

YOUTH IN

TRANSITION

Experiences, models and tools for
designing, organizing and supporting
individual pathways for NEETs



January 2021

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A CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS

This analysis was initiated to ensure that work in Youth in transition incorporated, on the one hand, the youth perspective and, on the other hand, the perspective of the professionals working with the NEETs. The purpose was to identify "the needs of the NEETs and the needs of the professionals", seen in the context of the system with its requirements, limitations and possibilities.

The focus was on best practice, next practice, best fit and dilemmas, when collecting data and cases from Denmark, Slovenia and Iceland. The conclusions reached should be in the 'radius for maneuver' for the professionals and their direct managers.

Qualitative and the quantitative data collection had a natural limitation regarding representativity, due to the limited resources available for analysis and for transnational collaboration in this context.

The analysis was authored by vocational consultant Regina Lamscheck-Nielsen, Moeve, Denmark. The author cooperated closely with experts from Denmark, Slovenia and Iceland. Process and output were quality assured by researchers from the University of Hamburg.

Vocational consultant Regina Lamscheck-Nielsen, Moeve (2020), in cooperation with experts from Iceland, Slovenia and Denmark

Download analysis from youth-it.cool/2020/12/analysis-the-needs-of-the-neets-and-the-needs-of-the-professionals

Who are the NEETs

The term "NEET" refers to young people who are neither in education, nor employment or training. They typically struggle with a complexity of problems such as personal and/or social difficulties, psychological diagnoses, abuse, drugs, crime or lack of basic educational skills. Their difficulties typically occur in combination with each other.

All in all, the total number of NEETs in Europe is high and has been relatively stable over the years, even when measured for different age groups.

The percentage of NEETs in the 28 European member states aged 15-24 years was 10.9% according to Eurostat (2018). OECD calculated the percentage 13.3%, including the age range of 24-29 years, but excluding Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia (2018).

Eurostat, 2018 "Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training" [accessed 25.03.19]

Diversity of NEETs eurofound.europa.eu/topic/neets

THE NEEDS OF THE NEETS

Young people with severe complex problems have typically been part of the 'system' for many years and have developed personal approaches to navigating in the system. Their problems and their pathways vary widely from each other, but common needs and common motivations could be identified, also across countries.

It was found that all NEETs have dreams that can be transformed into goals, which over time can be within realistic reach. The pathways to their goals are to a certain degree unpredictable, but not coincidental. The young people are more likely to accept and engage in elements on their pathways, such as educational courses or individual learning activities, if they make sense for them. Therefore, the NEETs should be involved in co-designing their own pathways. The elements on their pathways must lead to manageable subgoals.

The pathways towards their personal final goals reflect the NEETs' progression towards the society-defined goal of self-support. Self-support is understood as engaging sustainably in education or job. Attending to this required goal is part of "vocational maturity".

The NEETs show motivation, or possibly more likely, can become motivated for working towards their goals - if their motivational orientations are triggered. Here, motivation is constructed, dependent on changeable contexts as well as individual preferences and prerequisites.

The NEETs' generally show a high degree of sensitivity to impulses from others (peers, professionals, family etc.), which affects them emotionally. This sensitivity calls for strengthening resilience.

Professionals or other supportive resource persons play important and possibly game-changing roles - if the NEETs experience respect, trust and confidentiality. Thus, relationships have a fundamental importance for NEETs, for better or worse.

The overall picture of the needs of the NEETs reveals many sensitive issues but also remarkable potentials. To transform this picture into personal development, professional approaches and support are required - last but not least in order to match given societal settings and requirements.

Vocational maturity

Vocational maturity reflects the competencies and potentials that are necessary for starting in and retaining a job or an internship. This can also be true for the beginning of a vocational program and during its educational processes.

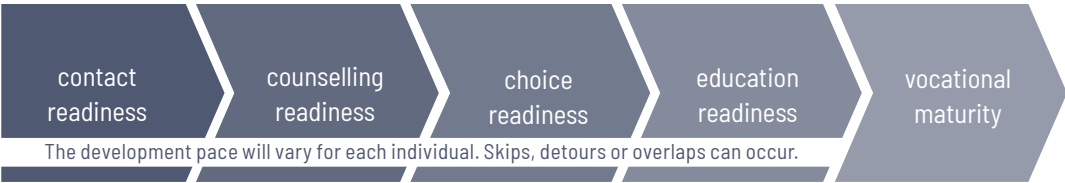
Youth in transition, 2019



YOUTH PROGRESSION – A TAXONOMY


The taxonomy below describes the progression towards vocational maturity. The taxonomy was developed by professional practitioners and managers (2018-2020) during several related Danish innovation projects.

Individual progression does not necessarily occur linearly, not necessarily distinctly in its separate phases, and not necessarily simultaneously with that of other young people. In spite of this unpredictability, five criteria could be outlined.



Taxonomy for youth progression, vs. March 2020, ©EUK/KL & Moeve - Unge med kant Syddanmark, Unge med kant Hovedstaden, Youth in transition

Each of the five phases is described using action-based indicators. It is emphasized that both the phases and the indicators must be adapted nationally and to a certain degree also locally, as they depend strongly on the conditions of the system in which they are applied.

 Criteria and indicators for youth progression youth-it.cool/deliverables

THE NEEDS OF THE PROFESSIONALS

The professionals are frontline practitioners in their work with NEETs. Their roles cover personal guidance and counseling, teaching, employment counseling, social services and specialized offers such as various therapies.

These practitioners make a personal difference to their clients, when they use their professional methods of guiding, counseling and teaching directed towards the young peoples’ efforts and learning processes. Career learning and motivational and relational work are just a part of the total methodology, which can be transformational for the young people.

The roles of the professionals include systemizing and simplifying the complexity of the individuals’ problems, and helping them to organize, plan and stay on their pathways. In particular, there is increasing attention to supporting transitions of the young peoples’ pathways. Transitions cause vulnerability and occur between educational and work phases, as well as between phases in the young person’s personal life (first own home, broken relationship, bodily changes etc.).



The high complexity of the problems and the needs of the NEETs lead to the need for an increased interaction between the professionals and other key persons important to the NEETs (parents, peers, mentors etc.).

IN CROSS-PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

Almost always, several public institutions or departments are involved in the complex cases of the NEETs, and not untypically, also the private and the civil sectors. A fundamental, but as yet relatively new principle for working with NEETs is cross-professional and cross-sectoral outreach and cooperation. In order for this to succeed, professionals must have knowledge of each other’s work conditions (procedures, legislation etc.), resources, approaches, language (terms) and methods.

The professionals express a desire for an alignment of approaches and methods. But this is neither realistic nor advantageous for the NEETs in the long run. On the contrary, it can ease the professionals’ daily work to focus on the benefits of each other’s approaches and accept their diversity.

The approaches obviously clash especially between, on the one hand, work processes with a strong youth perspective and, on the other hand, work processes directed towards vocational requirements. Achieving a balance and synergy must be aimed through constant exchange or even negotiations.

Despite all this, a certain degree of alignment among the professionals is possible, by increasing transparency among the professions regarding their approaches, negotiating open-mindedly, and agreeing cross-professionally on terms.

The “taxonomy for youth progression” has brought a certain value as a common language that eases mutual understanding and agreement on procedures. In all cases, the taxonomy must be adapted to local conditions and local ways of understandings.

COMPETENCES

The study includes data from well-educated, very experienced, committed and ethically well-founded practitioners. They pointed to a set of necessary competences, consisting of:

- › knowledge, mostly about the youths, the system and its resources
- › skills, regarding professional methods, self-insight, documentation and cross-professional cooperation
- › as well as appreciative and resource-oriented attitudes to the NEETs

Finally, in spite of the fact that the professionals’ work conditions and workload seem to create pressure for many of them, they experience their work as very meaningful and express their personal dedication.

THE 'SCOUT' – A COMPETENCE PROFILE

A 'scout' is a close and consistent contact person for the NEET, during the phases of their pathways as well as during transitions. The scout profile combines two roles; that of organizational coordinator and that of personal counsellor. The scout can perform both of these roles or the role of scout can be divided among several coordinated professionals, depending on local implementation and the individual needs of the NEET.

The term itself is artificial. Locally, many terms are used, such as 'youth guide', 'contact person' or 'coordinating counsellor'.

Competences

Competences are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Key Competences for lifelong learning – European Reference Framework, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (2007)

IN PRACTICE

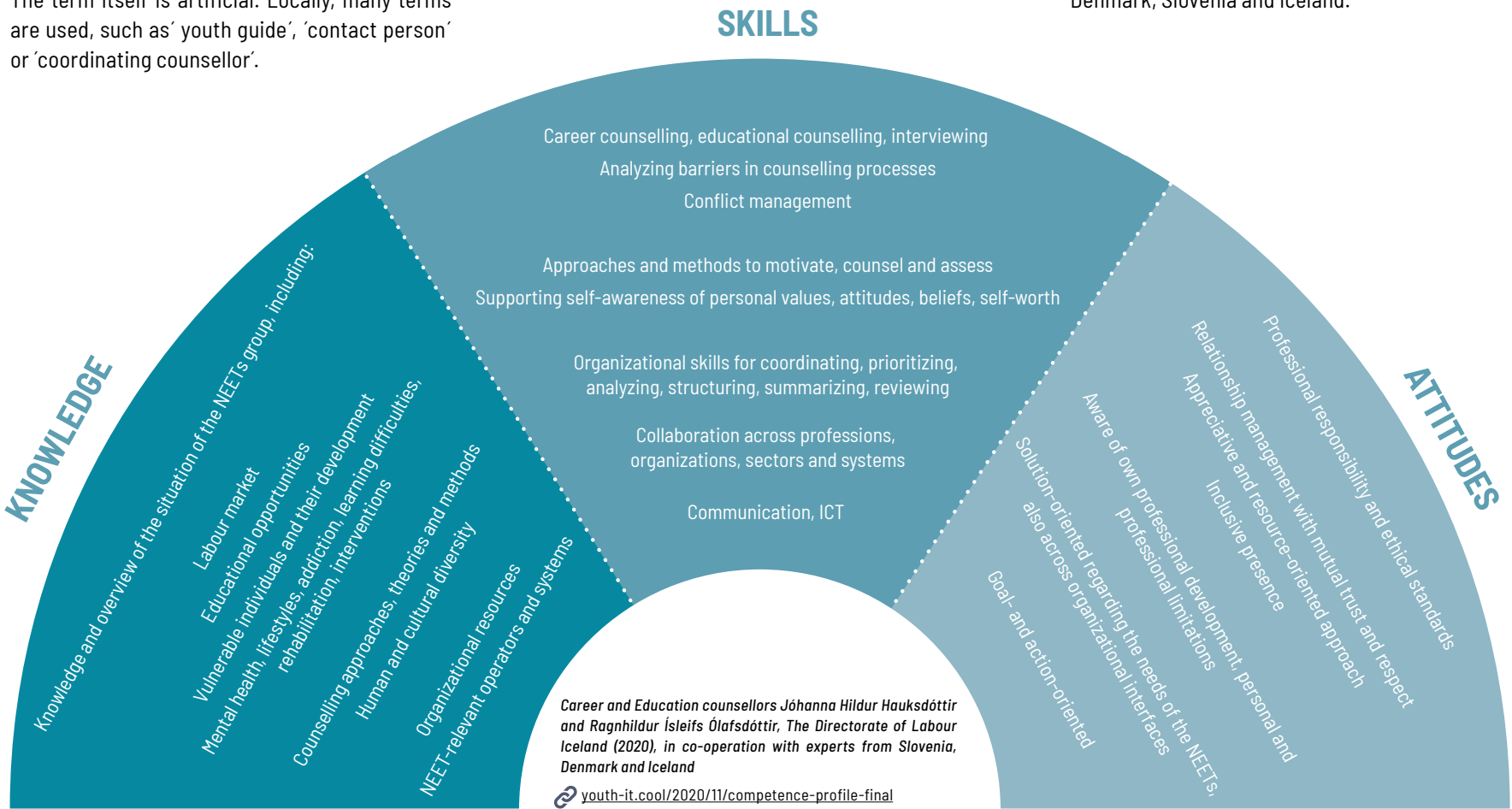
Different combinations form different scout profiles. The profiles must match the expected tasks and the professional roles that are relevant for the given local contexts. Mostly, a counsellor will, according to his/her professional background, have at least some of the desired competences.

The generic European profile has been transferred and adapted to national profiles for Denmark, Slovenia and Iceland.

EXAMPLES

John has knowledge of counselling theories, masters counselling skills, and has attitudes that show professional responsibility. These competences represent his personal counselling style.

Johanna has knowledge and understanding of the NEET group's situation. She masters skills to recognize and analyze barriers to achieving the results expected from the youth and to support them in overcoming obstacles. Finally, she has an approach of understanding the circumstances of the NEET group. With these competences, Johanna supports NEETs in making personal plans and outlining their individual progression.



An interactive functionality

It is possible to create locale profiles in an interactive "drag & drop" version. Thus, the generic competence profile can be adapted to local needs.

KOMPETENCEPROFIL
Kontaktperson+ i kadeansvaret
Suanne, Kommune X

EXAMPLE:
INTERACTIVE DANISH PROFILE

START FORMLA
DOWNLOAD PDF

1-10-2020
VIDEN
Kende metoder for hver professionel samarbejde
Kende systemet, målgruppen og deres behov

KOMPETENCER
Co-design og koordinere individuelle forløb i samarbejde med målgruppen
Afdække og evaluere de professionelle tilgange til de unge
Samarbejde på tværs af afdelinger og med forældre

FÆRDIGHEDER
Beherske metoder til dokumentation, beredning og it
Professionssamarbejde, målgruppen relevant efteruddannelse
Følge de professionelle standarder

VIDEN
Respekt for målgruppen
Kende målgruppen og deres behov
Reflektere over egen rolle
Relatere til lovgivning, data, økonomi, m.fl.

KOMPETENCER
Gennemføre målgruppen relevant, aktivt samarbejde
Vejlede målgruppen med individuel fokus, træning og klare engagement
Gennemføre relationer
Gennemføre behovsundersøgelser
Identificere data

FÆRDIGHEDER
Forstå egen rolle i forhold til andre roller
Beherske metoder til evaluering og kvalitetsudvikling
Forstå målgruppen, udvalgte områder


SCOUTS IN ICELAND, DENMARK AND SLOVENIA

// A 'scout' has knowledge of vulnerable individuals and their development, skills to use techniques, methods and approaches to motivate NEETs and the attitude to have faith in the youths and their abilities. A professional with these competence supports NEETs in creating and following their personal plans.

- Icelandic counselor (2020)

// The profile for a 'scout' requires knowledge, skills and competencies for working cross-professionally, solving organizational, legal and administrative tasks, for delivering social work and youth guidance counseling. Being able to balance the youth perspective with vocation-directed requirements is essential, too.

- Danish professional, youth guidance sector (2020)

 Danish profile: Kontaktperson+ ungemedkant.dk/toolbox/kontaktperson

// The 'scout' is skilled in individual counseling based on the principles of career development and has the necessary knowledge, contacts and skills to coordinate across professional fields and resources as required by the youths, with the aim of supporting them on their individual pathways to vocational maturity.

- Slovenian counselor (2020)

INDIVIDUAL PATHWAYS FOR NEETS

Work with NEETs must match the needs of the individual NEETs, as well as what is possible for the professionals and the conditions of the 'system'. Didactics were needed for designing and conducting individual pathways towards vocational maturity, including active co-design with the NEETs.


A relevant didactic model could not be found, as classic didactic models treat the design of teaching processes or counseling processes too narrowly. Thus, a generic action-oriented didactic model was outlined by the professional practitioners in YIT, quality-assured by The University of Hamburg.

The model (pp. 10-11) allows transformation to locally sense-making models, with regard to the national and local conditions. The model offers an overview of how professionals can work, preferably together, with planning, evaluating and adjusting individual pathways for NEETs in a cross-professional context.


The model reflects 5 phases in a logical order: Alignment of the professionals' approaches > Overview & outline of resources > Profiling of the NEETs > Development > Actions & dialogues. The final goal is that the NEETs complete a high degree of educational and vocational maturity that empowers them to complete an educational program or to independently maintain a job.


While the first part of the model focuses on the professionals' preparation of their joint work with the NEETs, the second part is about individual work with the NEETs, which often will take place as a circular process with several iterations.


The elements of the didactic model


 In the initial phase, the professionals identify and reflect on their approaches and attitudes to NEETs, in order to consciously choose methods for working with NEETs.


background, challenges and potentials, as well as the young person's needs.

 Getting a general overview and identifying resources are a prerequisite for a successful cross-professional work with NEETs. A mutual understanding of each other's approaches and perspectives must be achieved, as well as a common language as a foundation for the collaboration.

 Forming a relationship supports the individual development of the NEET. The NEET and the professional start formulating goals and sub-goals and plan activities for promoting the goals.

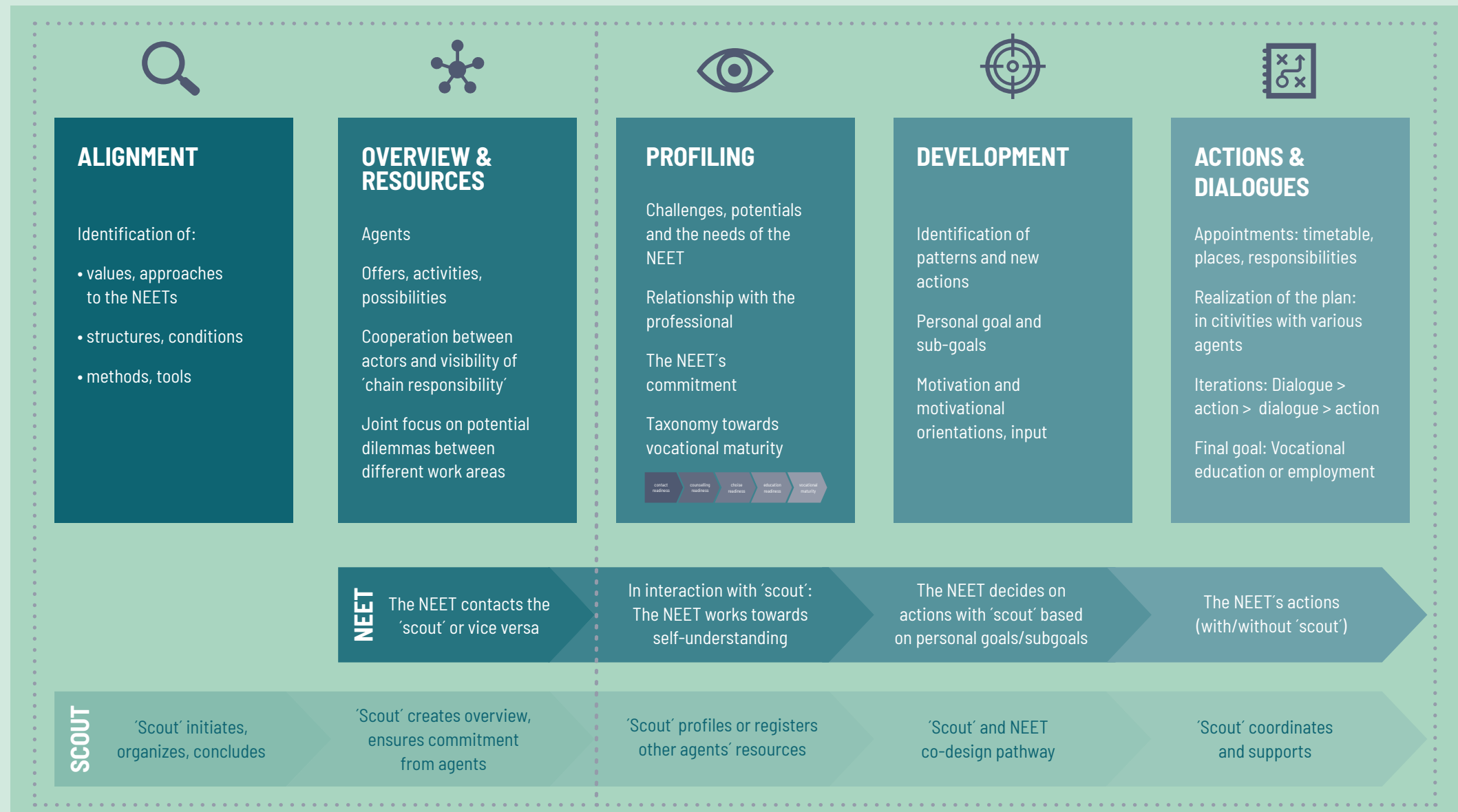
 Dialogues with the individual NEETs start during the profiling phase. The professional creates a profile of the young person's life experiences, including school

 The chosen goals, sub-goals and activities are included in an education plan, which must be continually evaluated and adjusted if needed. Various actors and stakeholders are involved when relevant. Responsibilities are agreed upon.

 The two arrows illustrate, respectively, the organizing and coordinating role of the 'scout', and the NEET working with personal goals and subgoals.

DIDACTICS

INDIVIDUAL PATHWAYS FOR NEETS IN CROSS-PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS



NEETS IN PROGRESSION

The individual pathways of young people can be described along the line of the taxonomy for youth progression (p. 4): Contact readiness > Counselling readiness > Choice readiness > Educational readiness > Vocational maturity.

What has been done

During the project period, qualified data on 172 NEETs were collected every 3rd month over a period of one year (2019-2020) in Denmark, Slovenia and Iceland.

The progression of the NEETs was assessed on a scale towards vocational maturity, according to the taxonomy for youth progression (p. 4). The indicators for this scale were slightly adapted to national conditions. The observations and assessments have been undertaken by professional counsellors.

As the results emerged, it was interesting to note that the initial situations of the young people were assessed differently by the different counsellors. During the initial encounter, approximately the same number of youths had been identified as "contact ready," "counselling ready," or as "choice ready".

This confirmed the assumption that NEETs enter their counselling process at different levels of the taxonomy.

The data for the 3-month-periods confirm that the taxonomy levels are not necessarily achieved in a linear fashion, as 'stair steps'. On the contrary, the development varies depending on the individual case. Some NEETs remain at one level for a longer period of time, while others move back and forth on the taxonomy.

In an overall statistical analysis, 45 % of the young people were able to achieve an "educational readiness" or "vocational maturity" status. This corresponds to 61 youths with "educationally ready" and 17 youths with "vocational maturity" status.

The share of "drop-outs", who were still assessed by their counsellors as "not contact ready" after the counselling period, was 6 %.

All in all, it was found that the categories of the taxonomy for youth progression are suitable for describing the current situation of the young people in general.

However, it is important to state that it is up to the young people themselves to decide on the goals, direction and activities of their own pathways and also the right moment for them to end their counselling process.

The data show that a large proportion of the young people accept the support services and thus share the goals intended by the project Youth in transition.



VOCATIONAL MATURITY

Vocational maturity as the goal of the NEETs' progression process reflects the competencies and potentials that are necessary for starting in and retaining a job or an internship. This can also be true for the beginning of a vocational program and during its educational processes.

In a cross-national desktop process, the YIT experts investigated "vocational maturity" more in depth and identified 6 dimensions (criteria):

Resilience | Motivation | Setting goals | Flexibility | Social norms | Professional skills.

The dimensions encompass, on the one hand, the 'youth perspective' and, on the other hand, expectations from the world of work.

The dimensions were operationalized with indicators. These indicators were formulated as action-oriented competencies that refer to knowledge, skills and attitudes, respectively. Aspects of common literacy ("Bildung") were also added.

// These dimensions are a common denominator of extensive scientific evidence such as career choices, identity, motivation, stress and coping theories.

- PhD Christiane Thole, The University of Hamburg (2020)

The 6 dimensions

Resilience

The ability to tolerate pressure and to see changes as an opportunity for growth. Resilience can grow and be trained, in cognitive behavioral change processes or with playground methods, for example.

Motivation

There is more than intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Motivation relates also to the context and surroundings of the NEETs. Motivation can be promoted by professionals using methods such as "motivational orientations".

Setting goals

Goal setting is essential for progression, and individuals should identify their own meaningful and realistic goals. Reaching goals is the result of many subgoals with small intermediate actions that are continually assessed with regard to how they help the individual to reach the ultimate goal. Concepts such as "SMART" criteria or "Career learning" methods can be supportive.

Flexibility

Flexibility can be seen as a person's capacity for coping with changes in his/her surroundings, circumstances and expectations, and how he/she thinks about problems and tasks in novel, creative ways. It can also be necessary to redirect goals, if reality sets barriers or opens new possibilities. Methods for promoting creativity or rethinking can strengthen flexibility.

Social norms

Meeting social norms requires both respect and self-confidence. Spoken and unspoken rules appear in all contexts; private, professional, as well as in public and educational environments. Relating to others with different norms and behavior must be learned. It is important to reflect on social norms and relate them to one's own understanding.

Professional skills

The knowledge, skills and attitudes that are needed to perform the relevant work tasks in a given job or trade. Can also comprise the competences that the young people already have gained in prior contexts and learning processes. In a vocational program, the required professional skills can be outlined as the targeted learning outcomes.

ONLINE SELF-EVALUATION IN DIALOGUE

An interactive online tool for NEETs' self-evaluation of vocational maturity was developed in a cross-national and cross-professional process.

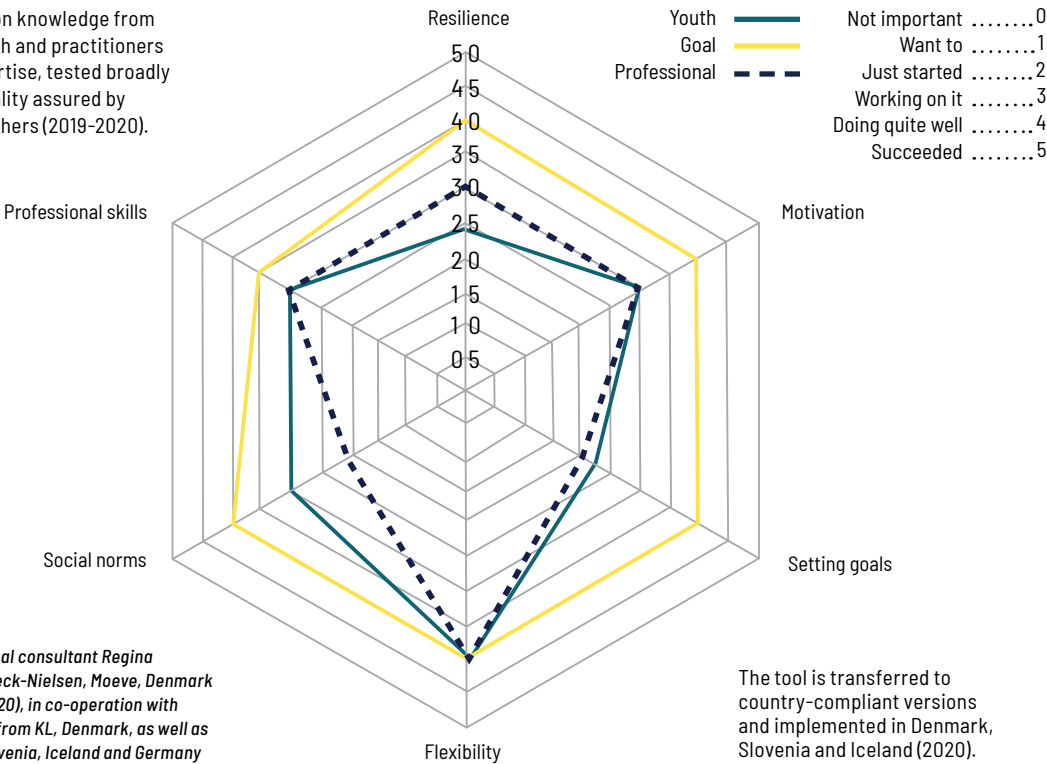
The tool offers the possibility to create individual profiles. Each profile reflects only the NEET's present self-perception of his/her vocational maturity. Individual profiles are not mutually comparable.

The individual profiles of the NEETs can be supplemented with a profile for the NEET's goals for each dimension. In addition, an assessment profile for the NEET can be added, elaborated by the NEET's counselor or in a group with other professionals.

// The validity of the tool is not implied in the exact measurement of the individual, but in its individual application and in the counseling process between the professional and the NEET.

- Prof. Dr. Werner Kuhlmann, The University of Hamburg

Based on knowledge from research and practitioners of expertise, tested broadly and quality assured by researchers (2019-2020).



Vocational consultant Regina Lamscheck-Nielsen, Moeve, Denmark (2019-2020), in co-operation with experts from KL, Denmark, as well as from Slovenia, Iceland and Germany

The tool is transferred to country-compliant versions and implemented in Denmark, Slovenia and Iceland (2020).

youth-it.cool/vocational-maturity

The self-evaluation tool is developed to refer to the criteria of Vocational Maturity in the taxonomy for youth progression (p. 4).



It is important to consciously determine, *when* to apply the tool during the individual pathway, *in which settings* and together with which *professionals*.

Note: The progression will vary for each individual. Skips, detours or overlaps can occur.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Timing, settings

The NEETs should have achieved a certain personal stability and openness to a 'view ahead', when applying the tool. The scout can help to identify the right time and place, possibly right before choosing a vocational program or in the beginning of a VET program. The tool can also be beneficial during transition to a job, internship or apprenticeship. The right time for application can differ from youth to youth, and even younger pupils may benefit from the use of the tool, if they are ready for this.

The application of the tool can (but need not) take place regularly during, for example, a period of study or an internship.

Preparation, introduction

Self-evaluation can be carried out individually, in pairs or in a group counselling session.

Creating a calm and trustful atmosphere is recommended, with a clear time frame and possibility for follow-up, if planned or needed. In any case, it is necessary to introduce the aim, to demonstrate the technique and to inform about data protection. It must be clearly agreed upon, whether or not to share the results of the self-evaluation, and if, what, how and with whom.

If using the tool in pairs or groups is intended, this should be planned and supported based on knowledge of the young people and with awareness of group dynamics.

In dialogue

Young people should not be left on their own with the tool. They may need and want personal dialogue or support during the session, or they may prefer to complete it by themselves. In any case, there should be a professional available, such as a mentoring teacher, guidance counselor, employment counselor or other relevant expert.

The professional can assist technically, or with clarifying explanations or supportive questions. It is especially important to be able to contextualize the content of the tool into the young person's background, experiences, present life, competences, goals and dreams. The professionals must also be open to new insights of their own about the individuals.

THE TOOL FOR SELF-EVALUATION OF VOCATIONAL MATURITY IN TRIAL RUNS

The interactive tool for self-evaluation of vocational maturity was pilot tested by NEETs aged 15-29 years together with professionals.

The cross-national in-depth trial runs supported the development of the innovative online self-evaluation tool in the transition to and in vocational education and training (VET), as well as in the school-to-work-transition. The trial runs also confirmed the usefulness of the tool as formative evaluation of NEETs progression, assisting them in their developmental process.

Potential benefits and problem areas in the didactic tool should be identified, as well as the actual applicability of the tool in counselling and in VET, prior to its full-scale implementation. The trial runs enabled the experts to receive feedback about the content (formulation and sequence of questions) and user experience from NEETS and professionals, with the aim of adapting the tool broadly and relevantly to the needs of NEETS and professionals as much as possible.

THE TEST SAMPLE

Each country had their own procedures for recruiting NEETs for the trial runs. The samples encompassed NEETs associated with Learning for Young Adults centres, VET colleges, youth counselling centers, VET-directed preparatory educational institutions and employment centers. Many vocational fields were involved, among them business & administration, gardening, industrial programs and food & catering.

	Slovenia	Denmark	Iceland
No. of trial runs	8	14	5
No. of NEETs	59	94	15
No. of professionals	10	17	2
No. of face-to-face counseling	10	13	3
No. of pairwise counseling	-		2
No. of group counselling	-	2	-
No. of distance counselling sessions	3	-	-

Public Education Centre Cene Štupar (2020), in cooperation with experts from Denmark, Iceland and Slovenia

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TRIAL RUNS IN SLOVENIA, DENMARK AND ICELAND

The trial runs were undertaken in 2 iterations during the period of August 2019 to September 2020 in different professional settings in Slovenia, Denmark and Iceland.

SLOVENIA

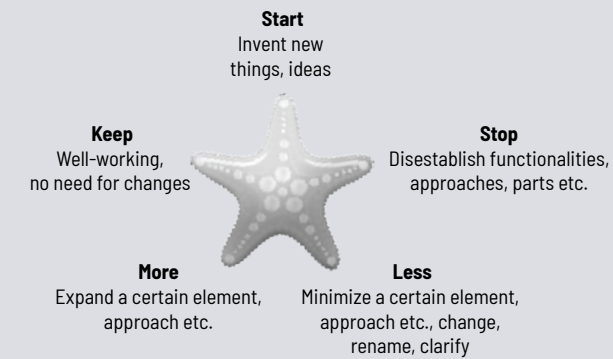
- Average duration 15 minutes, running up to 25 minutes.
- Laptops, stationary computers and projectors were used.
- The results were divided into a) NEETS' feedback on the usability of the tool and b) professionals' feedback on the tool's usefulness and value in the counselling process.
- Data obtained through observations, dialogues with the test persons on the usability and value of the online tool as well as written feedback sent by email.

ICELAND

- Average duration 10-15 minutes.
- Computers were used to conduct testing.
- Feedback was received from NEETS during and after they had tested the tool, based on oral questions about usefulness and appropriateness, as well as a questionnaire.

DENMARK

- Average duration approx. 20 minutes, running up to 45 minutes.
- Different devices were used: laptops, stationary computers, smartphones and also large projector screens for presentations.
- The results were divided into a) NEETS' feedback on the usability of the tool and b) professionals' reflections on the counselling value of the tool.
- Observations and considerations from the YIT team members as observers were added.
- The results from the NEETS' feedback and contributions from the observers on the usability were collected and organized according to the "starfish diagram".



Adapted "starfish diagram", method from agile software development

The tool has come a long way since my first try. Now it's easier to use, more understandable, and because the taxonomy focuses on progress rather than current success, I allow myself to reflect more deeply on my strengths and focus also on how to work with my weaknesses.

- 2nd year VET student,
after 2nd iteration of trial runs in Slovenia

THE EFFECTS OF THE TRIAL RUNS

The findings suggest how to use the tool as a part of a counselling process. They show its limitations, advantages and potentials in this context. Its uniqueness is that it is not intended to assess the youths. Instead, it promotes dialogue between NEETs and professionals. The tool supports self-evaluation of the NEETS, and it broadens the professionals' assessments of the NEETS.



The trial runs demonstrated that the online tool showed great promise regarding the individual pathways' processes and also revealed its shortcomings. The results from the trial runs across 3 countries have resulted in improving the content, linguistics and interface of the tool.

The 3 national tools have become more localized and adapted to the needs of the NEETs and professionals. The national tools overlap widely, but differ also in areas such as the concretion of the indicators and the taxonomy scale. At the same time, the graphic design was applicable for all countries. Possibly most important, the 6 dimensions seem to be universal for understanding vocational maturity.

The tool is obviously not suitable for all NEETs and not at all stages of the youth progression taxonomy. It is designed for a specific purpose during the counselling process. It cannot be a substitute for a trusting counsellor-counselee relationship and other methods. But it can play an important supportive role in a counselling process, where NEETs and counsellors have a common understanding of the purpose of the tool and how it can help to promote the NEETs' vocational maturity.

6 cross-national findings

- 1

The tool works best when professionals are well-prepared and the tool is well explained to the NEETs before its use.
- 2

Contextualization of the tool to the individual NEET's situation, past and future is essential. Contextualization can only be undertaken by the professional, not in the tool itself.
- 3

The tool should not be the first method to be used for NEETs in the beginning of their progression towards vocational maturity. Trust and respect is needed between the NEET and the professional, and the tool by itself cannot create trust between a counselee and a professional.
- 4

A setting for clarifying eventual questions from the NEETs during the use of the tool, results in less misinterpretation and more meaningful results in the individual profiles.
- 5

NEETs see the tool as useful and constructive in identifying new insights regarding their strengths and needs. It helps them reflect more deeply on their education and career pathways.
- 6

There is a need for continued training, update and exchange on how to implement the online tool by professionals in order to guide and support the NEETs.

A COHERENT TRAINING CONCEPT

As one of the results from the analysis "Needs of the NEETs and needs of the professionals" (p. 2), a set of necessary competences was outlined for professionals working with NEETs in cross-professional settings.

The identified set of competences was transformed into a generic set of short training modules, which can be adapted to local needs and conditions and conducted in a flexible way.

TRAINING MODULES FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH NEETS


The training concept is a modular program for training professionals working with young NEETs, especially when working towards their inclusion into education or employment in a sustainable way, and at the same time aiming to support them in achieving their personal goals.

The professionals participating in the training can be youth counsellors, employment counsellors, rehabilitation services experts, social workers, social administrators, relevant teachers and counsellors in VET, relevant experts from primary schools, career guidance counsellors, and others.

The training concept aims to strengthen the professionals' competencies regarding their methods and approaches to work with NEETs. In addition, the training aims to strengthen the local cross-professional and cross-organizational cooperation.

The training curriculum includes 4 modules with the following focus areas:

Module 1) The competences and profile of a 'scout'	Module 2) The cross-professional and cross-organizational cooperation when working with NEETs
Module 3) NEETs' individual pathways – didactics	Module 4) The method and tool for identifying vocational maturity

 youth-it.cool/2021/01/training-modules-for-professionals

The modules were outlined with learning outcomes and, after this, they were concretized by experts in Slovenia, Iceland and Denmark to meet the needs of the professionals in the respective countries.

From this platform, the YIT partner organizations prepared and implemented 14 local trainings for more than 200 participants between May and December 2020. More trainings are scheduled for 2021. The content and methods were adapted to local conditions and possibilities in the 3 countries. The modules were carried out face-to-face and online, also according to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Researchers from The University of Hamburg quality-assured the entire process.

4 TRAINING MODULES

The modules include suggested learning materials, references and training methods, some of the learning materials were co-produced by participants as results from local trainings.

Module 1)

The competences and profile of a 'scout'

This module supports relevant organizations in identifying professionals for the role of the scout and the needs for the empowerment of these professionals.

The professionals and organisations supporting the NEETs on their pathways must be aware of the impact of the scout's role on the NEETs. It is crucial for a professional to identify own strengths and weaknesses regarding the needed skills and competences, as outlined in the scout competence profile (see pp. 6-7). The role of the scout is addressed in all 4 modules.

The participants will identify their needs for upgrading their skills in order to develop a professional scout role. In their own organizational and national context, the professionals will also define steps they need to take in order to implement the scout role into the NEET support-system. They will achieve an understanding of typical inter-role and intra-role conflicts related for the scout function and its implication for their professional work.

" Every day is different when working with NEETs, there are always new challenges. The scout-work helps you to meet these challenges.

- Webinar in Iceland

Module 2)

Cross-professional and cross-organizational cooperation when working with NEETs

Module 2 focuses on organizational and cooperational aspects and capacities. The module aims to raise mutual awareness of different roles and expectations of the professionals working with NEETs. This also includes the identification of conditions for forming a sustainable cross-professional and cross-organizational collaboration.

Obstacles must be overcome, and this involves dealing with interfaces between organizations and professionals as well as outlining different methods for handling these interfaces.

In this context, the professionals can contribute to their local teams:

- by identifying when the individual NEETs need support and from whom
- by designing form, manner and content of continuous cooperation
- by focusing on capacities
- by designing common elements during the individual pathways of the NEETs

The counsellors appreciated very much that they were able to exchange experiences and good practices as they normally don't have this kind of opportunity very often.

- Training in Slovenia

The success of the training depends on how the module is adapted to the national and organizational context of the participants and on local cross-professional and cross-organizational representation in the training.

Module 3)

NEETs' individual pathways – didactics

Module 3 focuses on exchange of approaches and methods, when designing individual pathways to support and guide the NEETs on their way to achieve their career goals for education and employment, respectively (see pp. 10-11).

This involves

- the recognition and knowledge of different counselling methods for supporting NEETs on their pathways, especially during transition phases
- different ways to set up a pathway
- a mutual understanding of and agreement on data to collect in order to identify the NEETs' progression

The different professionals from different organizations will work on creating a common didactic framework for working with NEETs. The participants align to the profile of a young person's life experiences, competences and needs. This results in an individual pathway as a product of cooperation between the professionals from different organizations, with different roles, etc.

The individual pathways relate to a taxonomy with indicators to monitor the NEETs' progression towards vocational maturity (p. 4).

Module 4)

The method and tool for identifying vocational maturity

The main aim of this module is to offer the professionals a tool for supporting the identification and development of vocational maturity of NEETs.

A proper use of the tool depends on familiarity with the concept of vocational maturity and its 6 dimensions, as outlined in YIT (p. 14). Among other aspects, the relationship between educational readiness and vocational maturity must be specified in the context of national systems.

The professionals learn

- the technical use of the tool
- how to follow ethical guidelines and pedagogical recommendations for using the tool
- how to use the tool in different settings
- how to concretize and how to contextualize the indicators for the 6 criteria

" The trainer's examples from his own practice could create an understanding of how to contextualize the indicators of the tool.

- Webinar in Denmark

The progression taxonomy and the model for designing individual pathways for NEETs meant an added value for the participants. It is easier for professionals to identify the needs of the NEETs when 'checking' their own understanding across organizations.

- Training in Slovenia

HOW TO PLAN LOCAL TRAINING

The training program can be transferred, adjusted and implemented in any local environment where needs for upskilling professionals working with NEETs arise.

// During and after each training, the modules were evaluated by the trainers and the participants. The results led to optimizations of the next trainings. The variety of options, depending on the needs of the local target groups, is illustrated by the differences in implementation of the trainings in Denmark, Iceland, and Slovenia.

Experts from Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (2020)

Guidelines for the preparation of the training can be found in the concept for the training modules for professionals working with NEETs supporting documents – freely available.

youth-it.cool/2021/01/training-modules-for-professionals

When preparing a training plan based on specific learning outcomes as described on pp. 20-21, it is strongly recommended to become familiar with the models and methods, outlined in this brochure, as well as with the proposed literature.

Senior advisors Simona Knavs and Polona Prosen Šprajc, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (2020), in cooperation with experts from Denmark, Iceland and Slovenia

Note!

The learning outcomes are based on the assumption that this is the first time the learners are introduced to a certain topic. Thus, the needs and given competencies of the local professionals should be taken into account.

The national and organizational context is also very important, when preparing the training.

It is possible to choose to implement a single module, several modules or all of them. It is also possible to use the modules as a coherent training program, possibly leading to a certificate, for example. Another experience points to the possibility of integrating one or more modules into accredited programs for professionals.

The trainers are free to combine, add or remove the suggested learning outcomes, depending on the needs of their target group and the goal they set for the training.



THE VOICE OF RESEARCH

The project partners in YIT worked according to research-based quality assurance that had the purpose of guiding them through continuous (self-)evaluation. The quality of the developed instruments and concepts shows that these aids have been used successfully. In addition, quality assurance was also about summative assessment of the outputs and their interrelationship.

All in all, a high level of quality was ensured for each output. Specific quality criteria had been defined for each output, concretized with indicators that showed the extent to which the quality criteria were met. Quality was measured from this quantitative and qualitative baseline.

At the same time, it was important to ensure coherence between the work fields and the outputs and thus the quality of the overall project. Here it was important that the developed instruments were able to match the situational conditions, which means that they made sense and worked in the partner countries Denmark, Iceland and Slovenia. But even more, universal findings had to be identified that could be valid on European level.

THE OVERALL ASSESSMENT

// Through the intensive and well-structured cooperation between the partners in YIT as well as their different perspectives, results were achieved that have the potential to improve the situation of the NEETs in Europe.

- Prof. Dr. Werner Kuhlmann, The University of Hamburg (2020)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from YIT can be taken into consideration in many countries, although uniform recommendations for all countries are not possible. Countries are highly diverse regarding their laws, welfare systems, cultures etc., which as a whole influence approaches and work with the NEETs group.

YIT's results and experiences will be processed as policy briefs. The policy briefs will be short, specific, action-oriented and designated to each of the work fields. They target low level decision makers with the aim of fast implementation, 'plug and play' policy. Together with the analysis "The needs of the NEETs and the needs of the professionals" (p. 2), the catalogue of policy briefs form YIT's knowledge platform. The aim is to deliver information to aid decision-making, not to make prescriptions.

youth-it.cool/deliverables

BEHIND THE OUTCOMES

This brochure presents in short the seven intellectual outputs from the European Erasmus KA2 project “Youth in transition” (YIT), October 2018 – March 2021.

The intellectual outputs form a coherent concept, containing findings from empirical data and desk research, as well as models, methods and tools emerging out of practice-based work with NEETs and professionals in Denmark, Iceland and Slovenia. The cross-national production processes and their results were quality assured by researchers from the University of Hamburg.

The freely available materials offer expertise in scaffolding the most vulnerable sub-group of the NEETs on their pathways. These ‘young people on the edge’ are characterized by a complexity of personal and social problems, caused by psychological or physical diagnoses, socially disadvantaged backgrounds, social dysfunctionalities such as drugs and crime or other obstacles in life.

YIT focused on cross-professional support before and during the individual pathways of the NEETs, aligning their dreams with vocational maturity, with self-support via job or education as the final goal.

The brochure was coordinated and authored by vocational consultant Regina Lamscheck-Nielsen, Moeve, Denmark, a partnering organization in YIT. The author cooperated closely with experts from the partner organizations in the four countries.



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