a NEET up to 1.5 times

Education is no safety either: In the EU, 10% of young people with a tertiary education have become NEET. In Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, this drops to less than 6% of those with a tertiary education. In Estonia and Italy, however, 20% of those with a tertiary education end up as NEET – twice the EU average.

From Eurofound's 'NEETs Infographic', 2012



ERASMUS+ 'INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY'

The Erasmus+ 'Inclusion and Diversity Strategy – in the field of Youth' explains the kind of inclusion and diversity projects it wishes to support within youth work. It sets out a set of 'definitions' of factors it wants to focus on because they put young people at significantly greater risk of exclusion.

These definitions very closely mirror the 'risk factors' identified by Eurofound (which in turn were also compatible with previous research findings in the field):

- Educational difficulties
- Cultural differences: immigrants, immigrant background, refugees, ethnic minorities and so on.
- Geographical obstacles: from remote or rural areas,
- Health problems
- Disability
- Economic obstacles
- Social obstacles: something of a mix of things, including discrimination and precarious situations

So, we have a reasonably good understanding of the different ways young people can end up in a NEET situation, now we turn to the key question – what can youth work actually do to help?

3) PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH WORK

A NEET situation can be interpreted as the result of life transitions not happening or failing. Eurofound, looking at European **policies** to support successful youth transitions, broke said policies down into five general categories. In some of these the role of youth workers might be more obviously central. In others youth work might have a more complementary role, in partnership with other actors.

Five main categories of policy approaches to the NEET issue:



Eurofound (2012), *NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*

Preventive: Measures to prevent early school leaving.

Prevention is of course the **ideal solution** to the 'NEET problem', and an area with a lot of scope for youth work to contribute – by engaging with young people, involving them and so forth. Working with schools and social workers is essential for detecting those youngsters who are drifting towards dropping out, before they do.

Get back to learning: Measures to reintegrate early school-leavers, with timely support for recent dropouts, enabling them go back to their studies or find a suitable alternative.

In cases where the breakage has already happened and prevention has failed, the next best solution is to reintegrate the young person **as quickly as possible**.

A NEET situation is a self-reinforcing spiral, the longer it goes on the more severe the consequences (isolation, mistrust, difficulty to employ, etc.) and the more difficult it thus becomes to find one's way back out of the situation.

Transitions: School-to-work transition policies intervene later, as it's no longer about dropping out, but transition 'from learning to earning'.

Youth work and policy in Europe has been talking about transitions for years and the idea is widely understood in the field.

Employability: Measures to foster employability, by strengthening formal and generic skills, specifically labour market-related aptitudes, such as job interviews, CVs and so on.

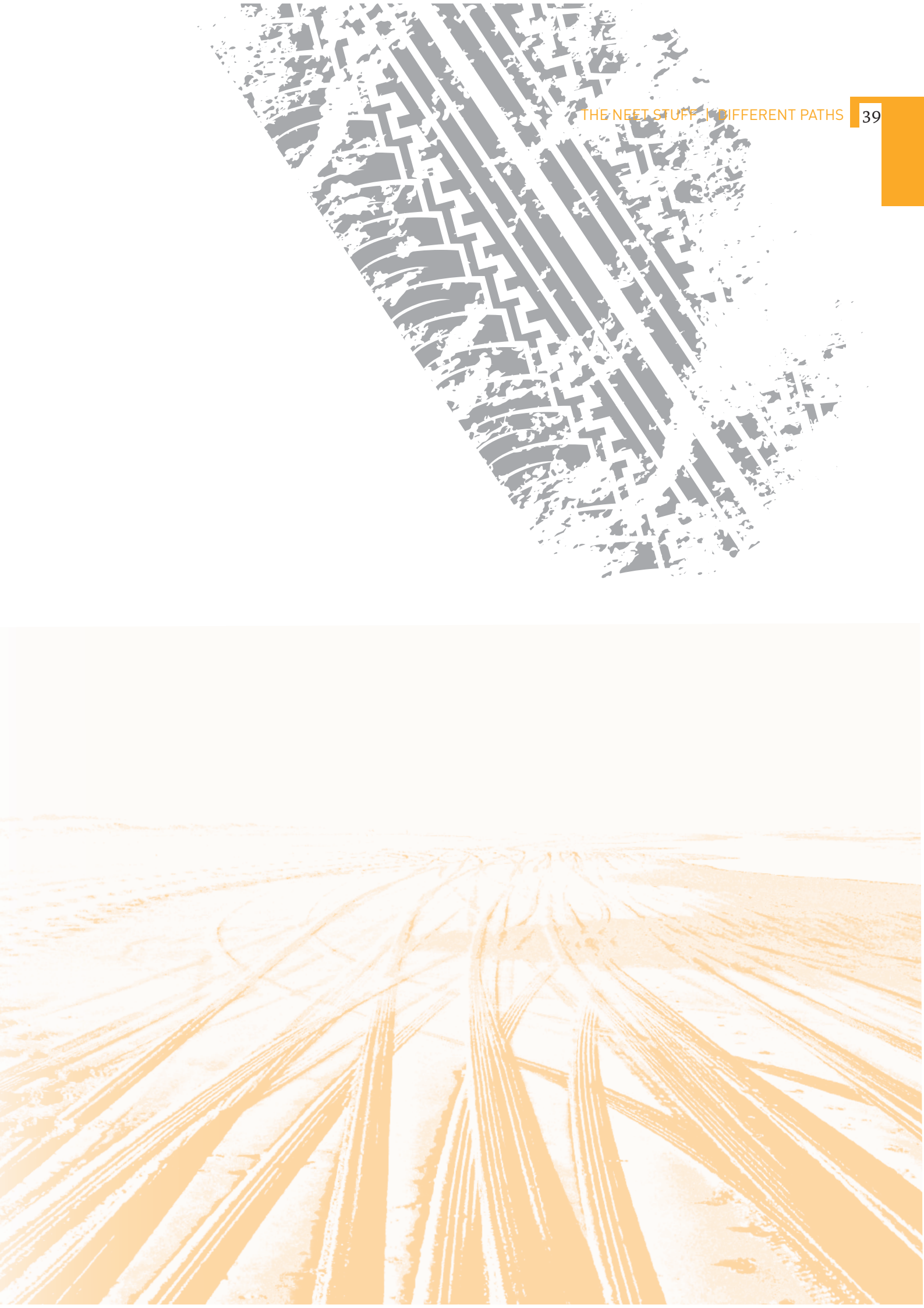
Youth work is part of this – as one type of actor in a much larger ecosystem – even if **not all youth workers know it** yet. What youth workers are already doing builds the kinds of generic skills – self-confidence, sense of initiative, and so on – that are a key element of this multi-element equation.

Access: Measures to remove practical and logistical barriers to employment – young people from vulnerable backgrounds, in particular, face specific barriers.

While changing barriers in how the labour market works (hiring incentives, labour market legislation, etc.) is largely out of the hands of youth workers, there is a role for youth work in support of vulnerable groups and groups facing discrimination (see above, the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy) – again, as part of a much larger constellation of different actors and actions.

While there is always more than one way to conceptualise things, this 'Pathway to Employment' framework is a useful tool to keep in mind, when looking at specific youth work practices, so as to better see how they fit into a '**Big Picture**'.

Let's look at some.





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GOOD STUFF: APPROACHES TO NEET SITUATIONS, HOW AND WHY THEY WORK

There is no one kind of NEET situation, so there is no one approach to helping people who are in a NEET situation or to preventing people entering a NEET situation.

To be effective, any approach to NEET situations has to differentiate among them and the different paths to NEET situations – not see NEET situations as an amalgam.

The following tries to sketch out a range of practices that respond to the needs of different types of NEET situations and causes. It cannot pretend to be exhaustive but rather to illustrate what a structured approach to thinking about NEET situations in a differentiated way looks like, in practice.

Many readers may find they have already been working to prevent and help NEET situations, without calling that work a NEET practice or policy. For instance, programmes helping the young physically disabled might be considered NEET actions, as might a plethora of other quite different, and seemingly unrelated measures.

A/ They stay when they have a say

— youth work's role in bringing opportunity to young people in rural Estonia and the case of Rõuge

ISSUES

Remote areas are generally places of limited and/or declining opportunity. Living in such places, as a young person, is a significant risk factor of a NEET situation.

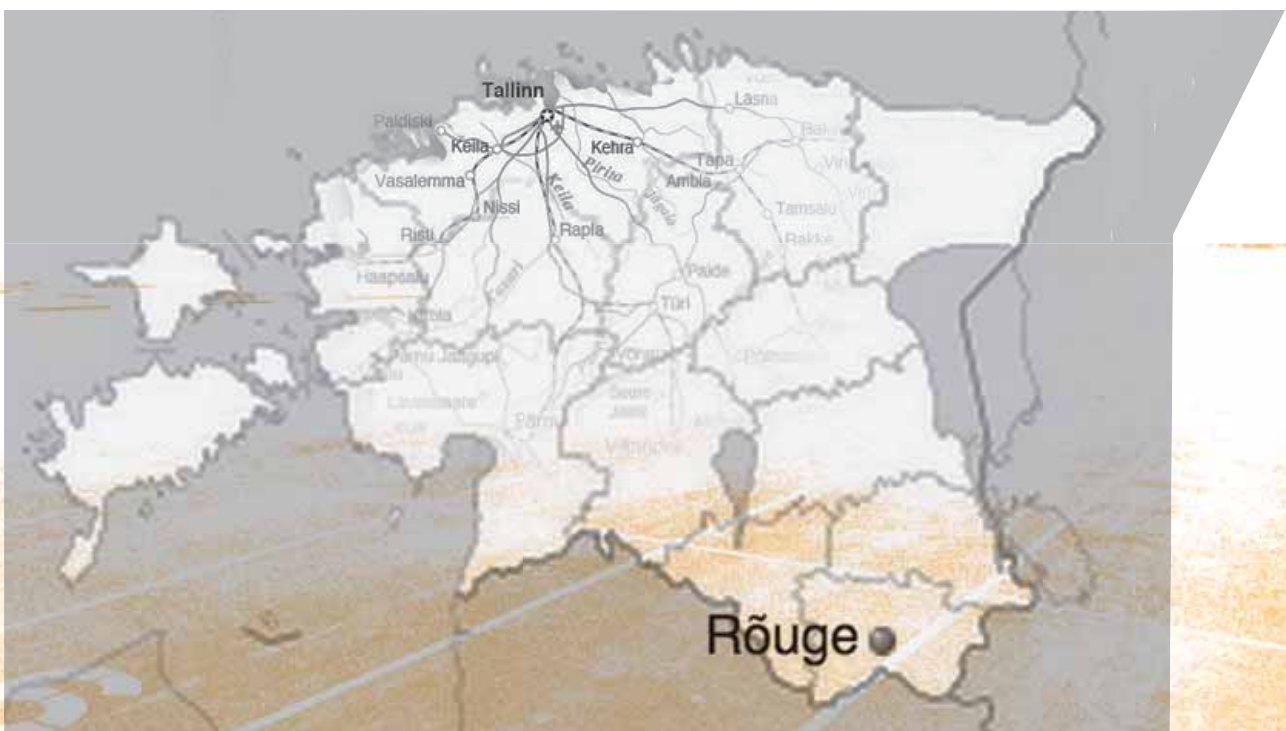
Policies and actions that grow opportunity in remote areas – making them viable and attractive settings in which to build a future – reverse, or at least diminish, these locations' role as producers of NEET situations. Youth work can have a valuable role in those policies and actions.

PRINCIPLES

- Provide services **where there is most need** and lack of such, rather than where they are easiest to implement.
- **Prevention.**
- **Giving young people a say:** Acting on young people's desires for how they want their community to be, making these communities into places where they want to stay.
- Youth work **bringing youngsters and the world of work into contact** with each other.
- Economic **diversification** – to offer choice in the world of work.
- Building **openness.**
- **Long-term** approach.
- The key role of **youth work.**

YOUTH WORK IN RÕUGE:

— From listening to young people to electing them



One of the general principles of the youth work currently supported by Estonia's National Agency for Erasmus+ is to make a special effort to **bring youth services to young people who have least access to them** – those in small towns and communities – rather than on the basis of where it is easier to deliver such services. This is part of a broader struggle to keep remote and rural communities alive and viable.

The case of Rõuge stands out as an example of how youth work can be a central to – efforts at making remote communities sustainable and dynamic. The town stands out from similar Estonian communities in terms of its **18-year track record of youth work**. In neighbouring towns, youth work is less developed or yet to get started.

Rõuge youth work started with the establishment of a youth Council, as a local NGO, with its first elected president Kalvi Kõva – who would go on to **become mayor of the town** and, at 24, the youngest mayor in the country. He was eventually elected to the Estonian National Parliament, where he serves today (at the time of writing). His **replacement as mayor** had previously replaced him as president of the Youth Council. Likewise other elected figures in the municipality come from a Youth Council background, and the town has a higher proportion of younger councillors than do its neighbours.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- **Stable and even slight population growth**, whereas similar communities are shrinking.
- **Young people returning to Rõuge**, after going away to university – when the predominant tendency is the opposite.
- Young people's meaningful **involvement in local planning and decision making** of young people, with local leaders emerging from youth work.

YOUTH WORK AND LOCAL PLANNING

The local authorities involve Rõuge youth and youth work in town planning – designing parks, municipal facilities and the like. The guiding principle is that the town's youth should be part of the design of policy and plans, and so they identify with the end result and feel strongly part of their community.

How it works: The municipality invites the Youth Council (which operates as a kind of club for town youngsters) to provide input on policy, planning, services etc.

The Youth Council members interested in a given issue attend meetings with the relevant planners and specialists to contribute to a given project, planning proposal etc.

Also, the Town Council has various commissions, for various municipal policy areas, such as Education, Environment, Development and so on. Interested young people (ages 14-25) sit on these Commissions as permanent members and participate in them.

The municipality also holds open, 'Town Hall' type meetings where all citizens are welcome, including the young.

In an additional one-off experience, young people were involved in developing a regional **Strategic Plan**, participating in its 13 Working Groups on different themes. In addition, the Strategic Plan conducted public youth consultations, via large scale **brainstorming** events at local schools.

YOUTH WORK AS WINDOW INTO WORLD OF WORK

Rouge youth workers believe bringing young people closer to the world of work is a necessary part of their work. The goal is a win-win situation whereby **young people succeed in the labour market and the local community stays viable** – thanks to growth and dynamism in the local economy and labour market. The main tool local youth work uses to pursue said goal are organised visits.

These visits are designed to open the eyes of young people to the different possibilities and opportunities that exist for them on the labour market. They go to companies and meet entrepreneurs, learning about the different sectors and activities going on in the region. Entrepreneurs and business people are also invited to visit the youth Centre to present what they do – though the **on-site visits seem to have more impact** on the young people.

This is about helping local young people learn about the choices available to them, and helping them to see that **living in a rural area does not mean they can only work in farming**.

Moreover, the interaction is **mutually beneficial**, in that the participating business owners and professionals say they enjoy meeting young people this way and learning about how they see things. The Municipality offers young people job-shadowing experiences in the administration, and the civil servants involved report a similar sense of enlightenment they get out of interacting with the young.



And of course, in many cases, young people end up getting hired for a summer or part-time job in one of these companies they visit.

OPENNESS AND EXCHANGE - BENEFITS AFTER

A focus on **openness** as a value, desirable in itself, is another important dimension of Røuge youth Work, and **international exchange** plays an important part in this.

Røuge young people get to see good ideas elsewhere and come back with new ideas of their own (see accompanying examples).

EXAMPLE

Some examples of how International Exchange has benefitted Røuge young people and their town:

- **Baltic Broadcasting** (www.broadcasting.ee) was set up in 2004, inspired by a young person's experience of a Swedish video centre – eventually leading to the creation of Røuge TV.
 - One **street vending agricultural business** was inspired by experiences youth work provided in other countries.
 - One young lady was so inspired by Italian cuisine and cafe after EVS in Italy, she opened the region's first **Italian style café-restaurant**.
 - One young man, who worked in the Atlantic Sea through youth in Action, says he values the education and experience obtained and now feels **confident about working in international teams**.
 - Several **local NGO's** were at least in part inspired by international experiences, and now offer services to the community.
-

WHY IT WORKS

As Rõuge youth work personnel see it, the local approach is working because:

What they want is there. Young people come back and/or stay in Rõuge because the town offers what they want and need. There is little need to go into larger cities, as the services, facilities and activities they need and value are available where they live.

Long-term. The current circumstances are the result of long-term process of planning and decision making with young people. Local authorities have been able to build up the offer and characteristics of services that attracts young people, because they have been consulting those young people for years.

Diversity is circular. Alternative job options attract young people to the area, and young people drive an evermore mixed economy, because they are the ones who innovate and start new ventures in ICT, media, food, etc.

DO'S AND DON'T'S

When asked what DO's and DON'T's Rõuge would share with those thinking of pursuing a similar path, the following was offered:

- Find **common ground**. Some start by heavily criticising local government, however a hostile or adversarial approach achieves little.
- Start by thinking what **you can do** and how you should **change your own thinking**.
- **Focus on a positive message**. This is key to motivating people and moving attitudes to positive ones.
- **Education** can be very helpful. One youth worker related how she started out feeling practical experience was the main thing. After working in the field 10 years, she went to study social work and policy at Tartu University, and only wished she had done so earlier. She found the explicit theoretical underpinning really helped her better understand and articulate what she was encountering in her work.

👉 For more information see: www.noorteklubi.ee
<http://revolutsioon.ee/>
www.broadcasting.ee
Or contact: Kerli Kõlv, kerli500@gmail.com

B/ Eco-Herbal: creating opportunity where there was none

SUMMARY

Creating new opportunities for young people in remote rural areas where opportunity is lacking – through innovative agriculture and Social Enterprise.

ISSUES

Living in a remote area with few opportunities – as are many of Romania's rural areas – is one of the major paths to a NEET situation.

In much of rural Romania, young people are dispirited by the lack of opportunities they find for themselves and lose hope for their future in these places. Often the only hope they believe in is leaving.

PRINCIPLES

- Creating new **opportunities** in the communities **where young people already are**.
- Finding value in and building on **what communities already have**. In this case that meant innovating within the agricultural sector, and building on the skills and traditions already present in rural areas.
- **Added value** agricultural products, moving local agricultural production up the value chain, to grow potential income, via innovative agricultural activity.
- **Economically self-sustainable** social enterprise.
- **Overcome scepticism** through transparency and building long-term credibility.

BACKGROUND

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs¹² gave Lorena Urse the opportunity to go to a Polish Social Enterprise – Dary Natury – to get trained in organic farming techniques.

Back in Romania, Lorena co-founded Eco-Herbal in February 2014, as a Social Enterprise¹³.

Eco-Herbal chose to start up in Ghimpati, a village in Giurgiu County (on the border with Bulgaria) which was well suited to the operation, but whose inhabitants had been left sceptical by a recently failed, partially similar, business venture. Overcoming this scepticism was a key challenge, and ultimately success, of this social enterprise.

¹² www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/

¹³ Legally it is a standard SME, as the Romanian juridical system as yet provides no specific status for Social Enterprises

GOAL

Eco-Herbal wants to bring opportunity to disadvantaged young people in rural Romania. These young people are at significant risk of a NEET situation, or already are.

It seeks to achieve this by:

- Generating sustainable employment and income where they live.
- Raising low levels of education and training – combining non-formal education and training in organic agriculture, rural entrepreneurship and crafts.

WHO

60% of participants are 18 to 35, many of the rest being older family members.

The participants come from a range of backgrounds. Eco-Herbal particularly targets disadvantaged young people at high risk of poverty and social exclusion, such as:

- Early school leavers
- The unemployed
- People without income
- Roma – especially girls

WHAT THEY DO AND HOW IT WORKS

Eco-Herbal provides the **training and materials** needed (seeds etc.) for local people to engage in organic farming of specific high value added produce used for:

- Pharmaceuticals
- Cosmetics
- Tinctures
- Teas
- Spices
- Natural extracts
- Supplements
- Syrups and oils

Eco-Herbal sells the produce to corporate buyers and pays the producers a pre-agreed amount.

While the participants come to the project already with a rural and agricultural background, they need and are given training in newer and very specific methods the organic farming of these ingredients requires.

For those participants who are early school leavers – particularly the Roma girls – the training is leveraged to help get them **back onto an educational path**.

Cooperation with local authorities has led to unused land belonging to local institutions being put into agricultural production and social use.

The whole operation is **non-profit**; all returns beyond covering costs are re-invested.



RESULTS, BENEFITS AND SUCCESS INDICATORS

Social enterprise success:

Eco-Herbal has (at the time of writing) **expanded** to 6 other rural communities, and production is still greatly outstripped by demand.

Eco-Herbal started by achieving a 30% **increase in productivity** at the very outset, over what their manual predicted as standard output.

Participation:

In the first year in Ghimpat, only 10 people had been willing to cultivate for Eco-Herbal, and now **over 100 are participating**.

Across the programme, some 300 **people have received training**, and more than half – about 180 – are establishing crops.

Benefits to young people:

Participants **earn money**, allowing them to meet their financial needs and improve their quality of life.

Young people build their **confidence**, acquire new role models and develop a sense of belonging in their community and self-worth.

Other benefits:

Decreased public expenditure on **Social Assistance** and increased local **tax revenue**
Eco-Herbal collaborates with local **schools** (these provide land to grow on, awareness raising, etc.), which use the money raised to buy supplies and other needed materials.

Better protection of the environment, thanks to responsible organic farming methods.

Eco-Herbal won a 2015 **award** from the Embassy of Belgium, for best Romanian Social Enterprise.

WHY IT WORKS

Lorena Urse feels Eco-Herbal has been successful because:

- The team is highly **motivated**.
- Eco-Herbal is meeting **real needs** of people in rural areas.
- Local people are **happy** to see the Social Enterprise really wants to do something for them.
- To build trust, understanding and support, the team works with all sorts of **community leaders**: from church leaders, to medical people, to the municipal authorities.

- **Seeing is believing.** When local people saw the Social Enterprise's promises kept and how the initial participants had benefited, more people wanted to join the initiative. This virtuous circle has kept growing ever since.
- Participants **don't have any money** to invest, and aren't required to. They are given free training, seeds etc.
- Participants are **not in competition** with each other, as whatever they produce can all be sold for the same price.

DO'S AND DON'T'S

Ms. Urse offered the following key DO's and DON'Ts to any peers considering a similar initiative:

- **Focus on the beneficiaries.** Establish a training curricula and activities personalized according to the beneficiaries' needs, goals.
- Be very **involved.** You must invest a lot of time.
- **Communicate** clearly and stay open minded.
- Don't lose your **credibility.** Keep promises to beneficiaries.

👉 For more info

<http://ecoherbal.ro/>

Lorena Urse lorena@ecoherbal.ro





C/ Kamers met Kansen = 'Rooms with Hope'

— An alternate home environment

ISSUES

Family/home circumstances – leading to school failure and NEET status.

SUMMARY

Programme providing supported living and counselling, for young people at risk of a NEET situation – through school failure due to negative home environments.

The programme combines support – built around a Personal Action Plan – from professionals, young peers who are further advanced in the project and young professionals active as volunteers.

Young people get back on track to obtain qualifications and transition to autonomous adult life.

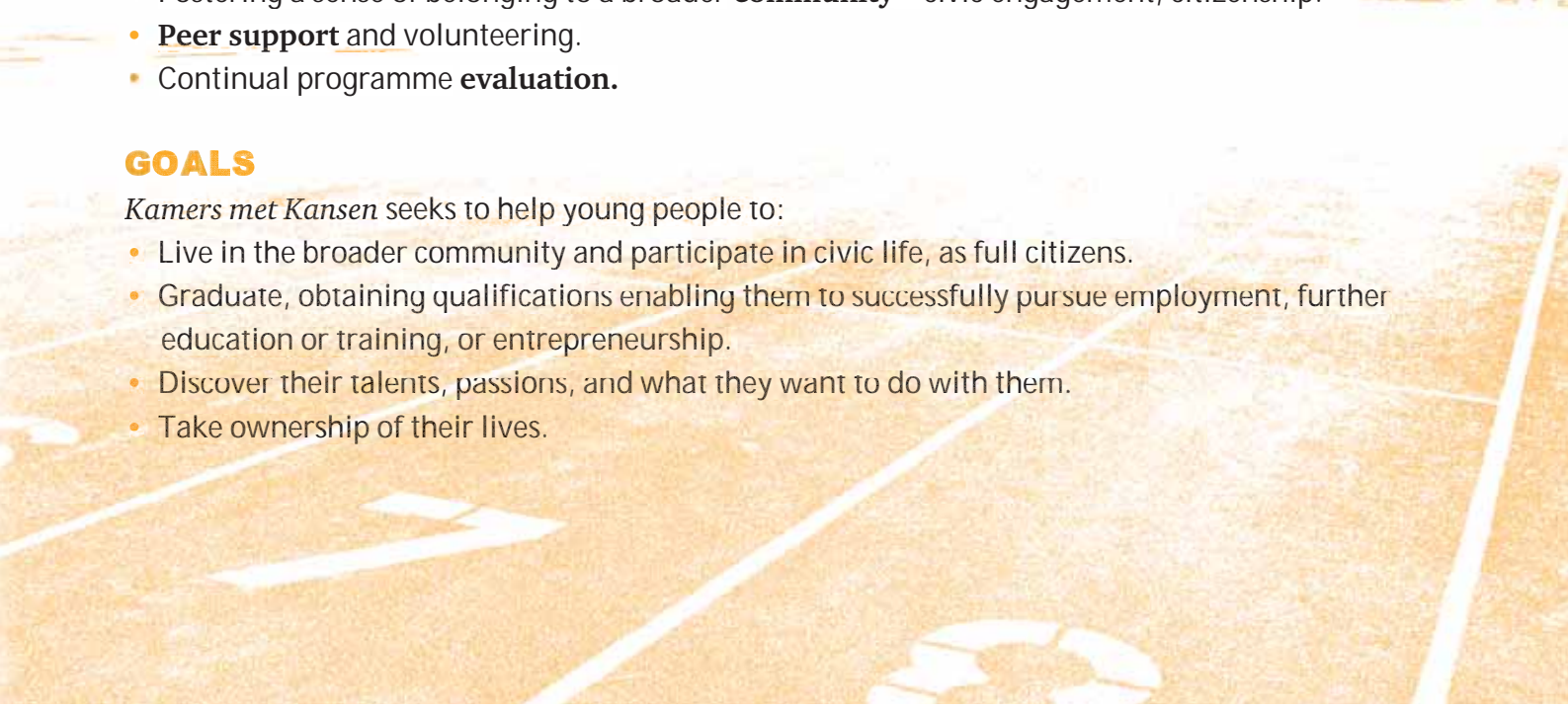
PRINCIPLES

- Participants taking **responsibility for their own lives**, and **ownership** of their work in the programme (co-production, agency etc.).
- **Whole package** approach, addressing all dimensions of the youngster's life.
- Fostering a sense of belonging to a broader **community** – civic engagement, citizenship.
- **Peer support** and volunteering.
- Continual programme **evaluation**.

GOALS

Kamers met Kansen seeks to help young people to:

- Live in the broader community and participate in civic life, as full citizens.
- Graduate, obtaining qualifications enabling them to successfully pursue employment, further education or training, or entrepreneurship.
- Discover their talents, passions, and what they want to do with them.
- Take ownership of their lives.



BACKGROUND

Kamers Met Kansen was initially inspired by London's 'Foyers' programme. The City of Amsterdam agreed there was potential for the practice to be successfully adapted to its own local conditions, taking advantage of the fact each district has a quota for property for social use and that property owners were open to a deal.

The programme started in 2011 and has expanded to three separate residences:

- 1/ **Amsterdam South-East 28 places** – collaboration with housing corporation Rochdale. Started Spring 2010.
- 2/ **Amsterdam West 70 places** – partnership with housing association Eigen Haard. Started Fall 2011.
- 3/ **Amsterdam East, 18 places** – Partnership with the housing association Alliantie. Started Spring 2013.

HOW IT WORKS

Schools alert the programme to young people who are at high risk of school failure and dropping out – largely, but not uniquely, due to their home environment.

To be selected, applicants must express an **active desire to do something with their lives**¹⁴.

The typical applicant profile is a young person:

- 18-27 years old.
- With problems in their home environment – such as low education, low-income families or weak parenting with poor role models.
- Who may have already **left home** and is living in improvised arrangements of some sort. Those under 18 are often in **state care**.
- At elevated risk of **dropping out** of school, with very **poor attendance** rates and other problems in school (conflicts etc.).
- Lacking a social net work suitable for finding accommodation.
- Problems with **managing their emotions** and aggressive impulses, finding social interaction challenging.

¹⁴ Those with criminal records or high debt issues are signposted to other programmes.

Coaching works on the skills youngsters need to transition into autonomous life, for example:

- Job searching
- Writing CV's and motivation letters
- Communication skills, styles and context
- suitability of communication
- Self-confidence when speaking to others
- self-promotion
- Problem solving

The young people get a place to live and coaching support, typically for two years (though adaptable as individual cases warrant), geared to helping them achieve the goals they themselves set out at the beginning of the process, in a **Personal Action Plan**.

Each youngster is assigned a contact person. A tailored network of support is then built up around each young person individually. **Mentoring** is provided by older figures – both the multidisciplinary staff and external volunteers – and by their peers. The 'Peer-to-Peer' support comes from other young people who are farther along in the programme.

This method of **peer-to-peer support is unique** in comparison to other housing projects in Amsterdam.

In terms of **resources**, the use of external and internal volunteers allows the programme to do more with less.

In terms of the **programme goals**, peer-based support helps these young people realise their own worth and that they have something to contribute. Moreover it allows them to experience the civic mindset and value of 'giving back'.

More generally – so as to develop skills for problem solving, resolution and negotiation – the programme encourages the participants to resolve disputes and problems among themselves. Staff only intervene when necessary.

Similarly, learning to get along with the neighbours is part of the 'social/civic skills' learning process. Youngsters learn fast by sharing and taking care of their environment.

The *Kamers met Kansen* team tries to identify **leadership** figures among the participants and make them ambassadors for the programme – inside and outside of it.

The whole process is subject to continual **evaluation** and revision. The team involves the youngsters in the evaluation process of the organisation as a whole, and of their individual plans – to identify what needs to be better and what to do to make it better.

The Personal Action Plan

The Personal Action Plan is the basis for the guidance and coaching the youngsters participate in throughout their stay.

In the Personal Action Plan, each young person sets their own goals for their stay in Kamers met Kansen. These goals cover different life areas: social, emotional, cognitive, daily self-reliance, leisure/study/ work time, lifestyle – and so forth.

The participants own the Plan. It is theirs and they write it, with some guidance, when they move into their new homes.

Following the Plan involves daily ownership on many levels, for example:

- How do you plan your day?
- Do you eat right?
- What school activities, sport, friends are you involved with?
- How is your formal and informal network organized?
- Are you financially independent?
- How do you deal with your emotions?

DO'S AND DON'T'S

When asked what advice they would give to peers elsewhere interested in pursuing a similar initiative, the *Kamers met Kansen* team suggested the following DO's and DON'T's:

- **Include the neighbourhood** when you start – work with the neighbours and local businesses as stakeholders.
- Everyone – staff and beneficiaries – needs to share **one common vision** of what they are there to do.
- **Communication** – about rules on living together and boundaries – has to be very clear.
- **Evaluate** and revise regularly, involving the beneficiaries.
- Be **multi-disciplinary**. Build a team with various profiles and qualifications.
- **Think positive**, in terms of possibilities not problems.
- **Have fun**, enjoy the ride; if you have fun with it, youngsters will respond well.
- Work bottom up; **start with youngsters** and their vision.
- Don't have everyone in the team **doing the same thing**, as it's not effective. Rather, they should have differentiated roles, according to aptitude. If the participants see you are good at something, they will respect you, less so otherwise.
- Don't go over 30 **participants**. In a programme like this, the more over 30 the more unworkable it becomes.
- Don't approach **different neighbourhoods** the same way. Look at the neighbourhood you are going into and adapt to it.

👉 For more info

www.kamersmetkansenamsterdam.nl

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D/ Studio Moio

— Making young people the solution, not the problem

SUMMARY

Studio Moio is a self-financed Dutch **social enterprise** with high success rates at re-engaging young people.

They approach the young people they deal with by trying to find the value in them and very creative ways in which they can make a contribution – rather than as problems to be fixed.



THE PARTICIPANTS

The youngsters Studio Moio works with come from a range of circumstances, however there is a predominance of young people **traumatized by bad long-term experiences with education**. They are often dropouts or on the verge.

Often they have been damaged by negative input they have received from teachers and other figures of trust.

When they first make contact with the Studio, these youngsters typically express apathy and do not know what they want.



EXAMPLE

based on 'I don't like':

Don't like the elderly: With a young person who expressed hatred for old people and a belief that government money was wasted on them, Nathalie offered to sponsor the youngster in conducting some research in support of this view.

This young person was sent to interview at least ten elderly people - the idea being to push him out of his comfort zone and into new contacts that were in fact a bit scary for that person. In this case, the youngster morphed into a fierce critic of the healthcare system and its various deficiencies with regard to how it treats the elderly.

Don't like foreigners: With another young person who manifested a strong aversion to immigrants and leftist apologies for them, the individual was offered a chance to do some research to back up this view. When this person began interacting with actual migrants and the reality of their unfavourable circumstances, his views shifted to criticism of how the system was letting migrants down.

In both cases, these young people went from seeing themselves as lonely victims, to an understanding of how others were also victimised - and empathy for these 'others'.

Don't like to leave the house: A young person with an anxiety disorder about leaving the house was tasked with making a film about the 'heroes of the neighbourhood' - requiring the person to leave the house and talk to strangers.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Every youngster is of **value** and has something to offer. We can learn things from them.
- Economically self-sustaining **social enterprise** – Studio Moio finances itself by selling what it creates.
- Young people learning they can **make things** on their own, instead of buying things.

THE SETTING

Studio Moio is a cluster of spaces in the Dutch city of Leiden. There is an office for staff, a workspace for young people and a creative studio, for arts activities and lessons, creation and general fun.

HOW IT WORKS

Studio Moio describes itself as a laboratory for societal and educational innovation, whose Mission is to help young people find the place they deserve in society.

The general target is to get the young person into an education, training or employment outcome, suitable for them, after a roughly two-year process.

Studio Moio has a 91% success rate of getting young people back to school or work.

The ethos is one of accompanying these young people into learning to do and to fail – accepting failure in some instances, so they can also succeed at other things.

They are drawn out into encountering proof that they can do something, to get past seeing themselves as zero value people.

INITIAL CONTACT

Staff always start by talking with the youngsters when they arrive to the Studio, they use a conversational approach, to get to know each person and feel out what direction to take their work with the Studio. While these youngsters are often ambivalent about what they like and want to do, when asked what they hate they often have some very clear answers.

Nathalie Lecina, the Studio's founder, believes it is important to start by identifying where there is some emotion in the young person and then connect that emotion to a societal issue. This may be done by giving the young person some sort of project (in some cases rather counter-intuitive ones) that therapeutically pushes him/her out of their usual comfort zone – ultimately expanding that zone.

THEY ARE A RESOURCE, NOT A PROBLEM

In all cases, the active principle is that every **youngster is of value, and has something to offer**. In particular, marginalised young people are credited with being some of the people best situated to come up with innovative **solutions to social problems**.

Rather than casting youngsters as those to be 'rescued', Studio Moio puts its participants into the role of **problem solvers**. These young people think of and develop the creative solutions that Studio Moio, a social enterprise, then finds some way to **monetise**.

In the case of the video by an agoraphobic young person exploring his local neighbourhood (see accompanying text box), a **local bank** financed and used the film as a means to strengthen its local profile.

Another young person came up with the unlikely, but ultimately highly successful idea of offering elderly people **kickboxing** training. Studio Moio sells these creative solutions and implemented ideas like this, to the relevant bodies that purchase such programming.

In other cases, Studio Moio participants generate **artistic** proposals, for which financial and other support is then procured. For instance, one young person had an idea for an opera and to make it happen, the Studio linked the budding creator with the kinds of local cultural actors the youngster would normally not come into contact with.

After seeing their ideas are taken up and valued, young people, who are used to **feeling invisible** to society, come to see themselves in a different and better way.

WHO CAN DO THIS JOB

The approach involves a lot of originality and continual adaptation. The director describes the youth workers who drive Studio Moio as a blend of:

- Entrepreneur, with a sense of business
- Artist, with a creative mind
- Alchemist, with a taste for making something out of nothing

These people need a large degree of autonomy to do the job, and a personal commitment to inclusion.

BOARD OF INSPIRATION - CONTACTS

To make these creative initiatives happen, Studio Moio relies on extensive **networking and cross sector partnership**, which goes well beyond the contacts the individual youth workers on the front line may have.

They are supported by a board, the 'Board of Inspiration'. This is a group of senior figures from different fields, in business and the arts, whose role is to connect the Studio with the people and organisations that can make the Studio's proposals happen. These are people who are anything from theatre directors to bank directors.

DO'S AND DON'T'S

Studio Moio's director gives the following advice to those considering doing something similar in their own community:

- Be a **partner** to the schools and companies that will take your youngsters in.
- Intervene **as early as possible**, before disengagement gets even worse.
- **See value** in all young people. Change how you look at young people, to see and be convinced of their value.
- Be aware of your own **prejudices** when dealing with difficult to reach young people. Accept you have prejudices and work on them. We can't change how society thinks if we can't learn to change our own thinking.
- You have to **like** your youngsters and the work you do with them, or you won't do it.
- A **social enterprise is a business**, run it like one and stay independent.
- Be **creative** and think in terms of possibilities.
- Dare to **fail**.
- **Don't try to copy**. Understand the idea in your head and interpret for yourself how to implement it on the ground.

👉 For more information, see: www.studiomoio.nl/
Or contact Nathalie Lecina: nathalie@studiomoio.nl

E/ Skuhna: making migration appetising

ISSUE

Being a **migrant**, or coming from a migration background, is a key risk factor of a NEET situation.

SUMMARY

Skuhna is an initiative in Slovenia that turns the difference of being a migrant – which can easily lead to rejection or discrimination – into something interesting and of value. It improves the employability of young migrants and the attitudes towards them in the larger society, through food.

PRINCIPLES

Appreciating difference as value – making cultural difference an asset.

Authenticity and quality of cultural and culinary offer.

Ownership – Skuhna is an initiative for young migrants, created and run by young migrants.

Simplicity of an idea as its strength.



BACKGROUND

Skuhna – a play on words for ‘world’ and ‘kitchen’ in Slovenian – is a restaurant, training and cultural centre in Ljubljana. It is a Social Enterprise developed by two NGOs concerned with internationalism (Zavod Global and Zavod Voluntariat) in partnership with migrants living in Slovenia.

It started as a project to increase the employability and employment of migrants, funded by the European Social Fund and the Slovene Ministry of Labour.

WHO IT'S FOR

Young recent migrants are drawn to Skuhna for this training by word-of-mouth or on the recommendation of other NGOs – when it comes to working with other NGOs, government agencies and employers Skuhna’s managers say ‘cooperation is everything’.

When selecting trainees, Skuhna gives priority to migrants who can already cook and/or like cooking, and to young mothers – the latter being less mobile and more charged with responsibilities.

They also take on people who come to them through the European Volunteer Service, who might help out in various capacities in the restaurant/cultural centre.

HOW IT WORKS

Cooking and food preparation is something a lot of migrants already have an informal background in, and where not speaking perfect Slovenian is less of a deal breaker.

Skuhna gives migrants restaurant-related training – cooking and hygiene standards, cold chain practice, work safety, Slovene regulations affecting catering, and so forth.

Thus qualified, the migrants might then work in Skuhna itself or seek employment in other restaurants and catering businesses.

The centre also hosts a range of other activities; it is a commercial restaurant, does catering and food delivery, rents out space for parties and events, hosts cultural awareness workshops for children and public info-discussion type events (debates, panel discussion, documentary screenings followed by moderated discussion, talks by visiting authors etc.).

The food is an eclectic mix of 'World Cuisine', mirroring the similarly eclectic mix of migrants who make it. Each dish is presented as good food, but also a kind of 'cultural story'. The décor is part of the story, made up of a range of motifs and symbols from Africa, Asia and South America.

The contents and themes of the more 'intellectual' events loosely relate to issues of the Global South, internationalism and so forth. The tone, quality and richness of variety present the presence of migrants in Slovenia as an enriching and interesting asset, something to enjoy rather than feel threatened by.

WHY IT WORKS

People like food and like stories.

Food is an accessible and depoliticised point of contact with different cultures. The dishes are presented in terms of the stories and cultural experiences behind them. For instance, one of the desserts was invented by Gambian freedom fighters; made with brown sugar, peanut butter and some spices, it comes wrapped up in a story of how a nation came to be.

Overall, customers respond well and give good feedback on the experience they have – describing the migrants that staff the locale as pleasant enjoyable people to be around. While it's difficult to quantify the effect on public attitudes to migrants, it can reasonably be assumed to be a positive one.

As Skuhna's managers see it, the concept has three key strengths:

- 1) **Language.** A major barrier to the Slovene labour market for many recently arrived migrants is the Slovene language. Skuhna cooperates with other NGOs to help its participants learn Slovene to support their long-term integration in Slovenia, but its own working language is English, and for other employers, perfect Slovene is not essential for a chef.
- 2) **No need for formal education.** Skuhna is able to take in anyone interested in food and learning about food. No other qualifications needed.
- 3) The **simplicity** of the idea. It's very easy to communicate and explain, and people immediately understand what it is and what it is trying to do.

WHAT IT ACHIEVES

The young migrants become much more **employable**. Many have never had formal jobs before and they get exposure to actual work environment.

These young migrants become more **self-confident**, more aware of their own skills and equipped with greater social networks.

Migration and diversity are presented to the receiving population as something **positive**, to enjoy and not something to experience as a problem.

The close cooperation with other NGOs with different specialties, their involvement in the different workshop events and the like, all contribute to **capacity building of the local NGO sector** – generally and in their work with migrants.

DO'S AND DON'T'S

Skuhna's management offered the following advice to those thinking of implementing a similar idea in their locality:

- A Social Enterprise is a type of **business**; focus on a good business plan, put in place the needed business skills and get good business advice. Skuhna went through a learning curve they now realise could have been less steep, if they'd gotten some advice from people who know more about the sector than they did.
- If you are in business, you have **competitors**, and not all of them may wish you well.
- Build on **what you are good at**, and cooperate with others who are good at other things.
- Know and accept your **limitations**. Your single initiative can't be an answer to all problems. Be realistic about what you want to achieve. Don't get overwhelmed.
- It doesn't have to last forever. Some things work for a while then stop, and that can be ok. **Don't count what you don't do**, but what you do do.

👉 For more information

👉 See www.skuhna.si and www.facebook.com/Skuhna

Or contact: info@skuhna.si

F/ Fáilte Isteach

ISSUES:

Integrating migrants in their communities.

PRINCIPLES

- Language learning as value in itself, but also as vehicle for **integration**.
- Overcoming **barriers** to communication and interaction.
- Changing the **attitudes** and perceptions of locals and migrants towards each other.
- Sustainable practice due to **low costs**.



SUMMARY

Volunteer-led English conversation classes for migrants in Ireland:

A win-win practice, developed in a rural village setting, that benefits and integrates (mostly) young migrants while providing a positive 'active aging' experience for older volunteer teachers. Inexpensive to do, and thus highly sustainable.

BACKGROUND

Being a migrant, or of a migrant background, is one of the major pathways to a NEET situation. Fáilte Isteach – Irish for ‘welcome in’ – started in 2006 in Summerhill, a little Irish village. The founder, Mary Nally, had become aware of the isolation, distress and the difficulty integrating into the community that young migrants were experiencing, stemming from the language and communication barriers they were encountering. So she went to her peers at the local ‘Third Age Centre’ (Third Age is an Irish organisation supporting the active aging of retirees) and together they decided to do something. And so they started a programme of volunteer-driven English conversation classes for migrants, which eventually spread from that one village, all across the country.

THE PRACTICE

Fáilte Isteach’s approach is more holistic than simple language learning. The programme is meant to integrate migrants better into the communities they are now living in and into the job market they are working in – and just generally to lead happier and more confident lives.



The volunteer teachers without prior teaching experience receive 8-10 weeks of preparation and are then assigned to the migrants they will work with. Student teacher ratios vary depending on availability of both. Typically there is one teacher for 1 to 4 learners.



A set of lesson plans have been developed, focused on topics from migrants everyday life experiences in Ireland. The teachers use this material flexibly, the central idea being to have a conversational experience. If the student is talking, the class is considered successful.

In the classes, the migrants:

- Improve English comprehension, speaking and writing skills.
- Learn English they need to get work and carry out day-to-day tasks, such as shopping, banking and general interacting with the community.
- Get help filling out forms, writing CVs, letters and so on.
- Build their social networks and learn about what's going on in the community around them.

The sessions are meant to be pleasant and amenable conversations, focused primarily on colloquial English, as the migrants will encounter it in the Irish context. Depending on their goals, migrants may or may not complement the Fáilte Isteach conversational classes, with more formal language learning options.



Anyone suitable is welcome to volunteer as a teacher, though the most typical volunteer profile is that of an older retired person. Migrants are disproportionately younger people, though not exclusively and the age makeup of the students varies by place. Accordingly, this is a practice that can be valid for migrant background NEET situations, but is not intended uniquely for them. Where the age profile is that of a younger migrant, the interaction occurring is potentially cross-generational as well as cross-cultural.

The volunteers widely confirm that the experience is beneficial to them. They get out of the house, meet new people and socialise, and generally feel good about being of value to others. It's an experience of 'active aging'.

The high rate of return is a firm indicator of the volunteers having a positive experience, as are the high numbers of people offering themselves as volunteers. At times the programme finds itself with more willing volunteers than it actually needs.

RESOURCES

The teachers are provided with some training and kits, suggesting lesson plans, possible conversation topics, and so forth. The sustainability of the programme is strong, because it is quite inexpensive to deliver:

- Relevant teaching materials need to be designed. Fáilte Isteach makes these available for free download.
- The sessions take place in already existing and available locales, such as Third Age Centres or community centres.
- The teachers are volunteers.

The Arthur Guinness Fund supports the programme financially.



Today the programme is being implemented in 68 locations throughout the Republic of Ireland, benefitting over 2,000 families a week, driven by over 600 active volunteers delivering over a thousand hours of tuition per week to students from over 75 countries.

- 👉 For more information and testimonies from migrants and volunteers benefitted by the programme, see:

www.thirdageireland.ie/what-we-do/13/fcailte-isteach/

G/ International exchange and young people with disability

BACKGROUND

“RA i DO” Foundation International Support Center for youth and Adults is a Polish foundation, created by Dorota Anna Milke, a psychologist with a background in working with young people, in particular those with hearing impairments.

In much of Poland, Deaf and disabled young people tend to live somewhat **isolated**, ghettoised in their own small closed groups. They often suffer low self-confidence, and anxiety about being different from others – in what is still a relatively homogenous society.

Dorota wanted to do something about this isolation and anxiety, and felt **transnational youth exchange** – like the European Voluntary Service (EVS) – could make a difference.

WHO

“RA i DO” Foundation primarily works with Deaf and Hard of Hearing youngsters, but not exclusively; they also work with the DeafBlind, wheelchair-bound and ‘non-disabled’ youth.

THE PRINCIPLES

A new environment and experiencing diversity can lead to new thinking.

Supportive conditions allow those with disabilities to participate.

Mix people up. People with disabilities shouldn't be separated from the rest of society


THE PRACTICE

RA i DO regularly organises Erasmus+¹⁵: Youth in Action Training courses and Youth Exchange, and sends/hosts European Voluntary Service¹⁶ (EVS) experiences exchange.

The basic idea is to help **change how young people think about life and themselves, by changing their environment**. When Deaf Polish youngsters go abroad, they encounter situations that are very different from what they are familiar with. They leave behind their usual circumstances families and encounter new people and perspectives.

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/mobility/european-voluntary-service_en.htm



However, for Deaf and other disabled people to take advantage of the experience EVS offers, they need support. The Deaf need to go with translators, so they can interact with the people they're going to meet. More generally, exchange organisers need to assure young people with disabilities can count on conditions suitable to them – wheelchair friendly toilets, all activities have sign language support, etc.

The common lack of such support is what stops so many of the Deaf and other disabled from going on something like EVS.

These exchange trips always include a mix of Deaf, or Hard of Hearing, and non-deaf youngsters – and sometimes youngsters with other disabilities. This is deliberate, as the whole idea is not to isolate the Deaf from other people, not to divide some from others, not to stigmatise anyone. The aim is to give the Deaf the help they need, without separating them from others.

The Deaf can rely on the Hearing Polish youngsters to help out if need be. The Hearing and Deaf /Hard of Hearing youngsters share the experience together, and learn they have plenty of things in common.

IMPACT

The experience consistently boosts the **self-confidence** and self-esteem of the disabled youngsters who have it. They come back with a new positive energy and new ideas. They are more open to trying things and show more courage in the face of challenges, more willingness to set personal goals and take initiative.

The contact with greater diversity, than what they would otherwise encounter in their regular lives in Poland, can be extremely empowering for the participant. Being in places where there are all kinds of different people helps these youngsters realise they are not really so abnormal after all.

They learn to be less focused on their disability, and just socialise with others. They are more open to trying things (like another trip somewhere else). They get to know themselves a bit better, and thus what they want and don't want for themselves.

What "RA i DO" Foundation does isn't about setting these young people a specific path towards a career or plan of study, rather it is about giving them the raw energy and sense of initiative that

enables them to go on to set and pursue those kinds of goals, possibly with the support of other types of youth work or support organisations.

DO'S AND DON'T'S

When asked what advice she would give to other people thinking of pursuing a similar initiative somewhere else, RAID's founder offered the following:

- If you want to involve disabled people, be very attentive and respectful of **special needs** – access and usability issues, special accommodation, etc.
- Don't just involve youngsters from the big cities where it's easiest to get a hold of them. Make the effort to give opportunities to young people in **more remote** places.
- **Look around** yourself; a lot of associations probably exist around you that may be complementary to what you want to do.
- Don't think in terms of disabled people being a **problem** in your projects - they can be the ones who **teach you** and the other participants things.
- Work **hard** and accept responsibility.
- **Enjoy** your job; if you do a lot is possible. If this job is for you, you can get a lot of satisfaction and positive energy from it.
- Don't work **hierarchically**, like in a big company; be open and work in community.
- **Don't just use** disabled people to 'get more points'. Don't put them into an application or identify them as a target group without thinking it through.
- Don't **define** people by their disability – someone is not a 'wheelchair person'.

CONTACT

- For more information see: www.facebook.com/raidofoundation
Or contact: anna.milke@interia.pl, raidofundacja@gmail.com

H/ Zavod Manipura

— EVS as part of a larger process

PRINCIPLES

Supplementary to other youth work – part of a longer path, before and after

Individually tailored proposals

Change of environment to facilitate a change in mentality.

PRACTICE

Zavod Manipura (ZM) is a youth centre and organisation in Slovenia, run by Henk Persyn, an experienced Belgian youth worker. The centre is used by local Slovene youngsters, but also functions as a year-round sending and receiving organisation for the **European Voluntary Service** (EVS).

Zavod Manipura's work with EVS involves youth at-risk of falling into a NEET situation for a large variety of reasons: living in a juvenile institution, school failure and dropout, family problems, disability, internet addiction etc. Generally they are young people lacking direction in their lives. "EVS is not an objective, but a method" says Henk, "the idea is to activate these young people", through a change in environment and setting, and by giving them opportunities to **learn from each other and diversity**.

As such Zavod Manipura always tries to generate a diverse mix – with young people from plenty of different countries and backgrounds. The centre finds this works well and they do learn from each other.

DO'S AND DON'T'S

Persyn's organisation tries to operate in a flexible way without a standardised 'cookie cutter' approach to young people, but it does follow some basic constancies in its methodology:

Work in partnership: Partnership is key to every aspect of Zavod Manipura's work.

What the organisation does through sending young Slovenes on EVS is **supplementary** to what other organisations, and parents, are doing for the same young people, so it is crucial to work and communicate closely with those organisations and people.

As an EVS hosting and sending organisation, Zavod Manipura has to work closely with its **international partners**, to guarantee good, safe and appropriate experiences and to be able to send and receive from a diverse range of places and young people.

Do individualised preparation and follow up: This necessitates significant **preparation**. ZM meets with the youngster, and the organisations and/or parents sending the youngster to ZM, to understand their interests and needs, and what other organisations are doing with them before and after. The EVS has to be devised to complement all those elements.

ZM doesn't believe in common strategies; the work is always in terms of each individual, **tailored** to them.

Once the young person has come back from the EVS, there is a **follow up meeting**. This debriefing is to see how the experience went – what went well, what didn't and why, what can be learnt from this, and to hand off into the next phase, not just leaving the person hanging.

Don't do an EVS exchange as a one-shot experience: Make it part of a longer pathway – before and after the EVS. That **pathway** has to be clearly in place before the youngster ever leaves.

"We don't just send them to have an experience, it needs to have meaning" argues Henk. "We try to figure out what motivates them – maybe working with animals, whatever. You only discover this in **conversation** with the young person, that's the **hardest part** – talking with the young person, and figuring out their needs."

THE RESULTS

The experiences young people have through ZM generally lead to a growth in **self-esteem and motivation**, though Henk cautions it is all about being part of a larger process of prevention or exit from a NEET situation, and needs to be seen in this light.

Finding a way to better **measure and demonstrate outcomes** is on ZM's 'To Do' list, however one quantified indicator they have is the continual year on year **increase** in the numbers of young people coming to be sent and received on EVS.

👉 For more info: www.zavod-manipura.org/
Or see 'Vila Čira Čara - Zavod Manipura' on Facebook

// Cyprus VET reforms

— Improved Apprenticeship = Less Early School Leaving and Failure

ISSUES

Educational failure and dropping out – one of the main pathways to a NEET situation.

PRINCIPLES

- **Prevention** and **early** intervention.
- **Identify** students for whom conventional education is failing.
- Provide **alternative education** better adapted to their needs, combining psychosocial learning with school subject learning. Changing negative feelings about school.
- **Preparation** to enter a labour market-relevant **Dual Learning VET** programme.

SUMMARY

Early school leaving and school failure are one of the most common paths to a NEET situation. In Cyprus, innovation in the state-run apprenticeship system – particularly the new ‘Preparatory Apprenticeship’ – takes young people who are dropouts or who are at high risk of becoming dropouts, and puts them into a **different educational environment — better suited to them** and their needs.

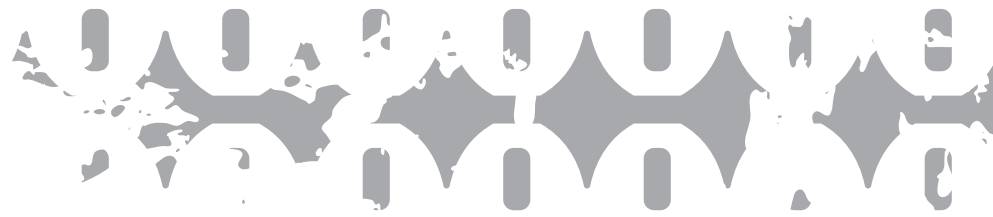
As a result of this new approach to how these young people are taught, course **completion rates rise significantly**, as do rates of enrolment and successful completion in subsequent education and training – preventing future NEET situation.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Preparatory Apprenticeship (PA) has just completed its third year (2014-15). PA is still in its ‘teething’ phase, yet its results are highly positive with strong year-on-year improvement.

The numbers:

- In year 1, 2012-13, 52.8% of students passed.
- Year 2, 2013-14, 80.3% graduated.
- Year 3, 2014-15, 81.5% graduated.



PA graduates move on to the next 3-year phase of apprenticeship, which combines 2 days of school and 3 days of paid job placement in a variety of technical professions, such as car mechanic, hairdresser or electrician.

While it's impossible to run a counterfactual experiment to find out exactly how many of these young people would otherwise have entered a NEET situation. There is a clear correlation between reducing school failure and less young people in NEET situations.

Perceptions:

The revised Apprentice system now enjoys an improved image. This is important, as the old system had come to be seen as a bad quality undesirable option.

The students themselves evaluate the new programme quite positively, giving high scores to questions like:

“**To which degree does the school... ?**” (Grading 1-10, 10 being the best):

- | | |
|--|------|
| a) Give you opportunities for successes even in areas where you have weaknesses: | 8.2 |
| b) Use a variety of teaching methods , such as texts, discussions, exercises, technology, and creative activities: | 8.46 |
| c) Encourage you to develop your skills and talents : | 8.03 |
| d) Give you the opportunity to have good relations with your teachers and the chance to engage in dialogue with them: | 8.28 |
| e) Give you the freedom and opportunity to express your opinion on issues that affect you: | 8.17 |
| f) Ensure democracy and respect for human rights, without prejudice: | 8.38 |
| g) Use teaching material that is adjusted to your level and needs: | 8.25 |
| h) Allow time for developing your social skills : | 7.98 |
| i) Consider every student important: | 8.03 |
| j) Employ teachers with love for their work and their students: | 8.34 |

BACKGROUND

Problem and plan:

In Cyprus, the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system needed improving. The quality and flexibility of the system had declined, and students were graduating with increasingly inadequate skill sets. Many of them were not even graduating at all. So, with help from the European Social Fund, the ‘New Modern Apprenticeship System’ (NMA) was launched, to overhaul the nation’s VET.

How Young People Experience School:

Students having problems with repeating grades and tending to drop out at the minimum school leaving age (15 in Cyprus) feel **alienated from school** and see it as **something to run away from**.

Many of them also face **family difficulties** – with unemployment rising among their parents – further adding to their difficulty succeeding in school.

How Young People Want their Education to Be:

When consulted about how they want their education to be, Cypriot teenagers (ages 14-18) expressed desire for¹⁷:

- More time for the development of **social skills and human values**.
- **Variety** in the teaching styles used, developing different types of intelligence.
- More **interactive** learning, discussion and dialogue.
- More **experience-based** learning.
- Use of modern **technology** and video.
- More **creativity**, challenge and motivation.
- More opportunities for students with lower grades, for distinction and **success**, through various in-school activities.
- Education based on the principle “**every student matters**” and encouragement for all students to developing their skills and talents.

HOW IT WORKS

The new system is an alternative pathway for educating, training and developing young people – ages 14 to 21 – more suited to the needs of young people having difficulties with formal education, and better able to equip them to succeed on the labour market.

A new ‘Preparatory Apprenticeship’ stage (PA) – the first year of a four-year programme – is **key** to the changed approach of the revamped VET system.

The students that enter the Preparatory Apprenticeship are **at risk of, or in, a NEET situation**. They have been repeating classes – typically with high degree of absenteeism, very low grades, or inappropriate behaviour – and are at high risk of dropping out or have already dropped out.

¹⁷ Source: *Adolescent suggestions during the 4 “Right 2 Learn” workshops run by the youth group (Cyprus, 2011) with about 60 participants.* www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPcXGhj9-Y

The purpose of this first year is to:

- **Keep or re-enter** adolescents aged 14-17 in an educational pathway – **prevention or early re-integration**.
- Increase their chances of **graduating** from NMA.
- Improve their basic **literacy/numeracy** skills.
- **Develop their talents**.
- Offer them **psychological support** within the school setting.

The Preparatory stage takes place in its own setting, and after they complete it, students go on to Dual Education-style VET and apprenticeship programme, combining in-company learning with in-class learning (in some cases they switch to Upper Secondary School, or 'Lyceum')¹⁸.

New entrants into the programme – ages 14 to 17 – are screened and selected through a process involving the school manager, psychologists, review of student files, and meetings with students and their parents.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

The personal and social development component of the curriculum is facilitated by **psychologists**, covering topics like:

- Identification of **personal strengths and talents**, differences and similarities with others, values – this is particularly important in terms of the pedagogical approach, emphasising self-awareness and bringing out the qualities and potential young people already have.
- **Trust**, belonging, empathy, respect, and awareness and expression of feelings.
- **Communication** skills.
- **Group dynamics** and rules, Team-building.
- **Creative** and critical thinking skills.
- **Learning** how to learn, goal setting, motivation.
- **Issues** of concern – like drugs, bullying, unemployment, personal hygiene, sexual relations, family problems, current events – and issues related to adolescence.

The Preparatory Apprenticeship also includes evening meetings and workshops with **parents**. Involvement of the parents in the goals and process of the educational programme is a key aspect of the approach.

¹⁸ For more on Dual Education in VET, see: Goldring, *On Making Education and Training More Responsive to the needs of the local Labour Market*, URBACT, 2014

The PA also offers **visits to work** sites and visitors coming into the school to interact with the students.

WHY IT WORKS

From her hands on experience as psychologist in the PA's Nicosia Unit, Charis Charalambous finds that the success of the Preparatory Apprenticeship rests on the following key implementation points:

- The **student and their parents are asked to commit** to the student's conscious engagement in the educational process and to minimal absenteeism from class.
- The students are treated by the management and staff with **love, care and acceptance**, in combination with limits for **acceptable behaviour**.
- They receive **recognition and encouragement for their special talents**.
- They are placed in **small groups** so that they are visible, are given more individual support and learn to work in a team.
- **Non-formal** education methods are **combined with formal** educational methods to give the students a **variety** of teaching/learning styles and the possibility to develop their sociability and teamwork skills.
- **Individual support** and educational assessment is offered by the **psychologists** of the school, so as to build the students' self-esteem, process individual and family issues and help the student set goals for the future.

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J/ Helping youth workers to better prevent

SUMMARY

An approach to preventing at-risk youth from falling into a NEET status, through **capacity building for youth workers**, to enable them to work more effectively with at-risk youngsters – in this case, through the adaptation of ‘Hobby Schools’.

PRINCIPLES

- **Prevention.**
- **Capacity building** for youth workers.
- **Cross Sector Partnership** – working with other actors who affect young people at risk, like schools, social workers, and parents.
- Value and attraction of specific **contents** that interest young people.

BACKGROUND

The European Economic Area¹⁹ Grant programme to Estonia “Children and young people at risk” is financing a preventive project – ‘HUKK-AP’²⁰ in its Estonian acronym – concerned with engaging at-risk youth **before** they ever fall into a NEET situation.

As in many of the post-Soviet countries, Estonia has a system of ‘**Hobby Schools**’, a sort of after school club house whose role is to deliver quality non-formal learning in a range of areas: sports, music, art, dance, language, drama schools, culture, science, etc. These schools were still quite traditional and it was felt they contained untapped potential to better address the current needs of at-risk youth.

¹⁹ Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway

²⁰ The project “HUKK -AP” benefits from a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants. The programme proposal was prepared in close collaboration with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) as a donor programme partner (DPP) and other institutions in Norway. The programme is managed by the Estonian Ministries of Education and Research (MoER), Justice (MoJ), and Social Affairs (MoSA) and by the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC) as a Programme Operator Implementing Agency (POIA). More info on the project at: www.entk.ee/riskilapsedjanoored/en

WHO IT'S FOR

The **immediate beneficiaries** are youth workers themselves, who receive the training the project delivers – meant to enable them to work better with the at-risk and difficult to reach youth, who are the **ultimate beneficiaries**.

These **young people are 'at risk'** for a wide range of issues. They are potential school dropouts, experiencing issues like poverty, family issues, health and disabilities. They may have been in differentiated schooling or a correctional facility, or living in remote areas.

As for the youth workers, in many cases they were people who worked with young people, through the Hobby Schools, but had never thought of themselves as youth workers, but rather as teachers. In many cases, at-risk youth issues had not previously been considered in how these people did their work.

In other cases, youth workers may have been working with youth 'at-risk of entering a NEET situation', **without having ever thought of it in any such terms**.

THE TRAINING

The project reached around 1000 youth workers and related professionals, mainly through seminars given to youth workers and teachers.

These seminars exposed youth work's potential for impact on at-risk youngsters. Generally, people proved receptive to being told their work was more important for society than they had previously considered, but on a practical level felt somewhat lost as to what they should be doing differently and where to start.

The training accompanied them through this rethinking of their work in and around the Hobby Schools – the idea being to help youth workers see updating of how they worked as something unthreatening and not really so difficult.

The workshops addressed things like:

- How youth work is part of a **bigger societal picture**, and can be a valuable element within that larger ecosystem of actors affecting young people.
- Understanding and identifying the different **factors** that put youth at risk – socio-economic, health, remote settings, etc.

- Approaches to better **involving** young people at risk.
- Dealing with **conflicts**.
- Starting **initiatives or pilot** projects.
- Reaching out and working in **cross sector cooperation** with schools, parents and other areas of youth work.

COMMON ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Some of the most common practical issues the capacity building tackled:

- **Misperception:** Young people at risk typically have less access to things, like musical instruments or technology – so they don't get to develop their potential in these areas as others might. This can lead to a perception on the part of others, and even themselves, that they are less talented and not suited for such things.
- **Payment:** Lessons or services that have to be paid for obviously exclude those who can't afford to pay. Arrangements can be made, but these entail a risk of **stigma**. People often don't want to identify themselves as 'at-risk' or be labelled as some sort of problem case. In some cases the solution is discretion – making it so no one knows who pays and who doesn't.
- **Support:** Unused to the idea and unfamiliar with the environment, disadvantaged youths may need support, especially at the beginning, to attend something like a Hobby School, and to figure out what activity is right for them.

The project found such support broke down into two basic categories:

- 1) For those who just need help getting started.
 - 2) For those who need more follow up or on-going help, for example with transport.
- **Size of group:** Being in a large mixed group can be beneficial for learning about group dynamics, but some youngsters have a hard time with being in groups. For example, young people with autism may be good at art activities but not group interaction – and so need smaller groups more suited to them.

However, smaller groups are more expensive to offer. Likewise, there can be issues of 'labelling' to be aware of, if special groups are formed for young people with disabilities or some other specific profile. Also, in smaller communities it can be difficult to generate the numbers to make separate smaller groups possible.

DRIVERS: THINGS THAT MAKE IT WORK

Once participants had become more aware of the issues of at-risk youth and how they can relate to their own youth work, they were better able to harness the fundamental factors that make Hobby Schools (and similar extracurricular learning) effective for engaging at-risk youngsters:

CONTENTS

The force of attraction of the contents draw all kinds of youngsters to participate. They join in because they share a liking of the subject – be it sports, music, technology etc. This shared interest connects different youngsters in a very simple, clear and reliable way.

CROSS SECTOR COOPERATION

To be effective at engaging at-risk young people in Hobby Schools (or similar) youth workers need to work in partnership with the other people and organisations in different fields that affect these young people's lives. This is so called 'cross sectorial cooperation'.

This means cooperating and communicating with NGOs and municipalities, social workers and administration people, and parents. All these elements have roles potentially complementary with the role youth workers play.

If we want to convince young people that getting involved in something like a Hobby School can be a good thing for them, we have to consider all the people around these youngsters who might influence them, one way or the other.

Who identifies youth in need? Youth workers can't be expected to do this on their own. They need to work with other actors who have 'feelers' out in the community and schools.

Likewise, youth workers can't be expected to handle all the administrative support and community outreach activities involved in updating a Hobby School system – or some equivalent practice. A network of different people are involved.

Last but not least, parents are key players in the lives of their offspring. In some cases, to obtain the participation of a given young person, their parents need to be convinced. The project found some parents were really won over by showing them some kind of proof of what their child could achieve with some extra help.

DO'S AND DON'T'S

When asked to provide some advice to peers thinking of pursuing a similar initiative in their own setting – either in terms of capacity building for youth workers, or more specifically the use of Hobby Schools as a vehicle for engaging at-risk youth – management from this project offered the following:

- Focus on the people who are **motivated and understand** the rationale of what you are trying to do. It's an approach based on providing training to do something, not any significant resources or coercion, so people will only apply such training if they want to.
- Don't be too bothered by **naysayers** and people who are resistant to your idea. Arguing with them will take up too much of your energy for little benefit. Pilot with the early adopters who want to do something and many with doubts can eventually be won over as you build credibility.
- Figure out what is **doable** and pick the low hanging fruit.
- Take a **long-term approach to developing youth worker skills** – not in the sense of large quantities of it, but in terms of knowing where you are going. Build on things successively, rather than producing disconnected one-shot actions.
- Build youth worker **confidence** in the value of what they do, as part of a larger picture.
- Don't try to become **something you are not**. Do what you are already good at, but adapt it to other types of young people.
- Involve **people from other fields**, who are good at what you are not – particularly schools and social workers.
- Don't get scared if a **first approach doesn't work**. It can take time to build up networks of cooperation and develop the right approach.
- Involve someone who can devise a way to **measure your outcomes**. Later this will be very useful to demonstrate that what you did achieved something.

K/ Key Takeaways

This publication has not tried to be a complete encyclopaedia of practices for all the different conditions and circumstances of young people at risk of, or in, a NEET situation – an impossible task.

Rather the idea is to illustrate an approach, differentiating among the measures that are called for in situations that can be very different – even though they are similarly labelled as NEET situations.

THE NEET THING

Talking about NEET situations can be complicated and difficult to resolve, in large part because it is not really that great a term. It's admittedly catchy, but refers to too many different things at once, to have a very clear useable meaning – unless you're looking at things from a very great distance, allowing a lot to blur together. But youth work takes place **up close**, on the ground.

Youth workers should not be intimidated by the term or what it might mean for their work in the future. In fact they should understand that many of them have **already been working with 'NEET situations'** – just without thinking about it that way.

For many, adapting their youth work to the rising demand to 'do something about NEET situations', will boil down to them continuing to do what they are already good at, but simply **adapting it to other types of young people**.

When looking at the various 'flavours' of NEET situation, one of the few commonalities that we see is the need, for not just direct work skills, but **interpersonal and generic** skills – developing things like creativity, social skills and self-confidence. Things that likely sound pretty familiar to a youth worker.

PARTNERSHIP, CROSS-SECTOR COOPERATION, ECOSYSTEMS

Obviously, youth work **should not be trying to do what it's not suited for, or become something it's not**. However, it does need to **see itself as part of a larger ecosystem** of actors who affect young people's lives – seeing how it fits into that bigger picture. Whether or not youth workers are aware of themselves as elements within a larger societal dynamic, they are.



Realising this can be a more abstract thing – perhaps stirring a sense of civics, which is fine. But it's also something very practical.

For example, Eurofound identifies '**Area-Based policies**' as one of the key approaches to preventing early school leaving. This means coordinating multiple actors, coherently, in a given area where there are youth problems of some kind – youth work, as part of that picture, would need what it does to be complementary with what those other local actors are supposed to do.

Again and again, in research for this publication, the contributing youth workers emphasised the importance of **involving the people around youth** and who affect them – their parents, peers, schools, social workers, artists, businesses or whoever else entered the picture in each particular situation.

The principle of people working at what they're good at doesn't mean they shouldn't combine their efforts, with those who are good at other things and/or have different knowledge and assets. It's possible to achieve a lot more, by involving people from other fields who are good at other things, than by working alone. This is in fact the essential rationale behind '**Cross-Sector Partnerships**'.

Conversely, **you** may want to work with others, but **they** may not want to work with you. Naysayers abound, and you will expend valuable energy and time trying to get someone to do something they really just don't want to do. Go with the **early adopters** – people who understand what you are trying to do and who would like to achieve something similar, but are looking for a way how – and with luck others will join later, once they see your results.

Moreover, cooperation with other NGOs, social actors and institutions is most valuably pursued as a longer-term process or **pathway** to somewhere, not as one-shot experiences in isolation.

Finally, cross sector partnership and coordination with other actors is important, if for no other reason than to **not discourage** young people. Youngsters are going to feel much more hopeful, if when asking for help they are given advice about where to go to get it, rather than meeting a 'sorry, not my job' sort of attitude.

HOLISTIC

The word holistic is overused, but nonetheless important. As an analytical approach we can break down the different NEET causal factors, as a reasonable way to understand the issue better. However, real life is of course messier and 'factors' get mixed up; there are all kinds of things going on in any one person, NEET situation or otherwise.

To be effective, support must be based on a holistic view of a person; if we want to change, say, employment outcomes, we will have to consider how other issues – such as family, health, location etc. – influence those outcomes.

This means at the very least adopting a broader perspective, able to consider **multiple causal relationships**.

In some cases this might best be facilitated by physically and functionally joining up services – for example, along the lines of the '**All Under One Roof**'²¹ practices in Finland and Germany, where highly coordinated services for young people are physically clustered in the same facility.

By extension, a holistic approach relates to **partnership**. Addressing all these very different, but interrelated, aspects of a youngster's life necessitates the cross sector cooperation and coordination of different actors playing different roles. This means youth work in partnership with social workers, schools and any number of other actors.

MEASURE OUTCOMES

In your project, programme, social enterprise or whatever it is, it will be very useful to you later – with trying to procure **support** of any kind – if you can find a way to measure outcomes and demonstrate your achievements. If you don't know how to establish indicators and that kind of thing, **get someone who can help you**.

LEARNING

In youth work, all the participants can **learn from each other**, and **learn from diversity** they encounter. This extends to the youth workers themselves and whatever other adults are involved.

²¹ For more info see: Goldring, *On Making Education and Training More Responsive to the needs of the local Labour Market*, for the JobTown network, URBACT 2014 <https://projectworks.wordpress.com/publications/>

While it's an easy habit to fall into, it's important not to look at young people youth work is working for as problems to be solved ('tackling the NEET problem' etc.). Rather, they are people with **value** and we potentially have something to learn **from them**.

Failing at school, dropping out, having bad or traumatising experiences of education and learning are some of the most common 'fast track' paths to a NEET situation. Consequently, one of the most urgent, and effective, paths of action is to **adapt education and teaching** to the needs, wants and characteristics of the young people attending.

CHANGE ENVIRONMENT, CHANGE THINKING

Many of the practices consulted worked on the principle of changing mindset by changing environment – be it altering the home or learning environment or some other aspect of the young person's surroundings, or by sending them elsewhere for an experience of something else. This seems to be a principle that can really work – and the **European Volunteer Service (EVS)** is an obvious tool youth work can use to change youngster's environments, in a way conducive to personal development.

However, EVS shouldn't be seen as simple medicine to dish out on its own. NEET situation young people are, by definition, disengaged. One of the things that characterise NEET situation young people is that they don't participate – **NEET situation young people are not natural candidates for volunteering**, and less so the more severe the case. Sending someone from a NEET situation on EVS, or something similar, should be the conclusion of a preceding process, building the person up to where that exchange experience will work for them.

More generally, to make sense and have real value, EVS (or similar) should be part of a **pathway** for the young person, part of a longer-term strategy, taking place before and after the exchange experience – not a one-off isolated thing.

INCLUDE REMOTE AND DISADVANTAGED AREAS

Unless it is consciously addressed, a kind of drift easily sets in, whereby services and programmes end up being offered where it is easiest to deliver them.

This often means cultural, leisure and social offer gets concentrated in the nationally or regionally important cities – where there is already the most offer, leaving the greater need of those in more remote settings still unanswered. Living in such poorly serviced remote areas is a major '**pathway**' to a NEET situation.

In planning youth work offer and delivery, and allocating resources, a conscious effort has to be made to include those in remote areas. In some cases this might involve mobile facilities that can access multiple areas.

Such consideration is particularly pertinent in countries facing **depopulation** of countryside areas and disproportionate concentration of population in capital cities.

ASAP

The NEET situation is a spiralling one; it gets worse and worse the longer it goes on and the person becomes harder and harder to reach. This means it is important to intervene **as early as possible**, before disengagement gets even worse.

It's hard to overstate the importance of **prevention**. The ideal 'gold standard' of intervention takes place before disengagement ever happens, detecting or foreseeing problems before they culminate.

Youth work has an **obvious vocation and rich potential** value as a force for prevention. This should be a priority going forward into the future and the possibilities explored.

DEVELOPMENT AND AGENCY

For youth work to make a difference for youngsters in NEET situations, or at risk of it, it needs to see them as young people with **value** worth cultivating, not just objects needing help. They have **talents and gifts to should be recognised and developed**.

Finally, if the bottom line is about young people not being disengaged, then they have to be **agents** in their own processes, of which there are all kinds.

ANNEX

References

1) Data and Graphs

NEET numbers: Some graphs and the latest data available at the time of writing, on NEET numbers in Europe and youth Unemployment – for the reader's reference.

Youth neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) rate, age group 15-24

geo	time	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
EU (26 countries)		13.1 ^(b)	12.9	12.7	11.7 ^(b)	10.9	10.9	12.4	12.7	12.9	13.1	13	12.4
EU (27 countries)		13.1 ^(b)	12.8	12.6	11.7 ^(b)	10.9	10.8	12.4	12.7	12.8	13.1	12.9	12.3
Euro area (19 countries)		11.9 ^(b)	11.9	12.1	11.2 ^(b)	10.7	10.9	12.5	12.7	12.6	13	12.9	12.4
Euro area (18 countries)		11.9 ^(b)	12	12.1	11.2 ^(b)	10.7	11	12.5	12.7	12.6	13	12.9	12.5
Euro area (17 countries)		11.9 ^(b)	11.9	12.1	11.2 ^(b)	10.7	11	12.5	12.6	12.6	13	12.9	12.5
Belgium		17.8	15.4 ^(b)	13	11.2 ^(b)	11.2	10.1	11.1	10.9	11.8	12.3	12.7	12
Bulgaria		29 ^(b)	26.4	25.1	22.2 ^(b)	19.1	17.4 ^(b)	19.5	21.8	21.8 ^(b)	21.5	21.6	20.2
Czech Republic		13.7 ^(b)	13.7	13.3	9.2 ^(b)	6.9	6.7	8.5	8.8	8.3 ^(b)	8.9	9.1 ^(b)	8.1
Denmark		5.2	5.1	4.3	3.6	4.3 ^(b)	4.3	5.4	6	6.3	6.6	6	5.8
Germany		10 ^(b)	10.1	10.9 ^(b)	9.6	8.9	8.4 ^(b)	8.8	8.3	7.5 ^(b)	7.1	6.3	6.4
Estonia		10.5 ^(b)	12.5	10.6	8.8	8.9	8.7	14.5 ^(b)	14	11.6	12.2	11.3	11.7
Ireland		11.7	11.9 ^(b)	10.9	10.1 ^(b)	10.8 ^(b)	15	18.6	19.2	18.8	18.7	16.1	15.2
Greece		18 ^(b)	16.6 ^(b)	15.9	12 ^(b)	11.3	11.4 ^(b)	12.4 ^(b)	14.8	17.4	20.2	20.4	19.1
Spain		12.5 ^(b)	12.5	13 ^(b)	11.8 ^(b)	12	14.3	18.1	17.8	18.2	18.6	18.6	17.1
France		10 ^(b)	10.6	10.9	11	10.3	10.2	12.4	12.3	11.9	12.1	11.2 ^(b)	10.7
Croatia		18 ^(b)	17.1	16.7 ^(b)	14.2 ^(b)	12.9	11.6	13.4	15.7	16.2	16.6	19.6	19.3
Italy		16.6	16.8 ^(b)	17.1	16.8 ^(b)	16.1	16.6	17.6	19	19.7	21	22.2	22.1
Cyprus		8.9 ^(b)	9.4	19.5	10.7 ^(b)	9	9.7	9.9 ^(b)	11.7	14.6	16	18.7	17
Latvia		12.9 ^(b)	12.4	10.6	11.5 ^(b)	11.9	11.8	17.5	17.8	16	14.9	13	12
Lithuania		10.3	10.6 ^(b)	8.8	8.3 ^(b)	7.1	8.8	12.1	13.2	11.8	11.2	11.1	9.9
Luxembourg		5.1 ^(b)	6.3	5.5	6.7 ^(b)	5.7 ^(b)	6.2	5.8 ^(b)	5.1	4.7	5.9	5	6.3
Hungary		12.6 ^(b)	12.7	12.9	12.4 ^(b)	11.5	11.5	13.6	12.6	13.2	14.8	15.5	13.6
Malta		19.4 ^(b)	13.1 ^(b)	11.9 ^(b)	10.3 ^(b)	11.5	8.3	9.9	9.5	10.2	10.6	9.9	11.5
Netherlands		5.1 ^(b)	5.3	5.3	4 ^(b)	3.5	3.4	4.1	4.3 ^(b)	3.8	4.3	5.1 ^(b)	5
Austria		6.1	9.1 ^(b)	8.6	7.8 ^(b)	7.4 ^(b)	7.4	8.2	7.4	7.3	6.8	7.3	7.7
Poland		16.7 ^(b)	15 ^(b)	13.9	12.6	10.6	9 ^(b)	10.1	10.8 ^(b)	11.5	11.8	12.2 ^(b)	12
Portugal		11.2	11.2 ^(b)	11.1	10.6 ^(b)	11.2	10.2	11.2	11.4	12.6 ^(b)	13.9	14.1	12.3
Romania		20.3 ^(b)	19.8	16.8	14.8 ^(b)	13.3	11.6	13.9	16.6 ^(b)	17.5	16.8	17	17
Slovenia		8 ^(b)	7.5	8.9	8.5 ^(b)	6.7	6.5	7.5	7.1	7.1	9.3	9.2	9.4
Slovakia		18.2 ^(b)	17.9	15.8	14.4 ^(b)	12.5	11.1	12.5	14.1	13.8 ^(b)	13.8	13.7	12.8
Finland		9.6 ^(b)	9.1	7.8	7.7	7	7.8	9.9	9	8.4	8.6	9.3	10.2
Sweden		8.8 ^(b)	7.6	10.5 ^(b)	9.3 ^(b)	7.5 ^(b)	7.8 ^(b)	9.6	7.7	7.5	7.8	7.5	7.2
United Kingdom		9 ^(b)	8.4	8.4	8.5	11.9 ^(b)	12.1 ^(b)	13.2 ^(b)	13.6	14.2	13.9	13.2	11.9
Iceland		4.9 ^(b)	5.5	4.6	4.7	4	4.5	7.7 ^(b)	7.4	6.7	5.9	5.5	5.9
Liechtenstein		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Norway		9.8 ^(b)	8.6	8.3	4.6 ^(b)	4.4	4.1	5	4.9	5	5.2	5.6	5.5
Switzerland		7.3 ^(b)	6.6	7.2	7.2	6.2	6.3	8.1	6.7	6.7	6.9	7.1	7.3
Montenegro		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the		:	:	:	41.3	33.1 ^(b)	30.7	27.7	25.5	25.2	24.8	24.2	25.2
Serbia		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Turkey		:	:	:	38.6 ^(b)	39.2	37	34.9	32.3	29.6	28.7	25.5	24.8 ^(b)

-not available b=break in time series p=provisional

Source of Data: Eurostat

Last update: 01.09.2015

Date of extraction: 06 Sep 2015 23:41:46 CEST

Latest available NEETs data, at time of writing – from Eurostat



NEET (ages 15-24) situation in the EU 2008



NEET (ages 15-24) situation in the EU 2013, greater darkening indicates rise in NEET numbers since 2008 advent of the economic crisis
From the Eurostat website

Last update: 01.09.15 **Unemployment rate by sex and age groups -**
 Source of data: Eurostat **monthly average, %**

Seasonally adjusted data **AGE: Less than 25 years**

TIME	2014M06	2015M03	2015M04	2015M05	2015M06	2015M07
GEO						
European Union (28 countries)	22.1	20.9	20.7	20.6	20.6	20.4
Euro area (19 countries)	23.6	22.6	22.4	22.2	22.3	21.9
Belgium	21.8	20.4	19.9	19.5	19.3	18.0
Bulgaria	23.7	21.2	20.3	19.5	18.8	18.1
Czech Republic	16.8	14.2	13.5	12.8	13.0	13.4
Denmark	12.4	10.8	10.4	10.4	11.4	11.7
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	7.8	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.0
Estonia	14.2	11.7	11.1	10.1	9.5	:
Ireland	24.1	21.5	20.6	20.4	20.7	20.7
Greece	49.5	52.1	52.5	51.8	:	:
Spain	53.3	49.7	49.4	49.1	48.9	48.6
France	24.1	24.5	23.9	23.8	23.8	24.1
Croatia	44.9	43.5	43.1	43.1	43.1	:
Italy	42.3	42.2	41.7	42.0	43.1	40.5
Cyprus	36.9	34.6	31.9	31.9	31.9	:
Latvia	21.2	16.1	14.4	15.2	15.5	15.4
Lithuania	19.9	16.9	18.2	18.4	18.6	19.4
Luxembourg	21.5	19.1	18.8	18.6	18.3	18.6
Hungary	22.0	19.3	18.6	18.6	17.9	:
Malta	11.3	9.3	8.9	8.9	8.7	8.7
Netherlands	12.8	10.8	10.9	11.1	11.1	11.3
Austria	10.1	10.1	10.5	10.7	10.6	10.8
Poland	24.0	21.6	21.4	21.0	20.4	20.1
Portugal	35.2	32.4	31.6	30.8	31.6	31.0
Romania	24.6	23.3	:	:	:	:
Slovenia	20.4	17.0	16.7	16.7	16.7	:
Slovakia	30.2	26.1	25.9	25.7	25.5	24.8
Finland	20.1	22.7	23.2	23.7	24.2	24.5
Sweden	23.8	20.7	20.6	21.0	20.8	21.3
United Kingdom	16.2	15.7	15.9	16.1	:	:
Iceland	9.8	8.9	8.8	8.8	8.9	9.0
Norway	7.4	9.7	10.2	10.7	11.1	:
Turkey	18.1	18.3	18.0	18.7	:	:
United States	13.3	12.3	11.6	12.2	12.1	11.7
Japan	7.0	5.1	5.0	5.5	5.6	:

Latest data on EU youth Unemployment, at time of writing – from Eurostat

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OTHER SALTO INCLUSION PUBLICATIONS

- **Inclusion A to Z (2014)** - an compass to international Inclusion projects. The best of the SALTO Inclusion youth work manuals in one publication.
- **Inclusion through Employability (reprint 2014)** – success criteria for youth projects addressing unemployment, research publication
- **Urban Solutions (2012)** - tapping the talents of urban youth research

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WEBSITES:

- Cedefop: www.cedefop.europa.eu/
- Erasmus + : <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/>
- Erasmus + Programme Guide: <http://ec.europa.eu/youth/>
- Eurofound: www.eurofound.europa.eu/
- Eurostat: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>
- Youth on the Move: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=950&langId=en>
- EU Youth Strategy: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/
- Europe 2020: <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/>
- Youthpass: <http://www.youthpass.eu>



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NEET — Not in Employment Education or Training. The term is simple, but the complex range of problems, causes and individual circumstances this umbrella term refers to is anything but simple or uniform.

Likewise, there is no one action or strategy youth work can latch onto as 'what to do about NEET situations', anymore than there is one single type of NEET situation.

This publication is a tool for youth workers, and any else interested, to understand the essential concepts behind the NEET issue and how very different approaches are and should be taken towards young people in very different types of NEET situation.

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