



*Preventing and contrasting the
NEET phenomenon*

**TRANSNATIONAL
STRATEGY PAPER**

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PROJECT NUMBER: 543229-LLP-1-2013-1-IT-KA1-KA1NW

AGREEMENT NUMBER: 2013-3972/001-001

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Dear reader,

This transnational strategy paper has been produced within the “NETnotNEET” project, a European project addressing NEET people, those individuals who are “Not (engaged) in Education, Employment or Training”. Our ultimate aim is to improve the performance of the current VET systems, employment services and appointed public authorities, by enabling them to better respond to the differing and specific needs of NEET people at both local and European level.

The aim of this paper is to provide guidelines and recommendations to public authorities, policy makers and experts at local and European level about new strategies, approaches and tools to prevent and combat the NEET phenomenon.

The paper is based on the experiences and approaches used in the project by the 11 partner organisations coming from 9 European countries, which included:

- ✓ Bottom-up strategies: involving NEETs in **Forums** and **Laboratories of Dialogue** to discuss and propose new methodologies and tools for the VET system, employment services and relevant public authorities, according to their needs and expectations;
- ✓ Top-down strategies: involving public and private stakeholders of the VET system, employment services and relevant public authorities in **Peer Reviews** to analyze the impact of their good practices;
- ✓ Matching experts and NEETs in **Dueling Moderator Focus Groups** where there has been a synthesis of the two points of view (bottom-up and top-down) summarized into **National Strategy papers**.
- ✓ Organizing a **Transnational Laboratory** with European experts, representatives of the NEET target group, the VET systems, employment services and relevant public authorities with the aim to identify and further discuss strategies, approaches and tools to prevent and contrast the NEET phenomenon.

More information about the project and the produced outcomes can be found on the project website: www.netnotneet.eu .

We hope you will find this material useful in your work related to preventing and combating the NEET issue.

The NETnotNEET project team

I. General view of NEET phenomenon in Europe

Among the partner countries involved in the project, the largest percentages of individuals described as NEET can be found in Turkey (28,4%), followed by Greece (26,7%) and Italy (26,2%), according to recent statistics.

A better situation can be found in Ireland (18,1%) and Romania (19,9%). Spain and Greece have recorded the largest decrease in the percentage of young NEET people, compared to 2013 (1.8%).

In percentage (15-29 years-old)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
EU (28 countries)	15,0	13,9	13,2	13,0	14,7	15,2	15,4	15,8	15,9	15,3
EU (15 countries)	13,9	13,1	12,7	12,9	14,5	14,8	14,9	15,4	15,4	14,8
Ireland	11,8	11,3	11,9	16,2	20,3	21,5	22,0	21,3	18,6	18,1
Greece	18,5	15,5	15,2	14,8	15,9	18,6	23,0	26,8	28,5	26,7
Spain	14,0	12,9	12,8	15,3	19,9	20,0	20,6	22,2	22,5	20,7
Italy	20,0	19,2	18,8	19,3	20,5	22,0	22,5	23,8	26,0	26,2
Romania	18,4	16,5	14,8	13,2	15,7	18,9	19,5	19,3	19,6	19,9
Turkey	:	40,4	40,8	39,2	38,1	35,2	32,7	31,7	29,3	28,4

Source: Eurostat

a. The economic crisis had a strong impact on the increase of NEET population at European level.

This increase can be noticed especially in the case of **Ireland**, where the percentage of NEET was below the OECD average and relatively stable until 2007, with rates for 15-29 year-olds around 10%. By 2013 the NEET rate had risen to 18%, significantly higher than the EU (28) average of 15.9%. This increase in the number of NEET young people is an increasing concern as the NEET rate is an indicator of exclusion both from the labour market and education.

There is strong link between youth unemployment and the NEET phenomenon in Ireland and during the economic crisis the youth unemployment rate tripled. In the years between 2006 and 2011 the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), increased from 11.8 % in 2006 to 24 % in 2011 (Eurostat). This correlation between the increases in both rates shows the strong link between youth unemployment and the NEET phenomenon.

In the last four years, the NEET rate in **Spain** has been increasing, due to the negative impact of a society that has been experiencing a severe economic crisis which has dramatically influenced the unemployment rate, especially in relation to young people.

The evolution of NEET rate in the **Region of Valencia** has not been significantly different than the national one. Both percentages have been fluctuating around the same direction and intensity. In fact, the percentage of the Region of Valencia is slightly under the National average.

Following the latest Eurostat data, **in 2014 the percentage of NEET people in Spain has decreased to 20.7%, from 22.5% in 2013**. Official reports maintain that one of the main reasons that could help explain the reduction of the number of NEET people in Spain is that the labour market is not so attractive than some years ago, so there are a lot of barriers which are difficult to overcome for young people. That means that young people stay in the educational system as an alternative to unemployment and the current lack of job opportunities.

In Italy, the percentage of NEET young people increased in 2009, after a period of slight regression (between 2005 and 2007 had gone from 20.0% to 18.9%). The reason is due to the global economic crisis, because in that year, a little more than two million young people (21.2% of the population between 15 and 29 years old) was out of the circuit of training or employment. The proportion of NEET is higher among women, 24.4% compared to 18.2% of men (Istat Labour Force Survey). The Istat [National Statistics Institute] analysis shows that in 2010 in Italy as much as 22.1% of young people, more than two million in absolute terms, are included in the NEET generation. The incidence of people categorized as NEET has increased more than three percent from the previous survey in 2008, partly as a result of the international economic crisis. This group of young people is composed of 65.5% classified as “inactive”, i.e. those who do not search for a job because they believe they will not find it, and of 34.5% considered “unemployed”, those who are actively seeking a job, registered as unemployed in Public Employment Service and also those who have recently lost their jobs.

In 2012 the percentage of NEET continues to increase: over 2.25 million young people (23.9% of the population between 15 and 29 years old) are out of the training and working circuit. The incidence of NEET is higher among women (26.1%) than men (21.8%). In 2013 over 27% of young people between 15 and 34 years do not study, do not work and do not attend a training course.

In **Tuscany**, the crisis has aggravated the situation of young people, worsening the opportunity to find employment and broadening the number of those who remain outside the labor market. The percentage of 15–29 year-old who are considered unemployed has grown 10% in five years, driven mainly by the decline in labor participation and to a lesser extent by rising unemployment.

In **Livorno** the situation is compounded by the decline of industrial level employment, within a system that was already weak and unable to promote further employment. This has impacted particularly on the age group of 15-24 year-olds, consistently the peer group with the greatest incidence of unemployment, which has seen a real surge after 2008, rising from 10% to 36%.

In 2012, 16.8% of young people in **Romania** were classified as NEET, compared to 13.2% of young people in the EU-27. After several years of decline in Europe, the share has stabilized in 2008, but then increased as a result of the economic crisis. Also in **Romania**, there has been an increase in the share of NEET, from 11.6% in 2008 to 17.7% in 2011, the last year recording a slight improvement in the phenomenon. In the 25-29 year-old category, **Romania** recorded its highest percentage of NEET as an EU country, which is 23%. More than a third of young people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, namely 40.3%, versus 24.3% in the EU-28.

For the total population in **Romania**, the risk of poverty or social exclusion is considerably lower, 24.3%. The cost of NEET young people is estimated by Eurofund to be at 1.54% of the GDP.

NEETs in Greece constitute a 16,9%, placing Greece in the first places of European countries with respect to NEETs. It is useful to note that this basic finding of the Study “Absents’ Barometer” converges with the respective estimation of Eurofound, which is based on the processing of secondary data (specifically 17,4%, according to Eurofound 2012).

Age is the chief defining factor and maybe the most decisive one, that affects the potential of someone to be characterized as a NEET. NEETs demonstrate their largest percentage in the 20-24 age group, in which their percentage reaches 30,9% in comparison to the 4,2% in the younger population. In short, the overwhelming majority of the total of NEETs (87,5%) belongs to the 20-24 age group, while only a 12,5% is younger.

Sex affects to a degree the potential of inclusion in the NEETs category, as women demonstrate larger percentages of representation in the NEETs category than men. More specifically, the percentage of women NEETs comes up to a 17,4% in relation to the general population of this age group, while in the case of men the relevant percentage is 16,5%. In the internal distribution of NEETs, this means that 54,4% are women and 45,6% men, percentages however that also converge with the general distribution of the age group they belong to.

According to the preliminary findings of an ongoing study, entitled “NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis: Challenges and Policies” and carried out by the OECD, 5.9 million out of 17 million young people in **Turkey** aged between 16 and 29 were classified as NEET in 2012, topping the list at 35% and ranking higher than all other OECD members.

Although this ratio decreased to 31.3 % according to the updated 2013 OECD data, **Turkey** remains at the top of the NEET list. Examining the side effects of the economic woe prevailing since the onset of a global economic crisis in 2007 in relation to the youth around the globe, the study underlines that NEETs have increased by 2.5 million to 38.4 million in the OECD, pushing the ratio up to an average of 16 percent in 2012. Nevertheless, Turkey’s ratio went well beyond the average and reached 35 percent in the same year.

Inactive NEETs constituted 80% of all NEETs in **Turkey** during the same period, suggesting that four out of five NEETs were no longer looking for work. The report indicates that Turkey has managed to reduce the share of inactive NEETs by 6% since 2007.

b. The early school leaving – one of the reasons for the increase of the NEET population in the 6 European countries

In **Spain**, since the middle of 1990’s, the increase in the construction sector has meant a constant increase in well paid jobs consisting of low productivity as their main characteristic. Young people started to leave the educational system to get a job in the construction bubble, without acquiring any special skills and earning good salaries since the first day of the job. This **empowered the Early School Leaving phenomenon and**

the lack of skills and competences of a generation of young people. Most of them are unemployed today and they don't have any kind of educational background, no special skills, and they don't speak any foreign languages. In addition, the peculiarity of the Spanish Education System, with its current rigidities, doesn't provide all these young people with a second chance to return to education or training after having dropped out.

The level of educational attainment has been found to be a factor in the NEET phenomenon also in Ireland; in 2011 graduates were 35% less likely to be NEET relative to those with lower secondary compulsory levels of schooling or less.

In **Italy**, among the most affected are young people in possession of only a junior school education (-37.8 % compared to 2008), defined by the OCSE as “left behind”, or at risk of exclusion from the labour market, due to the double consequence arising out of inadequate academic preparation and a lack of a job.

The rate of early school leavers and NEET always corresponds, in that they appear to rise or fall in tandem (they are positively correlated, for example in **Southern Italy**, where the drop-out rate has always been high).

In the past, much of the “blame” was placed onto the institutional school system; they were ostensibly too selective and calibrated towards students from the middle and upper classes. However, in recent years, the economic boom in some regions of the country (as in the Northeast) increased the number of NEETs. Since finding well-paid jobs was easy, even without specific qualifications, it was common for young people to leave school at early stages. However, in the times of crises, these young people were the first to lose their jobs and now, although they are still young, they do not know how to reconvert and become attractive on the labour market.

The main causes of the NEET crisis increasing can be therefore be indicated as follows:

In **Romania**, in 2012, the rate of early school leaving by young people between 18 and 24 year of age was 17.4%, a slight decrease from the previous year, **Romania's** target for 2020 being 11.3%. These young people have completed at most secondary school and are no longer participating in any form of education or training. They are therefore at risk of unemployment and inactivity. The percentage of young people who are not enrolled in any education or training, nor in employment, is a fifth higher than that recorded at European level. More than one young person in five leaves education early in the North-East and South-Muntenia regions. The highest rates of early school leaving, over 2%, are recorded in the early grades of school cycles of compulsory education. In the upper grades there was a somewhat lower abandonment.

In **Greece**, the majority of (relevantly few) NEETs who have dropped out early from school have done so mainly due to financial reasons (a 42,9% percentage). This fact confirms the hypothesis of the sociology of education with respect to the correlation between financial inequalities and school drop-out. Additionally, the other factors that have led to premature school leaving (family and personal) also array with the conventional reasons of school drop-out. Virtually, the large majority of NEETs regardless of educational level considers education to be totally ineffective as far as the connection to the labor market is concerned. This opinion is further consolidated by the fact that almost the total of the interviewees states that given the opportunity to be

educated followed by the assurance that they will find employment, they would participate. Additionally many put forth the request for a change-reformation of the educational system in the direction of connecting it with the needs of the labour market, larger flexibility and substantial learning, which they also refer to as “ineffective”.

Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) data also points out that young people in **Turkey** have significant problems in access to education and employment. According to the July 2014 Household Workforce data, the **Turkish** population in the 15-24 age group is currently 11.7 million and approximately one third of them are in education. Another third is working, while the final third is either unemployed because they have not been able to find a job or they are neither at school or holding a job. In other words, they are outside the workforce. This number has reached 3.7 million.

While the rate of young people who attend secondary school is 76 %, the number who advance to higher education is approaching 40%. This means they are out of school. Meanwhile, as of July 2014, the number of those who were out in the market looking for jobs was nearly 5.2 million. Consequently, according to the total of 5.2 million of the workforce, 18 people out of every 100 cannot find work.

c. The mismatch between education and the labour market

The lack of correlation between education and the demands of the labour market determines that many young Europeans end up unemployed, although they had university degrees. This happens also in Romania, Spain and Italy.

In **Spain**, the employment was reduced by 24% for young graduates, indicating a lack of the role of education in protecting against the effects of the crisis. From an analysis by „type of occupation”, there emerges a youth labour market that appears very different from the pre-crisis period . The collapse in demand for labour has reduced the area of employment, leading many young people, mostly graduated, to take refuge in forms of work formally independent.

But the mismatching is one of the peculiarities of young people in Spain. Certainly there are a lot of young unemployed and unskilled people but also the percentage of NEETs who have finished a degree at university level and don't have any job opportunities is growing quickly.

The “Education at a Glance 2014” report shows that Spain has almost double the percentage (33%) of NEET people aged between 25-29 compared to the OECD percentage (19%). This big gap shows the difficulties that young people have after finishing their university studies (one third of the Spanish demographic aged between 25-64 have a bachelor degree).

In **Italy**, the difficulty in finding employment is reflected in the number of inactive NEET people categorized, due to discouragement: 21.9% of the total in 2009. Added to this is the black job, positively correlated to the rate of NEET. On the side of public services for employment is the “mismatch” between the supply and demand of labour, and on the young person's side there is the difficulty of access caused by poverty or the lack of resources (social, family, individual) in having enough guidance.

In **Romania**, the mismatch between the qualifications and skills of young people and those required by employers increases youth unemployment. 49% of young people believe that only to a very limited extent the knowledge acquired in an educational institution responds to labour market needs; 69% believe that there is not enough practical activities and 85% of employers believe that young people are trained only in theory, but not in practice.

In **Greece**, many NEETs however have not even entered the labour market (30,7%), while we can also find many long-term unemployed in the older age groups (32,6% of the total of NEETs who have been employed before).

The minority of NEETs has attended a vocational training program and the overwhelming majority of the ones who have done so perceive vocational training as ineffective. It is obvious that despite their unemployment, NEETs do not trust vocational training, as the ones who have received training in the past state that the training was not at all helpful to their chances of finding employment, i.e. it did not function as an active employment policy, despite the fact that this is its fundamental operation.

d. Immigrants and Roma population

In **Romania**, the percentage of Roma children who have never been to school is two times higher than that of other children, and for those 14-17 years the proportion is three times higher. Meanwhile, of all Roma children aged 14 to 17 years, 11% have never attended an educational institution, 12% have not completed primary education and 28% graduated from eighth grade.

For the Roma population, the unemployment rate is about 2 times higher than for the non-Roma population, both at the level of the entire active population, but especially among the youth aged 14-24. As far as Roma young women are concerned, the unemployment rate is even higher - 62% in 2011.

In **Ireland**, immigrant youths were also statistically more likely to be NEET.

In **Italy**, particular attention must be paid to certain **disadvantaged groups** who are at risk of becoming NEET without any real "fault": the percentage of probability to not get a diploma rises to 70% in Europe for the children of immigrants (L'Espresso , July 5th, 2013).

In **Greece**, with respect to the ethno-cultural origin of NEETs, it has to be noted that as it was demonstrated by the qualitative research, the total without Greek citizenship (immigrants and children of immigrants without Greek citizenship, i.e. without an institutional integration in Greece) is very small. We can guess that the aforementioned small percentage does not reflect the actual percentage of youth with a different citizenship and that this specific demographic group is underrepresented. The interpretation of this underrepresentation is due to the following: a.) there is a large number of immigrants "without papers" (undocumented) in the country and therefore it is difficult for them to be found and subsequently registered so that we could have reliable statistic data which could constitute a point of reference for our research, b.) the lack of permanent telephone connection of the members of this group and c.) the inability to fill

in the questionnaire due to the lack of understanding and adequate knowledge of the Greek language.

e. Other common features of NEET young people in Europe are:

- Unemployed young people.
- Young people with disabilities or health issues.
- Young people from a family within a low economic activity or low income household where joblessness is a frequent occurrence.
- Young people in rural and isolated areas.
- Young people from families in difficult social-economic conditions.
- Young people who are long-term unemployed.
- Young people with a lack of experience or engagement in the labour market.
- Young people who are unsuccessful in their access to the labour market.
- Young people with drug or alcohol issues, or from a family with a history of drug or alcohol issues.
- Young people with a criminal background or those engaged in criminal activities.
- Young people with low levels of motivation and a lack of support.
- Young people with a low level of self-efficacy and self-esteem.
- Young women (around 50 % of young women are considered NEETs in Turkey).
- Young people who are in 'precarious' or unsuitable employment (Romania), e.g. temporary contracts, forced self-employment, part-time work, or jobs which are not commensurate with their level of qualifications.

II. Best practices and suggestions to fight against the NEET phenomenon at European level.

a. Learning from the study visit and peer review in Aarhus - Denmark

During 30th September – 2nd October, the partners of the NETnotNEET project together with other invited guests have made study visits to five educational and training institutions in Aarhus, Denmark that provide different ways and opportunities of supporting young people and are tools in the overall effort to fight and reduce the NEET phenomenon.

The visited institutions were:

1. **TAMU** is a practical educational program. The target group are young people with no real connection to the labor market, whose personal and social difficulties requires a targeted educational and training effort. The students achieve both academic learning and social action skills. The educational work is based on an impact/consequences pedagogy, a pedagogical direction developed in TAMU 40 years ago specifically for challenged youngsters.
2. **The Company Scholl** – a Business School model established as one of the initiatives in the action plan of Aarhus Municipality to reach the 95% target (95% of all young people shall at least have a vocational education) Business schools are practice-oriented education preparatory courses that are placed directly into a company. The teacher is placed as supporter of the students at the workplace.
3. **Gøglerskolen – The Circusschool or School of Intertainment** is an offer to all young people without higher education. The school's pedagogy is based on the fairground and craftsman philosophy of autonomy and focus on possibilities rather than limitations. From circus and theater, the school has taken an educational foundation, which unites the playful and creative with order and discipline.
4. **Café Dalgas** – a café set up by Technical College as a place for practical training and introduction to this labor area for young people not connected to labour market or formal education.
5. **The VUC adult educational center** provides all kind of courses in the area of primary and upper secondary education to people in the age of 17 to 60+. It is an offer to all those who failed earlier school activities or need to supplement previous passed examinations or need to expand the profile of subjects they already have, to apply and move on in higher education.

Learning from the study visit and peer review:

After the study visit, the participants had the chance to analyse the Danish practices and to compare them to their national ones, by means of a peer review session. The main conclusions were:

- ✚ Denmark considers education as an investment – not as a cost, the education and training system is an integrated one with a high quality in the services provided.
- ✚ Support is offered to people immediately after they lose their job, also long term support, in order to enter educational system or labour market.
- ✚ There is a monitoring system of youth after leaving primary school by the Youth Counselling Center.
- ✚ The employers have responsibility for young people's education and integration in labour market. There is a close contact and cooperation between labor market/companies and the educational vocational system.
- ✚ The personal development is integrated in school or training.
- ✚ There is a close link between companies and vocational education.
- ✚ They involve a group of different stakeholders to take responsibility and offer NEET youth new opportunities.
- ✚ The Danish system is organized and so flexible that a young person is able to start immediately.
- ✚ The Danish education and training system provides students with a salary higher than social support, which is a very important tool and an essential factor for a successful start and the ability to keep these young people in training/education/phase of preparation for the next step.

b. Learning from the study visit and peer review in Stockholm, Sweden

In Stockholm, study visits were made to 3 centres (Youths In Center (UIC), Youth Employment, AIM) on 2nd December 2014, followed by peer reviews the day after, as summarized below:

1. Youths In Center offers preparatory courses and intensified support for young adults 16-29 years old. They serve as the central entrance for those who are 20-29 years old and not working, studying or participating in other activities. Youths in Center also provides supervisor training to employers who take on young adults for internships and youth employment. During the visit we also got to hear more about the project Filur, which started as an EU Social founded project and is now implemented and one of Youth In Centers regular activities.

Learning from the study visit:

- There is a need for different approaches in the outreach work depending on the age.
- The importance of focusing on building trust and a relation.
- The professionals have to be solution oriented and patient.

Learning from the peer review: Filur

- Don't underestimate the importance on taking time, don't push NEETs but be patient.
- It could be even more important to work with projects and activities like Filur in countries and cities where there are no jobs.
- Act as you say in order to build trust and be specific with what you can and what you can't do towards the NEETs.
- It is important to build professional skills that NEETs can bring with them into the future.
- A key factor for a project like Filur is to find and put together the right staff.

2. Youth Employment

Jobbtorg Stockholm offers a provisional employment for unemployed youths (16-29 years old) within the city's administrations and own companies, we call it "Trainee employment". The salary is 1.800 euros per month and they get a contract for 6 months. The job matchers at Jobbtorg do follow ups at the workplace throughout the whole period and supports the youth in finding a new job after the trainee employment. The guidance counselors also support them in finding the right school for those who wants to study.

Learning from study visit:

- They invest in the youth because they believe in them and are convinced that they in the future will be able to pay back to the society in taxes and work.
- It is important to listen to employers and their needs and to prepare the youth in a proper way, before starting their placement.
- Youth should be allowed to return after having dropped it, as another opportunity.

Learning from the peer review:

- A very important part of the work with youth employment is being a link between different department and agencies.
- There is a huge value of study and career guidance in projects like these. Their expertise is needed and a good compliment to job matchers and coaches.
- The focus should be on empowering the youth, not just helping them.
- It is important to decrease the gap between youths and policy makers.
- Information about the labor market in early age is important. They should also learn how to make a CV, write a cover letter etc.

3. AIM is an open space activity in the centre of Stockholm, where youths between 16 and 19 who do not attend school can participate. The main goal is to get young people back to school. But in the meanwhile they offer them support to find a daily activity with the aim of helping them to find their inspiration and motivation.

Learning from study visit:

- The approach towards the youths and the way of welcoming them is crucial.
- A success factor is also a good collaboration with the parents, but the real impact is achieved with the youth.

Learning from the peer review: Social action groups

- How to gain trust and build a good relationship? Start with listening and accepting the young person as they are and where they are. See the positive sides/qualities.
- How to make them choose to take part of an activity? Wait until they are ready, let it be their choice, but be quick in offering the activity when they are ready.

Learning from the peer review: Outreach work

- The actual number of NEETs could be different than the statistics. A good follow up is very important.
- It is important that the outreach work is carried out through several ways and that there are enough opportunities offered once the young people decide to join.
- The difference between the control and support systems – how to change the attitude and approach is important.

General learning:

- *The practitioners working with NEETs would benefit from improved skills and training in order to better approach the target group.*
- *It is important to build trust between NEETs and policy makers.*

c. Learning from the study visit and peer review in Dublin, Ireland

The study visits to Dublin involved visiting six good practices (organisations/programmes/initiatives) on 15th April 2014, followed by peer reviews on 15th April 2015.

1. Equal Youth Network use an Interagency Model of Cooperation to ensure that early school leavers obtain and sustain employment through access to quality services that enable them secure appropriate training and educational supports. It aims to work with young people in an attempt to identify and overcome barriers, both intrinsic and extrinsic, to sustainable career development. Many of the services in Ballymun were dealing with the same clients presenting with a multitude of issues that were impeding their path to training and employment. The need for an interagency approach was widely accepted. Representative from agencies within the statutory, voluntary, training and education sectors attend a monthly meeting to discuss their clients' goals and progress to date. Equal Youth is a very positive initiative with the majority of clients progressing onto training, education and employment.

Learning from peer review:

- Interagency working is key to working with early school leavers and harder to reach young Clients.

- Training specific to the interagency focus (confidentiality, protocols, interagency working, etc.) should be developed and offered to all staff involved.
- Trust, transparency and clear communication are a crucial part of the success of this model
- Building interagency takes time and commitment – organisations should become involved not just in the short term but commit for the longer term!

2. The Ballyrunners Programme has been facilitated and managed by the Ballymun Job Centre & Probation Service since 2009. The main aim of the programme is to engage young people who are at risk of engaging in anti-social activities and help them to alleviate their boredom and promote life skills, pro-social attitudes and activities. It was envisaged that this in turn would lead to a reduction in anti-social and criminal behaviours, decreased drug use, increased engagement with local services, improved self-worth and greater chances of employment.

One of the key features of the Ballyrunners Programme is that the young people are not paid for their participation. Their engagement is voluntary but retention of the young people is very high, thus demonstrating their motivation to engage in something meaningful.

Learning from peer review:

- The health and fitness part of the programme encourages clients to reduce or cease drug taking.
- Often these young people do not leave Ballymun; organising the fun run part of the programme outside of Ballymun is good for encouraging them to meet and mix with others outside of the area.
- The football tournament is great for breaking down barriers as they play different teams in the area including the local Gardai (police force).
- The mentors encourage the young people to think about the victims of crime, which they often do not consider. This can lead to them thinking more of the consequences of their actions and therefore taking more responsibility.
- The relationship between the mentors and the young people is key to the success of the programme but this takes time.
- Young people who drop out can rejoin later in the programme or the following year etc. This flexibility is important as some young people just aren't ready yet.
- Negative conversation such as discussion of crime or drugs is banned during the programme.
- Pro-social Modelling is a key element of the programme- when the young people are dancing, the mentors are too! This has also been found to be crucial to the young people's progression and the success of the programme.

CDETB Ballymun Youthreach Centre

Ballymun Youthreach Centre is one of 10 Youthreach centres run by the City of Dublin Education and Training Board. It is aimed at early school leavers and provides second chance education geared towards the specific needs of the individual. The Centre is open to 16 – 20 year olds, and to fifteen year olds with special dispensation from the education officer. The Centre offers a full FETAC level 3 and level 4 programme as well as some subjects at level 5 including cosmetics studies. Some other courses available include Personal Development, Beauty, Art, Framing, Communications and Cooking. There is

also a gym facility and radio broadcasting room. Each young person is paid a training allowance and there are no fees to attend Youthreach.

Learning from peer review:

- Italy compared their education system with Ireland's but because their welfare system is different participants would not get paid for a programme such as Youthreach which may affect uptake.
- Payment does not mean people stay on in school in some countries such as Denmark- need to look at other ways to keep young people in school.
- In Denmark there are Reading Camps; 5 week intense reading courses which can lead to a 5 year progression in reading ability. The Youthreach staff expressed interest in hearing more about this as it would be of great benefit to many of their clients.

Ballymun Regional Youth Centre (BRYR) is a youth development and welfare organisation situated in Ballymun. BRYR provides a range of activities, services and resources for young people from Ballymun (10-24 years of age) to help them have a happy, healthy and successful transition to adulthood. The core belief underpinning BRYR's work is that every young person has the power within themselves to live a positive life. They believe the more opportunities and outlooks young people are exposed to, the more rounded their experiences will be. BRYR offers a range of services which include free counselling, Drama, Aikido, a games room and a music room. They also have a kitchen which serves the young people a hot meal daily.

Learning from peer review:

- Vast mix of activities and programmes within one organisation. This mix of activities and diversity all leads to progression. The structure makes sense even though it looks unstructured.
- Non formal education is flexible and not accredited; this idea has potential transferability to partner countries such as Spain.
- Youth work is a trained profession with standards in Ireland unlike some other partner countries. This is something partners are interested in exploring.
- Youth services have the potential to progress and develop disengaged young people: they can be identified by 'Outreach' youth workers which can lead to participation in youth work activities and this engages and motivates them and builds leadership skills

Whitehall College of Further Education provides a wide range of programmes designed to give students the skills necessary for progression to employment or further study. They offer programmes with recognised National Certification (QQI) and internationally recognised Examining Bodies. They pride themselves on their tradition of responding to a broad range of student needs. They welcome students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, each with their own learning requirements. Their programmes are designed to provide graduates with the skills necessary to go directly into employment or proceed to a Third Level College through the FETAC links scheme or by direct entry where appropriate. Unemployed persons can avail of back to education allowances such as the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) and the Vocational Opportunities Allowance (VTOS)

Further Education and Training in Ireland

The City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) believe that education should be available and accessible to all of the population. It is one of 33 ETBs in Ireland. They have Schools, Colleges and Centres across Dublin City offering Second Level, Further Education, Training, Adult and Community Education programmes and services. Programmes are offered from Levels 1 to 6+ on the National Qualifications Framework, which offers the potential for internal progression for a learner as well as external progression. It is also responsible for the quality assurance of its courses and the development of curricula to meet the national needs and local employment needs CDETb also engages with agencies such as the Department of Social Protection, Department of Education, SOLAS, Employers Groups, Universities and Community Groups as well as being involved in the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Scheme.

Learning from peer review:

- Germany, Sweden and Spain are all facing a similar political agenda to Ireland and engaging in labour market activation.
- For some clients (in all countries) it is about giving them a positive attitude towards education so they can then be motivated and confident to move onto a higher level of education.
- It is not always as simple as education and training leading to work. There is often considerable personal development required and this requires a more holistic solution. There is a need in all countries for counseling, one-to-one support and coaching within education systems.
- Agreement by all that sustainable employment is the goal of education and not just a job!
- In Spain the guidance process is considered very important however in Ireland guidance services resources have been severely reduced. It was agreed that guidance is key to getting clients into the right courses and building a sustainable career plan.

Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Scheme

The Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot (BYG) (2013-2014) tested a labour market activation method for young people (18 -24 years) using a partnership approach. It focused on providing young people (18 – 24) with a quality offer of education, training, work experience or employment within a short time of becoming unemployed. They worked with employers, education providers and community organisations to test out new ways to engage with our young unemployed. The local implantation group conducted an analysis of the young people in Ballymun using various data sources in order to build a profile of groups of potential beneficiaries so as to assist in capacity building. The analysis facilitated the identification of groups of young people that would require different types of interventions based on their employment readiness. The model adopted an activation approach tailored to meet the needs of the individual and was ambitious in its nature of offer and implementation schedule. It had a vital role, not just in supporting the young people of Ballymun, but in informing the development and rollout of the national Youth Guarantee.

Learning from peer review:

- The process involved in the BYG (identification of target groups, initial meeting with profiling of client and development of action plan throughout the guidance process and utilising psychometric assessments etc) and how this allowed for the provision of an individualised service based on each clients unique needs was very interesting to partners.
- The use of regular follow-up (every 1-3 weeks) was also a crucial part of the process and Sweden were interested in this approach. In Sweden they have smaller caseloads than the BYG guidance practitioners.
- Involving youth services (BRYR) in the BYG was very beneficial as they were able to provide great support to the most marginalised young people.
- The partnership approach of the BYG was crucial to the success of the pilot.
- Employer engagement was another key element of the BYG; it allowed young people access to employers as well as allowing employers to see the value in hiring young people.
- Pre-employment programmes teaching young people various basic skills are very useful for clients with little or no work experience.

Youth Service Initiatives

The City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) is a committee of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb), the role of CDYSB is to support the provision, coordination, administration and assessment of youth services in Dublin City. CDYSB is also responsible to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills for the administration of grant aid. The group were presented on youth work's contribution to addressing youth unemployment which included the YEP Programme.

This worked with over 100 NEET young people to develop outcomes, methodologies, indicators and resources for youth projects to use when engaging with this target group.

Learning from peer review:

- There are often dependency issues with disadvantaged young people- this is sometimes taught dependency.
- The ultimate goal is to raise young people expectations, reduce dependency and promote self-actualization.
- There is a need to keep motivated young people in their area.
- In many countries there are sometimes difficulties developing European partnership programmes with some young people due to language skills.
- Linking with employers is crucial for youth services.
- It is important to get a baseline assessment when you are measuring outcomes.
- Increasing young people's mobility is often a challenge; encouraging them to meet a friend outside their locality can be a way to overcome this.
- Invisible young people; most partner countries have invisible young people. Sweden is actively working to identify and engage with them.

III. What the young NEET people think. Results of the laboratories of dialogue

The youth involved in the project were engaged in the 3 NEET Laboratories of dialogue in each country of the partnership (Italy, Spain, Ireland, Turkey, Greece and Romania) where the NEET data is very troubling and new strategies are needed.

The main unique aspects from the laboratories in each country are presented below. The full thoughts and opinions of the young people can be found in the detailed reports of each country, on the project website, at: <http://www.netnotneet.eu/category/results/>.

III.1. Main difficulties in young people's job search

In Romania, the main identified difficulties were the insufficient training / professional development; the lack of information; too few jobs at national level; not having graduated school; the employers who take advantage of this situation and exploit young people.

In Italy, the difficulty in accessing the labour market are related to: experience requested, companies are taxed too much to hire new workers, discrimination depending of the kind of job, internships paid by the public service used by the companies as free labour force, general crisis and the lack of jobs, too many channels for job searching, et cetera.

In Turkey, most of the NEET people do not know what to do to find a job. The people who work at public employment services have to learn how to help people more efficiently. Moreover, some young people leave school with no qualifications and fail to find a foothold in the labour market, others go on to further education and/or training but fail to make the transition into work at this point..

In Ireland, the career guidance provided within the Irish Education system was deemed as inconsistent, and non-obligatory. They noted that it was provided by teachers whose position as career guidance teacher was in addition to their normal teaching duties and during the economic crisis, the focus of these teachers reverted back to normal teaching due to reductions in school resources; this meant that some young people did not receive much or any career guidance..

In Spain, the big challenge relates to finding the first job, due to lack of experience, which leads young people to a a dead point. In this way, the PES have different support programs but young people complain because the resources are not enough for covering all the needs.

In Greece, in order to be able to find employment today, one has to be constantly trained in new and unknown fields. Specialized education and training can be costly. There is a significant need for the organizing of qualitative and free of charge seminars on topics which could assist the unemployed individual in becoming integrated in the labour market.

III.2. Weak points of Educational System and possible causes of the early leaving phenomenon and suggestions to improve the situation.

Spain

- **School dropout due to increased costs.** The Spanish Educational System is for free but there are other complementary elements, such textbooks, which are expensive.
- **The impossibility for returning back to the Educational System after having dropped out from it.** Young people face big barriers and no support or guidance at all. In this sense, the LOMCE Law (a modification of the main Educative Law in Spain) introduces the idea of bridges between different educative itineraries.
- **Lack of/insufficient guidance and psychologist support in the school.**

Ireland

In the education system the young people recommended that:

- **career guidance services** should be an obligatory personalised quality service and should be available at an earlier age, intensifying in the later years of school.
- **the work experience opportunities be available to students earlier than in Transition year.** It was suggested that work experience should be a module along with a business start up module within the Civic Social Political Experience (CSPE) course that all students complete in the Junior cycle in secondary school.
- **Work shadowing** was also put forward as a way to expose student to careers and the workplace. They would also like to see more Employer links with schools, to improve their access to Employers.

Italy

- The skills are not related to the labour market, lacking of communication between teachers and students, higher education far from the labour market, post degree training expensive and not so useful to find a job, too much theoretical studies for job market, difficulties for people who interrupted school in obtain qualifications and have better chances to enter in the labour market.

Romania

- The school curriculum is too demanding;
- The young people are not appropriately supported by the state;
- The teachers do not empathise with young people and they don't engage in their personal development;

- Young people choose to leave school due to different reasons: weak social situation; having been abandoned by parents or parents leave abroad to work; lack of involvement of parents; marginalization; the idea of immediate financial gains, etc.

Greece:

- The main teaching approach in the Greek school (head-on teaching in the form of a lecture, dominance of theory and lack of activity) discourages and drives away from school a high percentage of students.
- The Pan-Hellenic Examinations constitute a one-way for the introduction of students in Tertiary Education and on the whole, they are difficult and particularly demanding.
- Many children with learning difficulties are integrated in classes that move faster than they can follow and as a result, they drop out because they feel unable to keep up.
- One can find at schools children with a significant intellectual capacity, who however fall behind due to emotional problems, a bad family situation, etc.
- Educational structures very often release individuals who realize at a very late stage that they have chosen the wrong profession, making them unsuccessful professionals or unemployed.
- It is known that formal education does not include in its program the development of competences that are related to soft skills, i.e. work in groups, problem solving, the role of leadership, communication etc.

Turkey

- Equal opportunity
- To put to same exam with Vocational High Schools and Other schools
- Family Pressure (about the choice of school)
- Negative impact on Vocational schools in society
- Most of young people cannot continue to universities due to the educational system and exams.

III.3. Weak points of Public Employment Services concerning the support in the job search process and suggestions to improve the situation.

Ireland

All clients should be profiled in the employment services, as done for the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot, to enable the guidance they receive to be more personalised and relevant to them. They would also like to see more consistent connections between the different employment services and have more frequent appointments with their guidance practitioner.

They needed more concise clear & relevant information, more consistent contact with the employment service (INTREO) (not just irregular and random contact), as well as better choice of work experience opportunities.

Spain

- **Lack of capacity to bring information to NEETs about pilot programs and other consolidated programs aiming to support young people is detected.**

There was a proposal coming from the NEETs which was opening an unique website with all kind of information about this issue at National scope.

Romania

- There are not enough information points and neither activities for promoting the services they offer;
- The public servants working in these offices are not always very kind and supportive;
- On the whole, the public employment services are seen as non-attractive.

Italy

To enhance the ongoing policies, there is a need to strengthen the Job Centres: at national level there are only 8.000 employees in Job Centres. An important reformation is ongoing related to the tasks of employment: a central agency for employment to manage all the questions related to labour market will be set up according to the new law just in force (Jobs Act, April 2015), but to ensure all the job services at local level probably different model of management will be included.

Greece

- It is very important that the services of the Manpower Employment Organization make the complainants feel secure when they turn to them.
- It has been noticed that the employees of the Manpower Employment Organization treat the public in a bad and rude manner and that most of the time, they do not provide the appropriate information that is of interest to the unemployed. Also, there is no personal contact between an unemployed individual and the career guidance counselors.
- There is a significant need for the implementation of programs aimed at strengthening the employee's basic job finding skills and the support of his /her candidacy.
- No funding is foreseen for activities related to the primary sector and for the ones with low formal qualifications. Additionally, the age limit is particularly low (usually until 29 years of age).
- There are many work placements related to cleaning (for example, at the municipality or schools/offices) that require a basic education certificate of studies (Junior High School). Many NEETs do not have such a certificate of studies and therefore cannot fill these positions. There is the need for the abrogating of this provision.
- The credit points allocation of the unemployed and on social criteria are unequal and unfair.

Turkey

- The public employment services are not very active and do not guide to NEET people actively.
- Unawareness of employment centres.

III.4. Links between educational system, training and the labour market and suggestions to improve the situation

Romania

- The young people should have access to integrated information, counselling and vocational guidance services, to training courses for jobs that are needed on the labour market, to apprenticeship programmes and labour market intermediation services, and to consulting and practical assistance to setting up a new business.
- Job orientation/counselling at early stages (e.g. even before deciding to go to a certain high school / vocational training) was also considered important.
- As well, matching the labour market demands with the school/training opportunities, e.g. training young people in jobs that are requested on the labour market.
- In Romania, a young person who has finalized studies and is not able to find a job within 6 months will disappear from all statistics. This is one of the reasons for the emergence of the young people in NEET situation.
- Young people who are not employed cannot become members of trade unions. Thus the interest of NEET young people is not represented by anyone.

Italy

- favouring the link school-labour market: the alternating school-work programme is a tool aimed to this: thanks to the new law “The good school” (n. 107, approved by the Government on 9th July 2015) all the students in secondary schools in the last three years before the diploma must spend at least 200 hours (for humanistic and focused on sciences schools) or 400 hours (for technical or professional schools) in stage in companies or public bodies.
- reinforce the internships: as a tool to have an experience on the job internships are promoted by many public institutions. The Tuscany Region is a positive example as it paid 21.141 internships from the start of the law.

Spain

- The lack of communication between educational system and the labour market is affecting young people a lot because the educational system “produces” workers in non demanded areas. This means that young people invest a lot of time in getting training in an area that won’t provide them with a related job. In this way, the adoption and implementation of VET dual system, with the German one as a reference point, could resolve partially this problem. This is targeted by the new law but the final implementation depends on the capacity of teachers and policy makers in facilitating its quick adaptation to the Spanish scheme

Greece

The labour market demands specialized knowledge (i.e. language proficiency, PC operation etc) and even demands from the candidates to have a respective certification. There is a big need for these skills not only to be provided by the formal educational system, but also to be accompanied by the relevant certification at school (for example, state certificate of language proficiency).

The need for technical education is established, but the technical-vocational schools operate only at the level of Senior High School. Elements of technical education should be also introduced at the level of Junior High School.

It is ascertained that Vocational Training Institutes offer education in specialties which do not meet the needs of the local labour markets,. Additionally, the lack of training with respect to professions related to the primary sector (agriculture, cattle-breeding) is profound. Vocational Training Institutes offer education oriented towards the labour market. There is the need for a number of bodies to cooperate, so that the moment a trainee completes his/her training, they will support him/her in a coordinated manner so that s/he can find work relevant to the training received.

There are occupations that require office skills (correct spelling, computers etc) which many NEETs do not possess and therefore they are excluded from them.

In order to be able to find employment today, one has to be constantly trained in new and unknown fields. Specialized education and training can be costly. There is a significant need for the organizing of qualitative and free of charge seminars on topics which could assist the unemployed individual in becoming integrated in the labour market.

Turkey

- NEET people are not aware of the possibilities for new opportunities.
- NEET people do not know how to find job.
- They need new training programmes and quality guidance.

Ireland

In the employment services the young people still felt they needed more concise clear & relevant information, more consistent contact with the employment service (INTREO) (not just irregular and random contact), as well as better choice of work experience opportunities. They proposed the idea of the employment services coming into schools and making presentations on their services and the type of jobs available. They would also like to see more incentives for employers to offer work placements to graduates. Overall they felt that the employment services need to take more responsibility for enabling work experience opportunities.

IV. Challenges for the implementation of suggestions directed at improving the situation of NEET at European level. Results of the duelling moderator focus groups

After the laboratories of dialogue, the young NEET people involved in the project had the chance to meet directly the representatives of the public authorities in a Dueling Moderator Focus Group held in each of the countries: Italy, Spain, Romania, Greece, Turkey and Ireland. The synthesis of the two points of view is presented below.

Italy

- The Job Centres, if reinforced, could provide more guidance and strengthen the demand/supply services, a key to access to labour market;
- The alternating school-work programme could fill in the gap of between school skills and labour market requests;
- Internships are a training tool to access to labour market, but they are not a job experience and cannot substitute a job contract;
- Companies don't ask for skilled people for the basic qualifications, but only for specific tasks or profile, so if a young person want to access to labour market could start from below.

The National Strategy in Italy should include these objectives:

- ✓ Enhance guidance (path of growing accompanied by a coach) as a central process towards the labour market;
- ✓ Empower the demand/supply service in the Job Centres;
- ✓ Well link the school to the labour market (e.g. promoting internship in the companies since the high school);
- ✓ Favour the access to labour market for young people by internships;
- ✓ Reinforce the link between institutions and companies, in order they can trust - better on each other;
- ✓ Persuade young people that also accepting a low profile job they can start working with a contract;
- ✓ Favour self employment by young people;
- ✓ Empower young people with soft skills (self confidence, knowledge and trust on - their rights, ability to self determination and to be proactive, etc).

Ireland

The suggestions made regarding the education/VET system that could be implemented/have with the most potential were identified as:

- Greater options for individuals who leave school early; they need to provide vocational opportunities for early school leavers.

- The education and employment service providers are all chasing the same employers. There needs to be a co-ordinated approach.
- Education for NEET young people can be even more important because of family circumstances. We need to take a whole family approach.
- The academic process does not work for some young people and there is no alternative structured path for them. The Interventions available are not joined up. This approach needs to be formulated and then sold to young people as an attractive option.
- Reduce fees or no fees to allow more access to education and training.
- Education needs to have a meaning at Level 5 and Level 6 (Irish National Qualification Framework) with specific Level 5 vocational links and Level 6 progression gateways into the 2nd year of Universities.
- Enrolment policies in CDETB are now being changed, where Full Level 4 accredited students will have automatic access to a Level 5 courses rather than a person with Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Applied getting preference over the Level 4 student. This is an important development which will improve access for these students.
- Value of transition year so the quality of this needs to be high.
- There is a lack of opportunities for single parents; we need to make more opportunities for them to return to education and or work.
- Youth Initiatives like BRYR are outside Youth Guarantee Funding and this need to be looked at.
- The value of quality guidance support; to provide this the focus must be on the individual.
- The economic crisis has caused many school guidance teachers to return to teaching duties only as they had been a reduction of teacher allocations to schools. Therefore there had been a severe reduction in the guidance available to young people. However with the recovering economy there is now the possibility to fill these critical positions.
- The need for DSP case Officers to be up-skilled in light of their changing role as guidance practitioners.
- There needs to be more of a focus on youth support.
- There needs to be more active employer supports and training needs to be geared towards employer needs.
- Relevance of DSP activation programme in meeting the needs of young people.

Spain

➤ **Creating a public service that connects educational institutions with the labour market.**

Maybe an on line platform with some face to face visits among students and employers could help: the first target group, by providing them with a real contact with future employers; the second target group, because they can go ahead faster with the selection process of workers when they have vacancies..

➤ **Creating a public service which controls that internships aren't used by companies in a vicious way.**

A possible solution is creating the position of internship inspector who can check in place the tasks that the students are developing and the relationship of these tasks with the educational background of the student. And one more, the public resources must be increased to resolve this topic.

➤ **Building bridges between different educational itineraries.**

There is a lack of communication between different educational institutions working on different frames. This is an important obstacle to resolve the question of creating bridges between different educative itineraries.

Networking the different educative frames, apart from the methods already approved by the LOMCE lay, could help to overcome this negative aspect.

➤ **Controlling the actors involved in providing tools used in the learning process.**

Particularly important is controlling the oligopolistic policies implemented by publishers that are changing textbooks year by year with the aim of maximizing benefits. This costs a lot of resources to the families and sometimes it is a mechanism which invites the parents to take the son/daughter from the school to the labour market prematurely.

Romania

- The educational system in Romania must be better linked to labour market.
- The partnerships between schools and universities with the private sector are insufficient.
- There is a need for more apprenticeship stages and in this sense more freedom of movement for the SMEs, less bureaucracy.
- There is a need for internship stages for young entrepreneurs.
- The information system towards the young people should be improved, the information and/or awareness raising is very weak and difficult.
- There is a need for personalized guidance for young people, as well as a record of youth in social risk areas;
- There is a need for more encouragement of the dual education system.
- The European funds should finance also the profession, not only the competence.
- The European funds should finance also the training in jobs requested on the labour market (e.g. IT programmer);
- Extending the age limit for the youth guarantees up to 30 years old, as many young people who are university graduates do not manage to find a job, but they are over the age to benefit from the programme.
- There should be a greater engagement of the national and local public employment agencies in counselling and informing young people.
- There should be greater engagement of all social actors in this problem (trade unions, schools, SMEs, NGOs, counselling centres, public institutions, youth organisations, etc.).

Greece

- Vocational Senior High Schools must be closely connected to the Region and local economy. The diagnosing of needs, however, must not constitute a one-way and one-sided act of matching vocational training to the needs of the labour market and this is because this procedure needs to be dialectically bidirectional and functional, taking into consideration not only the needs of production and economy, but also the outflows of the wider educational system. The development of effective and qualitative social dialogue, with the active participation of social partners, for the establishment and running of effective practical training schemes aimed at a more effective transition to employment.
- The avoidance of “abusive” methods that render practical training an employee “substitution” and “replacement” mechanism and lead to the decreasing of their salaries (for example, voucher programs).

- The development of an ongoing mechanism for the improvement, support, operation and modernization of professional profiles, as well as the establishment of mechanisms for their direct connection to the educational programs, aimed at their modernization and specialization in relation to the needs of employment.
- A significant issue is also the development of counseling systems, not only for the support of the trainees, but also the enterprises. The validity of vocational education and training should be enhanced. In the mid to longer term there must be a change of perception and the equivalence between general and vocational education should be pursued. This equivalence should be reflected in the degrees, the permeability of the educational system, as well as the National Qualifications' Framework.
- The promotion of the services provided by the SEPE (Hellenic Labour Inspectorate) and other similar bodies and programs to the wide public will assist in the support of the individuals who wish to, but have second thoughts about addressing these services.
- The agricultural sector faces a series of “challenges” related to the productive process. The engaging with the primary sector demands from the producer to be in the position to incorporate contemporary knowledge and innovation in the productive process. The education, training and new technologies through special supportive programs and grants are all imperative.
- The rude behaviour of the employees of the Manpower Employment Organization and the lack of information with respect to the programs and provisions of the organization constitute a major obstacle in the effective service of the citizens.
- The employment counselor owes to have a personal contact with the unemployed and shape his qualifications profile by frequent monitoring. Thus, s/he will be able to inform him/her on programs aiming at skills that are necessary for the promotion of his/her professional profile, so that s/he can match successfully the qualifications of the unemployed individual to the available job positions.
- It constitutes a crucial necessity to take measures that will protect motherhood and for the ones responsible to formulate proposals.
- Cooperation on local level, seeking cooperation with other European countries and European organizations and seeking of funding tools all constitute practices that can “alleviate” groups of people who suffer from the consequences of unemployment.

Turkey

- Explore barriers to employment, community and familial pressures and organisational culture.
- Should capture the views, opinions and experiences of those who work closely with unemployed young people in fulfilling a formal training or community-work role, in relation to unemployment and social exclusion.
- In the immediate term support is needed to help those who are already NEET. This includes working to provide clear and available pathways into employment; ensuring young people have suitable skills and work experience; and ensuring provision is flexible enough to meet the needs of the diverse NEET cohort.
- Support to access their first sustainable job is a core support need of young people. The system must be geared up so that education and training providers prioritise this outcome.
- There is a need to better coordinate local services to support young people.
- There is also a need for schools, businesses and government to work much more closely together to prepare young people for the labour market. The education system is

critically important, and more young people leaving with better qualifications can help to facilitate more successful transitions into work.

- Raising educational attainment
- Helping local partners to provide effective and coordinated services
- Encouraging employers to inspire and recruit young people through improving apprenticeships and work experience.
- To support young people at transition points, better coordination of support is needed at both local and national levels.
- Coordinating services locally. To help provide greater consistency of support for young people at the local level there needs to be strong coordination of local services to ensure young people are linked-up with the support they require to find employment, further education or training after leaving school.
- Create better coordination

Foster better links into employment: The school curriculum needs to prepare young people for the world of work through better links, high quality work experience and more routes into work e.g. apprenticeships. We need to make it easier for employers to engage with young people, particularly those most at risk of becoming NEET.

V. Recommendations and guidelines to public authorities, policy makers and experts at European level to prevent and contrast the NEET phenomenon. Results of the transnational laboratory

The transnational laboratory „*Preventing and Contrasting NEET phenomenon at a local and European level: partnerships and policies*” took place in Bucharest on 4th June 2015 and had the main aim to identify strategies, approaches and tools to prevent and contrast the NEET phenomenon.

Over 40 stakeholders from the partner countries, including NEET young people from the target group, attended the laboratory.

The first part of the laboratory was reserved to the presentation of the results of the work done in the partner countries, while during the second part an interactive „World Café” session was organized, with 4 parallel sub-groups/round tables, to discuss **the strategies and approaches to further develop and improve in order to prevent and contrast NEET phenomenon.**

The main conclusions for each section are presented below:

Soft skills and their central importance for personal development and educational and employment success:

- While trying to give a common definition of “soft skills”, the stakeholders in the round table reached the conclusion that soft skills are difficult to define and depend on the context of each country.
- However, the following were pointed as being crucial: communication, public relations, interpersonal skills, problem solving, time management, team work, leadership, taking responsibility on your own, etc.
- Where do people learn soft skills? The stakeholders agreed that many times soft skills are not taught in schools, as many of the teachers do not have themselves these skills. Thus, soft skills should be included in the basic education of teachers, as it already happens in some countries (e.g. Sweden).
- Soft skills are closely connected with the life experiences, so attention should be paid to the quality of experiences, relationships, environment of students in schools. Informal learning, including mobility projects, also plays a vital role.
- Besides the school, soft skills could be learned in sports situations, in youth clubs, within the family, etc. But it also happens that these skills are not learned at all, being also one of the reasons why young people end up in the situation of being NEET.
- Employability skills seem to be targeted at people outside the job market, while they would be very useful also within schools.
- The issue of how to teach soft skills in schools was also discussed, whether there should be a specific module for soft skills or rather within the personal development module. Formally soft skills should be transversal in all school subjects, but in reality this does not always happen. Several good practices for learning soft skills were mentioned (e.g. transition year in Ireland, 8 weeks programme in Sweden, etc.).

- How to measure/assess soft skills is also an important issue. Validation of soft skills acquired informally would be helpful for NEET young people.

Coaching, guidance and counselling from early age

- All stakeholders acknowledged that career guidance and counselling are very valuable for young people.
- On the other hand, guidance services vary from country to country, from very consistent to non-existing. Thus, there should be a structured way for providing guidance at EU level.
- Early career guidance is extremely important, it's a crucial transition point for young people. Early intervention prevents young people from making wrong career choices and from being demotivated to engage in another service.
- Early intervention is also crucial – it should be provided as soon as the person has dropped out from school or from a training course, as the longer the disengagement, the bigger the demotivation. Thus, early and accessible career guidance should be provided.
- To reach the expected impact, guidance should provide an individual service for each beneficiary, which requires time, while the practitioners do not always have the necessary time. Thus, investments should be made in the resources allocated to guidance services.
- The counsellors should know to refer the young people to other professionals, when they are not able to help (e.g. to a psychologist), as young people may encounter different types of barriers in progressing.
- The importance of soft skills was again brought into discussion, together with the example of production school in Denmark, which focuses on soft skills and gives young people the opportunity engage in production activities before engaging in other formal education.
- An ideal quality career guidance service, able to prevent the NEET phenomenon, should have the following characteristics: personalized, professional, dedicated separate service (e.g. not performed by a teacher), accessible, less bureaucracy both for beneficiaries and for practitioners, early intervention, flexible, a transition point, provide enough time, focused on helping, holistic approach (recognizing the boundaries of the practitioners, e.g. availability of psychologists, career guidance practitioners, etc), sensible to young people's needs, sustainable.
- The use of EU projects for developing the career guidance services, like the Youth Guarantee Scheme, is also helpful.
- Not least, it is important to assess the long term impact of the guidance programmes, not just the short term impact in terms of reduction of unemployment rate.

Flexible education, early guidance:

- Flexible education still remains difficult to define, but definitely NEET young people should be provided with alternative educational paths, as well as the freedom to decide. The example of the Danish production schools was again highlighted as a good practice, focusing on personal development and the soft skills of young people.
- The central importance of soft skills was also highlighted.
- Students should learn at early ages about job market and should have early contact with the real labour market (e.g. visiting companies, work-based learning, etc.).

- Parental education and counselling parents is also very important, the same as the relations between teachers-family-child/student – a strong social bond should be created by organizing common activities. Bridging activities should be created at early stages for supporting children.
- A flexible VET system can only be designed through the cooperation and efforts of different stakeholders and policy makers (e.g. ministries of education, labour, social affairs, etc.).

Dialogue and participation as enabling tools:

- While trying to define the two concepts, the round table participants agreed that dialogue represents the key to participation and also a first step to participation, being a mediating tool. On the other hand, participation is linked to the rights and responsibilities of young people as citizens.
- In order for young people to participate, they should have trust in the policy makers, which can be achieved through the mediation of another party, e.g. an NGO.
- Dialogue is more a communication process, leading to a change in perspective, as well as an initiating and understanding process in both ways, whereas the participation aspect involves changing a reality, not only a perspective, and also acting (e.g. young people become aware of their influence on their own situation).
- As regards the possible solution to the low level of participation of young people, the approach should focus on a practical way to increase trust of the young person in himself/herself and in the policy makers. The young people should first be offered something so that their trust can grow, as an enabling process.
- When discussing about the success factors, it came out that the motto should be “acting not waiting”. Young people should be helped to design a plan/a perspective/a set of target for themselves, so that they are enabled to participate more, which is closely connected with the guidance process.
- As regards the challenges met by young people, these include: lack of opportunities, lack of money, lack of confidence in their own forces and in the social system.

In the conclusion of the transnational laboratory, Prof. Andrea Salvini from University of Pisa, one of the moderators of the laboratory, emphasized that **one important concept that has dominated the discussions is the concept of network.**

- ✓ At a macro-level, the lack of link between the educational system and the labour market is a matter of network.
- ✓ At a meso-level, we discuss about bridging activities in schools, the need to involve policy makers, building opportunities, involving families, etc. –again networking.
- ✓ At a micro-level, we talk about building relations and interaction with youth, parents, teachers and joint counselling, so also networks.

Thus, we need to stress the importance of network structures at a local, national and transnational level in order to better understand and prevent the NEET phenomenon. Networking is a strategic choice to contrast the phenomenon, but also to support young NEET people and to guarantee success. The power of network and networking will increase the probability that policy makers will listen to the issues addressed.

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