

LifeComp for the Employability of Young NEETs State of Art and Best Practices

Portugal

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has highlighted the disparities between those who have access to a wide range of socioeconomic opportunities and those who do not. In this context, education is a critical tool for emancipation, particularly for young people from low-income families. However, when the opportunities available within a given territory are more limited, both educationally and in terms of future labor-market inclusion, situations such as neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) can occur much more easily. These are young people who do not work but have also given up on furthering their education. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation. In fact, the proportion of NEETs in the European Union increased by 11.6% in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the same period the previous year (Eurostat 2021). NEET status has proven to be a powerful tool for improving understanding of young people's vulnerabilities in terms of labor market participation and social inclusion. As an indicator, it has aided in redefining policy objectives concerning youth. Despite its rapid adoption in policy circles, the concept of NEET has been criticized in the past for the heterogeneity of the population it encompasses. While all NEETs share the common characteristic of being young people who are neither accumulating human capital nor experiencing labor-force participation, the various groups within this category have very different characteristics and needs.

Terminology

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

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

Human Success and Value

Within a larger context, research, institutions, youth programmes, and social work around youth NEET is done from the (implicit) assumption that to be successful in life, one needs to be in education, employment or training. As NEET is mostly used in accordance with a negative stigma, it cannot be argued that the term is neutral. Your definitions of success and value should be taken into account a-priori to working with and researching youth NEET. It could be argued that the focus on employment (education and training being regarded here as a means to the end of employment) is embedded in a larger neoliberal capitalist ideology of success. To problematize a youth NEET caring for a child and not “monetarily contributing to society”, for example, could be put into question by an alternative system that values care for others over capital. It should be taken into account that different views on the definition of success and human value are possible when deciding what the goals for projects are that aim to help youth NEET. And, that these definitions can vary strongly from person to person.

History and context

In Europe a focus on our individual responsibilities to take care of our own lives as human beings has been on the rise in the last decades. It has to be taken into account that individualisation of problems puts the attention towards individualised solutions. Regarding youth NEET, the disadvantage of

programmes focussing on individuals is that they leave out of sight the societal inequalities that are of a systemic nature and have a direct effect on who becomes a youth NEET at what moment. For example, inequalities in socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, schooling, family circumstances and (mental) health and wellbeing strongly correlate with the chances of having NEET status at one point in life. Inequality in our societies is not solved by having more and more programmes focussing on youth NEET. If at a structural, political, policy and institutional level these inequalities are not targeted, youth NEET will be the blood that keeps flowing if you don't stitch the wound first. One should consider focusing not only on the excluded, but also at the entities that do the excluding.

Intersections

The heterogeneity of youth NEET and societal inequality at the base of it leads to another complex issue that is at stake. When working with this topic, one should become aware of the inequalities and different ways of exclusion that are at work in society and intersect with one another. Socio-economic status has been mentioned as a factor when risking youth NEET status, but class intersects with gender and ethnicity (and many more) meaning that we have to understand differences in risk for a white, low-SES pregnant woman compared to a non-binary person of colour, for example. It is imperative to take these differences and intersections into account when working with youth NEET to refrain from homogenising youth and their separate circumstances and, most importantly, to be able to identify different needs. It has been commented upon that the umbrella term NEET is leaving those behind that are most in need of help. As policy makers often focus on bringing down numbers, it's (unintended) effect could be that programmes are focussed on helping short-term youth NEET with relatively simple problems. Long-term youth NEET with multiple, complex problems are then overlooked, excluded and become invisible (Bekker & Klosse, 2016).

Vulnerable Groups within Society

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

Methodology

One of the ethical considerations to take into account when researching groups of people is who is able to speak up and why. Especially in the event that vulnerable groups are the focus of research, researchers have to be very careful and aware of power relations, stigma and the possibility of voicing ones' experiences and opinions. Having space to speak up is a direct consequence of power structures and inequalities in societies, and it should be noted that it is very hard to navigate these power structures. To 'give a voice' to someone, for example, could be seen as very problematic, as in the giving and receiving space to speak up, the existing power relations are reiterated, instead of resolved. Another issue at stake are the personal biases of the researchers conducting the research. All of the ethical considerations mentioned here as well as personal contexts and beliefs influence the researcher's choices. For example, beliefs about what constitutes the notion of success in life will influence the choices that are made for the best practices that are shown in this output. The researchers for this output are all white, are primarily cis and straight, and have a degree in education. This has had an effect on the methods, the results and the recommendation.

1. The INKEY Project

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing labour market vulnerabilities and disengagement among young people, leaving further behind those youngsters that have been struggling to manage their transition from education to the labour market. After reaching the lowest point for a decade in 2019, the pandemic brought the number of youth neither in Employment nor Education or Training in the EU up to 13.7% in 2020.

Social distancing, restrictions, and isolation have profoundly affected the engagement, connection, and empowerment actions sought by the EU Youth Strategy, bringing young NEETs further out of the main channels through which human and social capital can be accumulated, like education and work. Innovative interventions to foster Young NEETs' personal and social development are essential to build resilience and equip youth with the skills to positively challenge themselves in a world that constantly changes its rules, and therefore reach the ambitious target of a 9%-NEETs rate by 2030, set by the European Commission in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

Personal, Social, and Learning to Learn competencies can play a decisive role in preparing young NEETs to develop the right skills for a changing world of work. In this context, the "INKEY" project aims to offer young NEETs new motivating and stimulating programs to acquire the key competence stressed in the LifeComp Framework by developing engaging digital tools that embed game dynamics, mechanics, and components, and online communities of practice.

General Objectives

- To enhance the employability of Young NEETs.

- To increase the quality and effectiveness of the empowerment actions of the organizations and professionals working with young NEETs.

Specific Objectives

- To develop tailored learning programs to enhance young NEETs' engagement and motivation in learning.
- To increase the key competencies of young NEETs, to let them unleash their dynamic potential, self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, cope with complexity, be thriving individuals, responsible social agents, and reflective lifelong learners.
- To equip youth leaders, youth workers and trainers with knowledge, skills and innovative tools to empower young NEETs.

This first project result aims at analysing the existing status and the successful practices in the application of the LifeComp Framework in education and training programs for young people and NEETs. The report consists of the analysis of at least 20 semi-structured interviews and a collection of best practices on the implementation of the LifeComp Framework in curricula and courses in formal and non-formal education.

2. Youth Disengagement and Unemployment: The Portuguese Context

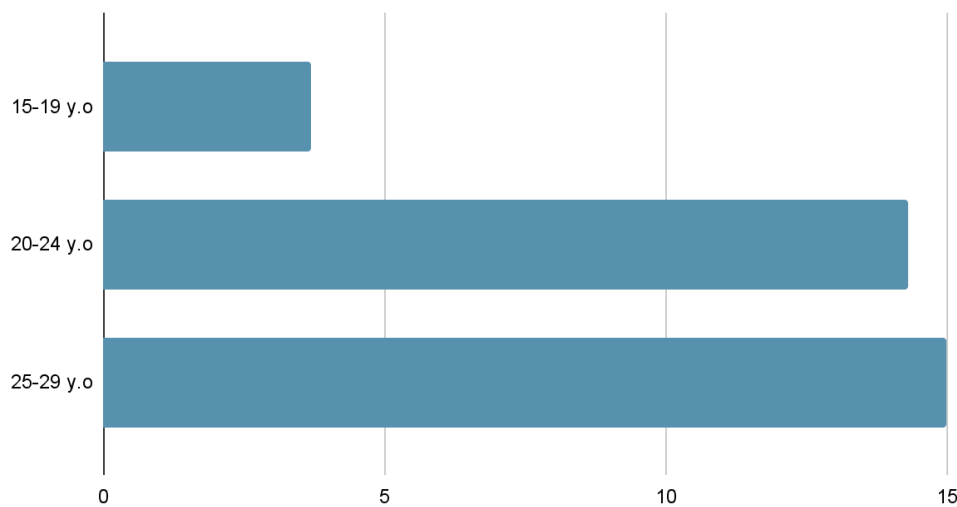
2.1 NEETs: numbers and geography of the phenomenon

Considering NEETs, young people between 15 and 34 years old who are not studying, working or in professional training, since 2013, the rate of NEETs in Portugal was in decline, going from 17.1% to 13.2% in 2016, showing a reduction in the effects of the crisis period of 2010. However, with the emergence of the SARS Covid-19 pandemic, it is estimated that 11% of 18- to 29-year-olds have lost their jobs. According to Eurostat, youth unemployment increased by 2.7 percentage points, from 14.9% in March 2020 to 17.6% in September 2020, while among the adult population (aged 25 and over), it increased by 0.8 percentage points from 5.7% to 6.5%.

When analyzing the difference between genders, the data shows there's no significant difference in Portugal, as NEET women (11.1%) are approximately the same as NEET men (11.0%), but there's a substantial difference when focusing on the place of birth: NEET's that were not born in Portugal are 14,5%, while the national borned NEET's remain at 10,8%. Besides that, in the year 2021, it is observed that there is a difference in the rate for Portuguese residents of cities (9.4%), towns and suburbs (10.4%) and rural areas (11.3%). This reveals that young people in certain territories are more vulnerable to becoming NEETs due to lack of opportunities in education and work.

Also, one could expect that the NEET's would decrease as they grew older, as they have been supported by several initiatives and programmes (Youth Guarantee), however in Portugal the data shows that the number of NEET's grow with age:

NEETS incidence rate according to age group



It was also found that, in Portugal, unlike other European Union countries, NEETs have a higher rate of schooling, bringing to light the lack of mechanisms for listening to young people and making them largely invisible in the design, implementation and evaluation process of the Monitoring System. The data also show that for many there is no institutional support of any kind (employment center or other public entities associated with the employment service or educational institution), being normal to find employment mainly through family networks, by direct contact with the employer and in response to advertisements (Oliveira et al, 2018).

Regarding the NEETs impact in the society, it is seen that their consequences can be in two aspects: economical and personal/social. The OECD (2013) reports that long periods of unemployment have harmful effects on old age, especially on NEETs, by lowering income levels in the future, the acquisition

of skills, contributing to job dissatisfaction and low levels of health. Also, individuals with low capital and skills are exposed to low-quality and unstable jobs and possibly social exclusion. It is estimated that young people who became NEETs in their youth are more likely to have difficult relationships, drug and substance abuse, involvement in criminal activities and disengagement from life and society.

2.2 The labour market: current scenario and forecasts

In the last two decades, Portugal has faced the challenge of seeing its young population decrease, delaying a progressive decline. This has led to a reconfiguration of the demographic structure with a growth in life expectancy outcomes, a low fertility rate, as well as an exodus of youth, especially during the post-2008 economic and financial crisis (Vieira et al., 2017). During this post-crisis period (2008-2014), Portugal underwent profound changes such as the austerity program imposed by international creditors (loan program) and a strong impact on the patterns and dynamics of its labour market, marked by high levels of unemployment, especially among young people. (COST, 2020)

Portugal's labour market has characteristics that distinguish it from other European Union countries. Most of the productive structure is carried out by micro, small and medium-sized companies, many of which have a standard for hiring human resources. In addition, despite the extension of compulsory education in 2009, Portugal remains among the European countries that have lower educational levels among the active population, making the country vulnerable to conjunctural factors. (Ferreira and Vieira, 2018).

According to the European Labor Force Survey, before the Covid-19 pandemic, Portugal's activity rate was 75.8%, higher than the EU-28 rate of

74.2%. For the second half of 2020, there is a drop in this number to 72%. Besides that, at the end of June 2020, there was a 36% increase in the number of unemployed registered in the employment center, compared to the same date in the year 2019. (Eurostat, 2020)

When looking at youth, according to Eurostat, individuals aged between 15 and 24 are the most affected by unemployment both in Portugal and in the EU27. From 2019 to 2021, unemployment rates rose again due to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, growing by up to 5.1 percentage points in 2021 than in 2019. When looking at the age group from 25 to 29 years old, it is presented an unemployment rate lower than the 15 to 24 age group, however, always above the general unemployment averages. Analyzing the total unemployment rate, measured by the population aged 15 to 74, there is an inversion of the values of Portugal's rates compared to the European Union 2018, where Portugal is above the European average.

Also, the rate of underutilization of work in 2022, an indicator composed of "unemployed population, underemployment of part-time workers, inactive people looking for a job but not available and inactive people available but not looking for a job" stood at 11.5%, minus 0.1 p.p. than in the previous month, 12.4% in July 2021. (INE, 2022)

For the future scenario in the labour market, some things are relevant such as population ageing, the growing demand for education and technological development. According to CIP (Confederação Empresarial de Portugal), the ageing of the population will create a demand for additional health services, especially home care and health expenditures. In response to this condition, it is estimated that this will lead to the creation of 120,000 new jobs. With the increase in income in the economy, it is also expected that there will be an increase in expenditure on education. This implies high enrollment rates, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, and a drop in the student-teacher ratio as the quality of education improves. As the population

is ageing over time, there will be a limited increase in the demand for labour in the education sector due to fewer students.

In addition, robotics, artificial intelligence and machine learning will play an increasing role in the economy, causing companies to increase demand for specific workers such as software engineers, mathematicians and electronics technicians. It is estimated 97,000 new jobs are created due to automation.

2.3 The National Skills System

The Portugal ranks 24th in the 2022 release remaining at the same position as in 2020 and occupying the last position in the “middle-achieving” group for the **2022 European Skills Index (ESI)**¹, Cedefop’s composite indicator measuring the performance of EU skills systems, particularly countries’ “distance to the ideal” performance in three domains:

- **skills development**, representing the education and training activities of the country and the immediate outputs of that system in terms of the skills developed;
- **skills activation**, including indicators of the transition from education to work, together with labour market activity rates for different groups of the population;
- **skills matching**, representing the degree of successful utilisation of skills and the extent to which skills are effectively matched in the labour market.

Portugal ranks 27th in skills development, with an average performance in the training and tertiary education sub-pillar, where the best result is obtained in both “reading, maths & science scores (aged 15)” and “recent

¹ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-skills-index>

training” (rank 16th). The worst score is in “upper secondary education (and above)” where Portugal ranks 31st.

Portugal ranks 21st in skills activation. It obtains a very good score for the activity rate of the older cohort (25-54), where it ranks 5th, but the other indicators are in the lower half of the ranking (the lowest ranking being 25th in “recent graduates in employment”).

Portugal ranks 24th in skills matching. It has a good score in “low-waged earners (ISCED 5-8)”, ranking 6th, but it ranks in lower positions than 16th in all the other indicators in this pillar.

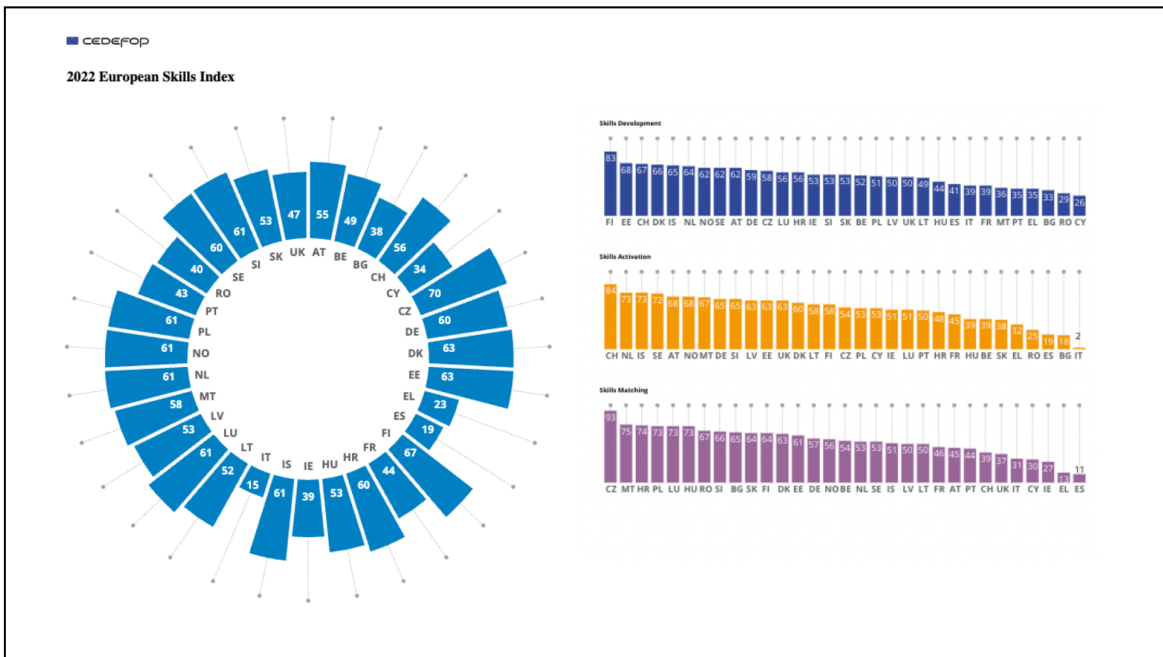


Fig. 2- 2022 European Skills Index (Source: Cedefop)

3. LifeComp: State of the Art in Portugal

3.1 The *personal, social and learning to learn* key competence in the Portuguese formal education system: recent evolutions of the Country's educational policies

The Exit Profile of Students² finishing mandatory schooling is, under these assumptions, a reference document for the organisation of the entire educational system, contributing to the convergence and articulation of decisions inherent to the various dimensions of curriculum development.

When considering and substantiating what is relevant, adequate and feasible in the context of the different decision levels, it is possible and desirable to find significant guidelines in this profile. It constitutes, therefore, the matrix for decisions to be adopted by educational managers and actors at the level responsibility for educational policies and educational establishments. The purpose is to contribute to the organisation and management of the curriculum and also to the definition of strategies, methodologies and didactic pedagogical procedures to be used in teaching practice.

² Direcção Geral da Educação, Ministério da Educação (2017) Perfil dos Alunos à Saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória, Available in: https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/perfil_dos_alunos.pdf

The document assumes a comprehensive, transversal and recursive nature. The scope of the Student Exit Profile respects the inclusive and multifaceted character of the school, ensuring that regardless of the educational paths taken, all knowledge is guided by explicit principles, values and vision, resulting from social consensus. The transversality is based on the assumption that each curricular area contributes to the development of all areas of competence considered in the Student Profile, with no place for a strict indexation of each one of them to specific curricular components and areas. The scope and transversality contribute to the recursive nature of this document, which consists of the possibility that, in each school year, its content and purposes are continuously summoned.



Fig. 3 - Framework for the Student's Exit Profile for the mandatory schooling system in Portugal

The framework for the Student's Exit Profile is structured in 3 main areas: Principles, Skills, and Values, as shown in the following translated table:

Principles	Skills	Values
Learning	Languages and texts	Freedom
Inclusion	Information and Communication	Responsibility and Integrity
Stability	Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking	Citizenship and Participation
Adaptability and Daring	Reasoning and Problem solving	Excellence and Exigency
Coherence and Flexibility	Scientific, technical and technological knowledge	Curiosity
Sustainability	Interpersonal relationships	Reflection and Innovation
Humanist basis	Personal development and Autonomy	
Knowledge	Well-being, Health and Environment	
	Aesthetic and artistic Sensibility	
	Self, Conscience and Mastery of own Body	

Table - Framework for the Student's Exit Profile in Portugal main areas

This framework has been implemented nation wide, and the transversal nature of it's content originated a new nomenclature for the group of skills now named "Transversal Skills". As it's implementation and execution in Portugal involved all levels of school and VET, all subjects and courses, there's a wide use of the "transversal skills" nomenclature when referring to "Life Skills" or "Soft Skills".

The Personal, social and learning to learn competence is placed as the first column in the matrix of transversal skills to which the ministerial guidelines expressly refer, in line with the EU Council Recommendation on Key competencies for lifelong learning. Such competence is defined as follows:

The personal and social competence and the ability to learn to learn consist of the ability to reflect on oneself, to manage time and information effectively, to work constructively with others, to remain resilient and to manage one's own learning and own career. It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, foster one's physical and emotional well-being, maintain physical and mental health, as well as to be able to lead a health-conscious and life-oriented life. future, to empathize and manage the conflict in a favourable and inclusive context.

As the Portuguese Education Ministry spread the Student's Exit Profile framework instead of LifeComp, most education providers in Portugal use the national document instead of the EU LifeComp framework as basis for their work.

On one hand, the fact that all levels and all education providers aim for this framework, provides consistency and continuity of the educational progress for each young person. However, the fact that the Transversal Skills or Life Skills aren't considered in the evaluation of a particular group of subjects or levels of education/ training, they are often overlooked as teachers and trainers are pressured to prioritise goals and skills considered within the evaluated grids.

3.2 Experiences from the field: interviews with Portuguese teachers and trainers

For the INKEY project, Contextos interviewed a total of 23 participants either teachers or trainers, working on formal education or non-formal education settings, selected on the basis of experience in the field of soft skills development. The interviews aimed at collecting the participants' experiences and perspectives on obstacles and opportunities for implementing soft skills development experiences addressed to young people.

3.2.1 Composition of the group

The group was composed of no. 13 teachers working on formal education settings, both on traditional education system as well as VET; 6 trainers from VET for out of school and/or higher education; 4 educators from non-formal education settings, working on non-profit organisations.

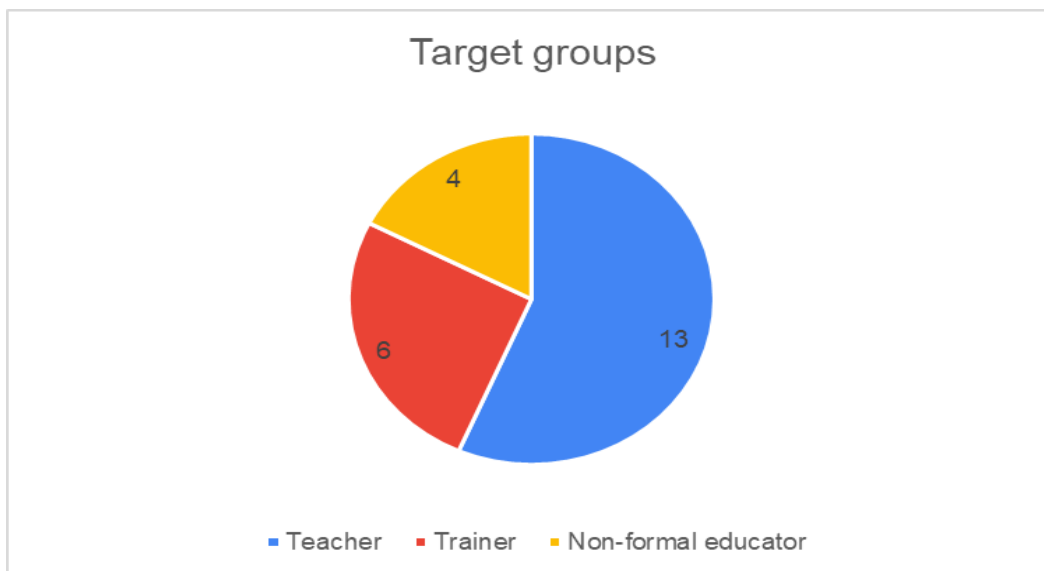


Fig.4 - Distribution of the Target group by professional profile

The large majority of respondents stated they were not familiar with the LifeComp Tool (78%), and only 22% had previous knowledge of the LifeComp tool. Although, on further inquiries throughout the interviews, it was made clear that all participants had vast knowledge and experience working on the development of all competences found in LifeComp, meaning that portuguese participants are very much aware of the content but not really with the tool itself.

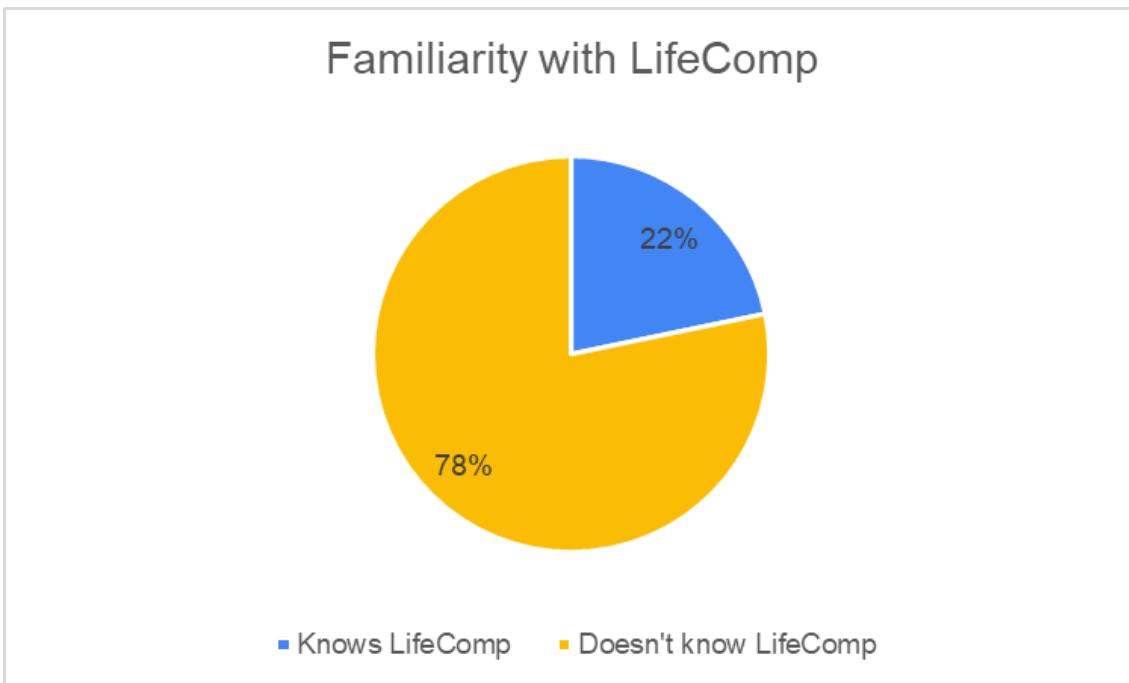


Fig. 5 - Distribution of the Familiarity with LifeComp framework

3.2.2 Questions of the interviews

Participants were asked the following questions:

1. In your opinion, how do soft skills training programs enhance or contribute to the integration of NEETs into the labour market?

2. What are the skills you think contribute the most to the integration of the NEETs into the labour market?
3. What do you think are the main barriers to implementing soft skills training programs in your field?
4. How do you motivate young people to participate in soft skills development programs?
5. What kind of feedback do you usually receive from participants? Do you think they feel that soft skills training programs are useful for them?
6. INKEY explores how LifeComp can be implemented in formal and non-formal training programs for young people. What kind of training materials/approaches would you be interested in having access to?
7. Do you think soft skills and the skills set out in LifeComp can be trained in blended mode?

3.2.3 Summary of the responses

This section summarises the main responses collected during the interviews to the main seven questions highlighted in section 3.2.2.

1 In your opinion, how do soft skills training programs enhance or contribute to the integration of NEETs into the labour market?

- More practical methodologies of teaching and training will shorten the gap between the school/education setting to the real world waiting in labour market
- Providing youth with the skills to engage with their own education programs and building a life project, promoting participatory methodologies, critical thinking and growth

mentality

- Soft skills, particularly communication and teamwork, as well as all personal skills needed to connect with employers and coworkers
- Providing young NEET's with skills to set goals and collaborate, negotiate and compromise, reinforce resilience and problem solving skills for a better management and tolerance of frustration and adapt to change.
- Providing young NEETs guidance and counselling during the transition period and or when their already in a long term NEET situation, offering an holistic approach to their individual case that can focus both on education and employability but also on the several issues a NEET person may face: housing, health, being a care-taker for other family members, special needs, migrant status, etc.
- Promote training programs and more practical educational programs, that involves other stakeholders like employers and policy makers, with the flexibility to adapt rapidly to labour market as well as to adapt to young people's
- Young NEET's are a very diverse group, and different NEET's show different gaps in their skillset and personal development. Providing them with a program that assesses their actual needs and is flexible enough to adapt to each subgroup of NEET's characteristics and needs would be vital to ensure the success of the integration process into labour market
- Providing young NEET's the realities of the labour market

include competitiveness, fast changing contexts that demand a life-long learning ability and capacity to embrace change.

- Non-formal education experiences, as well as internships, exchanges, and other hands-on methodologies to develop NEET's skills and put them into reality.

2 What are the skills you think contribute the most to the integration of the NEETs into the labour market?

The top 5 skills identified by respondents as the most important for NEETs transition into the labour market are: **communication** (43%); **learn to learn** skills (35%); **resilience** (26%); **team work** (26%); and **critical thinking** (17%). The Fig.6 shows the word cloud built by content analysis of the responses of the interviewees, in which the size of the words correspond to the frequency of responses.



Fig. 6 - Word cloud: Most important skills for NEET's to transition into the labour market. (size of the words according with frequency of responses)

3 What do you think are the main barriers to implementing soft skills training programs in your field?

The responses gathered can be grouped into three main clusters:

1. responses focusing on **young people's perspectives**;
2. responses focusing on **education and training providers' perspectives**;
3. responses focusing on **mixed or other issues**;

Cluster 1 - Young people's perspectives

- Lack of engagement and motivation from young NEET's to be involved in the trainings and/or programs made available to them
- NEET's are young people who are outside the system, and

reaching out to them is outside the scope of action of the education and VET system.

- The diversity of the NEET population is not taken into account. An holistic approach for each young NEET that considers their full reality (health, housing, family context, transport, etc) and their personal choices.
- Lack of knowledge about the alternative programs available in the whole region outside of a young person's school district. When the student's profile doesn't match the program offered in a specific school district, alternatives for transport and support to enrol into other more suitable programs do not exist.

Cluster 2 - Education and training providers' perspectives

- Traditional systems for education and training too rigid and not flexible enough to adapt and keep up with the fast pace of changes in the labour market on one side, and on the other to the generational differences and new challenges young people present
- Too little space for innovation on methodologies and techniques. Fixed curriculum, evaluation system, load of administrative tasks block teachers and trainers from adapting on-demand to the emergent needs of their students/trainees and focus on transversal skills³
- Lack of knowledge and soft skills on the educators/teachers/trainers as well as outdated pedagogical methodologies applied to the LifeComp scope.

³ Transversal skills - the Portuguese education and VET system nomenclature for Life skills.

Cluster 3 - Mixed or other issues

- Lack of funding and/or misplaced funding: to support projects and multidisciplinary teams to work with young NEET's.
- Policy and system: more proximity with employers, and the results of this joint work and educational effort, should translate into policy and system changes to allow good practices to thrive.

4 How do you motivate young people to participate in soft skills development programs?

- Using communication styles and techniques that are adequate and stimulating for young people.
- Using online and digital tools bringing dynamics and involvement to the learning experience: gaming and gamification, video, social media, etc.
- Focusing on each young person needs: depending on their level of demotivation the approach must be adaptable.
- Investing on positive relationships with the young NEET, using positive reinforcement and incentives especially for those highly demotivated and distrusting of the system.
- Change the rules and outside the box thinking: no testing evaluation; allow students/trainees to experience Life outside the classroom and beyond the school manuals and curriculum; non-formal education methods; informal settings.

- Empowering young people for their own educational path: incentives for participation and shared experiences between peers; international exchange programs and mobility; etc.
- Real integration of theoretical teaching and more practical real-life experiences, with paid integrated internships and other practical activities that build a proximity relationship between future employers and education providers.
- Funding the young NEET's on basic life needs: housing, health, food, transport...

5 What kind of feedback do you usually receive from participants? Do you think they feel that soft skills training programs are useful for them?

Only one respondent (coordinator of training programs for traditional teachers) stated to have no knowledge on this topic. Overall, the interviewed shared that the more practical programs and activities present consistent high levels of positive feedback. It was possible to distinguish three characterizations of this positive feedback:

- 17 respondents stated that VET programs, practical activities and methodologies present high levels of positive feedback.
- 4 respondents stated the continuity of the team of education providers and the program consistently allow the transformation from an initial negative feedback into a positive feedback (mainly the next school year).
- 2 respondents identify the more theoretical and traditional education system as the source of consistent negative feedback, that only transforms into positive when the students

reach the internship and/or are presented with a real-life practical experience.

6 INKEY explores how LifeComp can be implemented in formal and non-formal training programs for young people. What kind of training materials/approaches would you be interested in having access to?

- Group dynamic activities and exercises
- Hybrid methodologies and team work
- Digital tools and methodologies; gamification: quizzes, games, etc.
- Video tutorials and video testimonials from students/trainees from previous years
- Handbooks
- Alternative methodologies and a network of multidisciplinary professionals in education (youth workers, teachers, trainers, social workers, etc) to promote shared good practices and interventions
- Materials and resources to show the impact of each profession and/or job in the community
- Emotional, motivational and professional coaching methodologies
- Training for teachers and trainers from the traditional educational system, to help change from a “focus on the teacher paradigm” into a “focus on the young person

paradigm”, with more experienced based learning, developing a co-creation of knowledge culture essential for the interface of a school curriculum and a professional profile.

- Training for education providers on methodologies and tools to build and maintain strategic partnerships with different stakeholders from all sectors: public, civil society and NGO's and private sector.

7 Do you think soft skills and the skills set out in LifeComp can be trained in blended mode?

Unanimously the respondents stated that the hybrid methodologies, blending the online and offline learning models are the most adaptable to young NEET's needs.

However, all stated that the emotional and social development of LifeComp skills will not be as successful and efficient without the in person contact and group interactions.

- Online is useful to develop an individual, personalised LifeComp program.
- Presential and group settings provide the natural human context, relationships and emotional connections needed to fully develop each young person's individual set of life skills.

4. The Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence: Portuguese Best practices

Oficina Mar Vivo

2020-2022

Author: Fundação António Aleixo

Goals of the best practice

Oficina MarVivo (OMaVi) aims to implement a pilot to combat the problem of youth unemployment in the parish of Quarteira, through the implementation of a set of social training actions, where the participants acquire interpersonal skills through experiences groups, having as a vehicle of integration the nautical carpentry and related activities in the fishing port of Quarteira. This aims to build mixed group works (including women), in a series of initiatives to promote the discovery of collective skills, through the construction of learning communities.

Target Group / Beneficiaries

- Unemployed youth and adults;
- NEET, in english, “not in education, employment, or training”;

- PIEF: Programa Integrado de Educação e Formação - "Integrated Education and Training Program"
- DLD: Desempregados de longa duração - "Long-term unemployed";
- Unemployed registered with the employment center.

Resources and skills needed to carry out the best practice

The Parish Council of Quarteira, as a social investor, provides support, not only through the logistics of transport and packaging of materials, raw materials and tools, as well as in the promotion and dissemination of the Oficina Marvivo.

Methodology

Learning Communities

RESIDENCES - Twice a week participants acquire shipbuilding skills with tutoring from a shipbuilder.

VISITS - Conducting visits to different shipyards in the national territory in order to get to know other realities and ways of working.

8 WORKSHOPS - Carrying out different training actions such as: Introduction to carpentry; fiberglass arrangements; boat painting; basics of locksmithing; basics of soldering; woods and finishing; use of carpentry tools and machines.

Success Factors

OmaVi is a project of the António Aleixo Foundation (FAA), a private institution, committed to contributing to the development of the Municipality of Loulé, pursuing social, cultural, artistic and scientific objectives.

Competences of the LifeComp addressed

- Collaboration (Engagement in group activities and team work acknowledging).
- Flexibility (Ability to manage transitions and face challenges);

- Managing Learning (the planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing of one's own learning).

**Related
resources /Link**

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CarpintariaNautica

Mud@ki E8G

2016 - Now

Author: DOINA - Associação de Migrantes no Algarve

Goals of the best practice

Mud@ki E8G aims to promote social integration, transversally supporting children and young people between 6 and 25 years old and their families, from vulnerable social contexts, residing in Almancil council, through the promotion non-formal training, training and acquisition of knowledge with a view to encouraging and promoting school success and facilitating civic and community participation, for 2 years, involving 160 participants

Target Group / Beneficiaries

Children and young people between 6 and 25 years old and their families, residents in Almancil, coming from vulnerable social contexts.

Resources and skills needed to carry out the best practice

- 1) High number of students with risky school careers - school failure, absenteeism and indiscipline in the Almancil School Group. Also the high rates of early school leaving in secondary education, accentuated by the absence of secondary education in the parish of Almancil.
- 2) Weak participation and responsibility of parents in the educational process of their children and lack of opportunities for parental training.
- 3) Low civic and community participation on the part of children and young people, barriers to intercultural dialogue and weak social cohesion, exacerbated by the cultural and linguistic barriers of immigrants and the large inflow and outflow of immigrants (turnover of the immigrant population),

difficulties in think and act as good citizens in terms of community spaces and respect for others.

4) Lack of adequate responses to the social, cultural and economic context of children and young people, adjusted to the needs of families.

Methodology

Regarding the pedagogic methodology used on the planning and implementation of the non-formal activities, we have the Escola Moderna method as an inspiration, assuming as central values of creativity, reflection, respect for individuality, autonomy, the use of technology, fun and collaboration. The activities we promote are the following: support for study, speaking Portuguese, do you speak english?, challenges and games, online study, Mud@ki comunica, Digital world, inter_cultures, volunteering, coaching, mindfulness, youth circle, sport, youth assembly, make your music, family-school-community mediation, criativ_art, liberta-te, vocational guidance.

Success Factors

Internal: Communication style and interpersonal relationship with beneficiaries, access to artistic material (music studio, painting, dance), space organised by participants, active participants in planning activities and feedback.

Competences of the LifeComp addressed

We approach the 9 personal, social and learn-to-learn competences.

Related resources /Link

Facebook and Instagram
<https://www.instagram.com/projeto.mudaki.e8g/>

#StandOut

2021 - Now

Author: Associação Sê Mais Sê Melhor

Goals of the best practice

The social problem that the present project intends to intervene in is the employability and professional integration of young people in a situation (or at risk) of social exclusion, with a priority focus on combating the difficulty that these young people have in entering the labour market and in having consistent, regular and lasting professional experiences. The #StandOut aims to be an informal space open to the young community where the focus is on the young person, their uniqueness and needs with the purpose of developing a personalized intervention and training plan that enhances their confidence and skills with a view to employability

Target Group / Beneficiaries

Young people between the ages of 16 and 30 in a situation (or at risk) of social exclusion in the municipality of Faro.

Resources and skills needed to carry out the best practice

The promotion of the #StandOut project is based on a previous survey of needs and realities about employability, based on two perspectives on this issue: the perspective of young people and the perspective of region/locality.

From the perspective of young people between the ages of 16 and 30 in a situation (or risk) of social exclusion, when talking about employability it is important to highlight:

- Characteristics and challenges inherent to this age group.
- Situations of marginalization and discrimination.
- Multiple deprivation situations.
- Non-existent or precarious family and social support network;

- Difficulty in accessing information, services and social responses.
- Beneficiaries of RSI or other social benefits and covered by the Social Action of the County.
- Low levels of self-esteem and personal identification.
- Life paths marked by delinquency, criminality and others deviant behaviours.
- Difficulty in integrating the labor market and the existence of precarious professional experiences.

From the perspective of the Algarve region and the Municipality of Faro, it is important to reflect on the following elements:

- Risk of poverty or social exclusion rate in the Algarve area is above the national average.
- Increase in the number of young people in the region and in the Municipality.
- Increase in migratory flows and in the immigrant population in the region and in the Municipality.
- “Young NEET” phenomenon.
- Alternative teaching modalities with records of failure, retention and school dropout in the Municipality.
- The CPCJ of Faro is one of the Commissions at regional level with the highest procedural volume global.
- Existence of social houses and peripheral communities in Faro;
- Conditionalisms and dynamics inherent to the reality of the municipality “Urban vs. Rural”.

Thus, given the difficulty that young people in a situation (or at risk) of exclusion have in entering the job market and in having professional experiences consistent, regular and lasting, the proposed solution aims to reduce the risks and the dynamics inherent to their

social situation, provide support, guidance and monitoring and facilitating experiences in the employability field.

Methodology

#StandOut foresees 3 intervention phases:

1) #Reach_Out: the first moment of contact between the young and the project, this can be done on its own initiative or through a referral by a partner entity. This first phase includes a screening of the needs and expectations of the young person and an individual assessment of its singularities, which allows later to define an employability project and design a personalized intervention plan with strategies and actions suited to your profile.

2) #(Em)power_Up: after defining the intervention plan, a new phase in the process that will go through the training and empowerment of the young, using the non-formal education methodology to acquiring skills and confidence needed in the field of employability.

To this end, the intervention will be based on the training of Soft Skills, on the dynamization of Coaching and Vocational Guidance, in the realization of Workshops for the Employability (focusing on essential aspects from the creation of a curriculum to the preparing for a job interview) and facilitating experiences and offer for Training, Job Shadowing, Volunteering and Mobility. These activities will have an individual component as well as to be carried out in a large group with other accompanied young people, that is, not only of the inherent characteristics of each activity, but also of the needs of each young person and their level of acquisition and/or development of certain skills. Nevertheless, whenever possible, efforts will be made to dynamize moments of meeting and sharing between the young people being accompanied, from the perspective of mentoring, peer education and motivational group.

3) #Go_n_Keep_Up: considering the young to be empowered and bringing together the strategies needed for employability challenges, the third and final phase intervention implies the facilitation of a matching between "Youth - Entity", helping the youth to enter the job market (considering the different modalities of insertion in active life, such as training, mobility, volunteering, employment, internships or other employment support and incentives) and accompanying them on an ongoing basis until a process is established considered sustainable in the context of their employability. In view of the problem presented and the proposed solution, it is considered as an indicator as a result the number of young people involved in training, mobility experiences, opportunities for volunteering or in the labor market (considering the different modalities of insertion into active life, such as employment, internships or other support and incentives for employment).

Success Factors

#StandOut is a project included in the +COESO Employment Program - Social Entrepreneurship (GAL), promoted by Sê Mais Sê Melhor- Association for the Promotion of Human Potential and co-financing by CRESC Algarve 2020, Portugal 2020 and European Union - European Social Fund.

It takes place from Monday to Friday, at the Bairro Office, with the transfer of these facilities by the Municipality of Faro. At the same time, the project has been to promote sessions also at the Pinheiro e Rosa Secondary School and at the Escola João de Deus Secondary School, with a view to accompanying young people inserted in school context.

In terms of the technical team, this is made up of a multidisciplinary team (1 Social and Organizational Psychologist, who also assumes the role of Coordination from the project; 1 Clinical Psychologist; and 1

Social Worker) with experience and training that facilitate the development in young people of skills, confidence, motivation and stimulation necessary for them to succeed in their professional life.

The focus on young people and their singularities and potential, the proximity to the community regarding the location of the project, extended working hours, continuous monitoring, the use of strategies such as Peer Education and the use of Non-Formal Education methodology are the things that stand out as innovative aspects of this project.

Particular emphasis is also given to partnerships, whether with institutions and services in the social, as with private and public entities. By involving different agents of the society in the construction of the training and employability path of these young people, it is not only possible to raise awareness of issues of social exclusion, but also enhance the success of these courses, creating opportunities, as well as crediting and valuing these young people in society and in the job market.

Competences of the LifeComp addressed

It is considered that all LifeComp competences involved in the 3 areas (personal area, social area and learning area) are addressed by the #StandOut, as it intends to be a holistic project that sees the young in uniqueness and needs, while developing skills that allow it to successfully deal with the different challenges inherent to the employability and all the changes that the job market and the professional experience suffer. Likewise, LifeComp's typology of "Sensitize-Understand-Act" may be, in its essence, correlated with the 3 intervention phases of this project (#Reach_Out; #(Em)Power_Up; and #Go_n_Keep_Up).

Related resources /Link

Facebook / Instagram: @standoutsemaismelhor
Website: <https://cutt.ly/dMttvNE>

Examples of project presentation at events:

- https://www.cmfarofaro.pt/upload_files/client_id_1/website_id_1/CLAS%20Faro%20standout.pdf
- Associative Technical Conferences (IPDJ): <https://regiao-sul.pt/sociedade/ipdj Algarve promote jornadas-tecnicas-associativas/559888>

Examples of project disclosure news:

- <https://www.sulinformacao.pt/2021/11/projeto-standout-surge-para-promover-potencial-dos-jovens-de-faro-em-exclusao-social/>
- <https://jornaldoalgarve.pt/faro-projeto-standout-vai-promover-a-empregabilidade-jovem>

Skill'IT

2020 - 2022

Author: TESE – Associação para o desenvolvimento pela Tecnologia, Engenharia, Saúde e Educação

Goals of the best practice

“Skill'IT” works as a digital bridge between young people and experiences to develop key competences for employability. Designed as a digital platform, accessible online, it brings together and makes available information on skills development opportunities. It also concentrates and disseminates information, which is dispersed now, about local experiences made available by different entities and to which young people can access to develop certain competences.

Its general objective is to improve the employability of young people, through the following objectives:

- Increase the access of 352 young people to local formal and non-formal learning opportunities.
- Promote the development of key transversal competences by 70 at-risk NEET youth.
- Increase the appreciation and recognition of transversal skills by 40 local public and private actors.

**Target Group /
Beneficiaries**

The priority target population is young people aged between 16 and 29 years old, who are NEET or due to their socio-economic situation, are at risk of becoming NEET. However, as this is an online solution, free access, the platform has been used by other types of public. With regard to indirect beneficiaries, it's considered the Entities that register in the Skill'IT in order to be able to disseminate through the platform their experiences of development of transversal skills to reach more young people. From the point of view of territorial scope and given the high numbers of the youth unemployment in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, during this pilot phase the platform has focused its action in this territory, mapping local responses for the development of transversal skills and also assuming a more local dissemination strategy.

**Resources and
skills needed to
carry out the
best practice**

Skill'IT was designed to respond to the difficulties of sustained transition from education to the labor market of young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Young people in the NEET situation have been one of the main priorities of the European Union (EU) and Portugal (PT) in terms of employment and education/training policies (cf. Portugal 2030; horizontal objective II). Portugal implemented the EU recommendations through the National Plan for Implementation of a Youth Guarantee (PNIGJ, 2013), recognizing it as a “investment in the young population and as an important contribution to the reduction of social and economic costs that youth unemployment entails for individuals affected, their families, their communities and the country as a whole”. The International Organization Labor on the Strategy for Signaling Young People in Situation of NEET recognizes the importance of developing “pre-Youth Guarantee” responses (i.e. non-formal and informal nature) with a view to reinforcing the

motivation of young people and providing them with necessary tools and skills so that they can later take advantage of the formal measures of the Youth Guarantee. In 2019, when the project proposal was designed, this investment, despite of the economic recovery experienced at the time, was justified considering:

- 1 in 10 young people in Portugal (PT) did not study, did not work and they were not in training (9.9% rate; INE, 2018).
- The proportion of young people in the NEET situation in the inactive condition presented a growth trend in relation to unemployed young people, indicating that the number of young people further away from formal employment and training systems remained high and represents an increasing share of NEET youth.
- the youth unemployment rate (20.3%; 15-24 years old; INE, 2019), even though it had decreased, it was almost 3 times above the value for the general population (7%; INE, 2019).

In the post-pandemic period that we are experiencing and a deep economic regression, these data are even more expressive and the continuity of this intervention even more relevant. The permanently transitory nature of the NEET situation and the greater vulnerability of young people to the phenomenon of unemployment, fit into a wider context of constant change. Today, young people face unprecedented challenges, socially, economically and environmentally, driven by increasing globalization and technological advances. In this scenario of uncertainty, it is essential to provide them with transversal skills that are equipped with tools to overcome these challenges and foster their future employability (OECD, 2018), namely through the development of technological skills, but also of “soft skills” and specific employability competences

(Recommendations of the EU on young people and the future of work, 2019). Alongside this need, it is also noted that there is a diversity of entities and organizations that promote activities and experiences that propose the development of transversal competences, but these activities do not always bring together the number of participants that would be expected/desirable. That is, despite the existence of so many opportunities for skills development, there was no resource that aggregated this information, finding this information very dispersed. Thus, motivated by the relevance of the problem and the absence of a similar answer, TESE drafted the Skill'IT project proposal, applying for Portugal's Social Fund "Partnerships for Impact".

Methodology

We explain below the operating logic of the platform. To determine the tracks published on the platform, the responses are being mapped with public and private institutions in the territory related to pre-identified transversal competences. Once the entities that are promoting this type of experience are identified, they are challenged to register on the platform, in order to be able to post information about their experiences. The experiences are given the name of "tracks" that correspond to an opportunity tending to be free, of an informal or non-formal nature and of short or medium duration (examples: workshops, volunteer opportunities, exchanges, sporting and artistic activities, support for vocational guidance, Open Days for contact with companies, etc.), depending on the offer of territories. The person will have information about these answers and will be able to attend them "on-site" or online, according to the modality of the experience. The platform is organized into 4 groups of transversal competences, adapted to from the guidelines of the European Commission:

- Personal and Social Skills/Soft Skills;
- Employment and Entrepreneurship Skills;
- Digital Competencies;
- Other general technical skills.

From the user's point of view, the platform allows a very personalized use, promoter of self-knowledge and empowerment. As an example, the “path” of a young user in the platform.

1. **Registration and login to access your profile on the platform.** According to your goals and preferences (indicated in the initial registration on the platform), the person selects the skills that wants to develop and through which experiences (tracks), creating your own employability playlist. In inspiration, you can follow recommended playlists or view playlists from others users with similar preferences. There is no limit to the number of experiences a user can access, allowing each young person to redefine or complement their “playlist” throughout the time.
2. **Participate in an experiment = complete a “track”.** By autonomously participating in a given experience, the entity responsible for its dynamization by signaling its presence on the platform, confirming its participation. Every time a certain “track” is completed, the user earns digital badges, which allows you to advance in the level of development of your skills and recognizes the development of a certain competence. Each badge corresponds to one skill set and can have up to 4 levels.
 - Badge = skills development experience/opportunity
 - Playlist= set of badges of the same topic

It is considered that a proposal can generate impact through the experiences that are available, since they enable the development and recognition of key transversal competences for employability. In turn, the development of soft skills can:

- Create the user to enroll in a training that allows him/her to deepen/professionalize acquired skills;
- reinforcing the personal and social capital of the NEETs, turning the profile more appealing for potential alternatives and promoting the search for professional contexts more suitable for them.

Success Factors

Internal conditions:

- Appealing textual and visual communication aligned with a young audience;
- Gamification logic experienced by the platform user;
- User experience on the platform to allow an autonomous and personalized choice of experiences you want to attend depending on your interests and goals;
- Quality and diversity of the experiences that are presented

External conditions:

- Interest and registration on the part of entities promoting the platform experience;
- Development of transversal skills for young people;
- Registration of experiences on the platform by these entities, in order to make the same appeal to users/young people;
- Existence of a significant number of user/youth registrations, in order to make the use of the appealing platform for the entities.

Competences of the LifeComp addressed

The platform includes a set of transversal skills chosen based on various reference frameworks, namely the EC. Among these are the following LifeComp competencies:

- Empathy.
- Communication.
- Collaboration.
- Spirit of Growth.
- Critical Thinking.
- Learning Management.
- Flexibility.
- Self-Regulation.

Related resources /Link

Platform website: www.skillit.pt
 Teaser: <https://www.facebook.com/skillit.pt/videos/179285957496489>
 Pre-launch event: <https://www.facebook.com/tese.ongd/videos/2844488765864512>

Work in Progress (WIP)

2019 - 2021

Author: Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento (APDES)

Element

Goals of the best practice

The main objective of "Work in Progress" was to promote personal and professional success paths in young people sheltered, ex-sheltered and young NEET, residents of the Grande Porto, contributing for their life autonomy and, consequently, inclusion. The main objectives:

- To train NGOs to adopt participatory processes and democratic management.

- Promote the integration into the labour market of young people with autonomy of life and young NEETs.
- Empower a promoting entity for organizational improvement.

Target Group / Beneficiaries The direct beneficiaries of the project were young NEET, autonomy young people, ex-sheltered residents in the age between 18 and 29 years old. The project also involved in a direct way the Rede Proteger (informal network made up of 6 institutions that are supporting protection and childhood in the municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia. This was the target of intervention through training, to capacitate regard to participatory processes and democratic management. The main indirect beneficiaries are the children and young people who live in the shelters of professionals who are part of the Proteger+ Network and who have attended the training.

Resources and skills needed to carry out the best practice According to Social Security Data, in 2016, 8175 children and young people were in foster care, with the majority of this population being over 12 years old. The districts with the highest percentages are Lisbon (18%) and Porto (17%). In 2016, 2396 children and young people were integrated into alternative care, while 2126 children and young people ceased that care.

Despite the indications of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) for the adoption of measures that favor the sharing of information and networking, and for the improvement of the quality of care with an emphasis on selection processes, training and supervision of caregivers/professionals, several limitations have been identified with regard to the preparation of the young people's autonomy process like the deinstitutionalization, in the specialized institutional support after leaving the reception, in the establishment of norms at national and in the dissemination of good

practices. According to Carvalho & Cruz (2015), there is a need for adequate responses to the needs of the young in alternative care, lack of knowledge and technical quality of professionals, and absence of a structured intervention model in the preparation for autonomy and autonomy in life.

Therefore, the young report not feeling prepared for autonomy in life and that they do not receive enough support in this process (ISCTE, 2005). In addition to the insufficient preparation for an autonomous adult life, these young people face additional challenges in this transition, crucial for their life course, compared to the general population, such as greater difficulty in accessing employment and housing and greater difficulty in dealing with feelings of loneliness, and abandonment, perpetuating situations of social vulnerability. In this sense, and in line with international recommendations, the objective of this project is to promote successful social and professional paths in young people who are welcomed and ex-welcomed, aiming at their autonomy in life and, consequently, social inclusion. This objective will be achieved through:

1. Training of informal groups, one made up of former sheltered youths and the other by professionals from shelters for participatory processes, democratic management and the execution of an action plan suited to the needs of each organization.
2. Intervention with young people in autonomy of life and young NEET, to promote life management and professional/career path.

Methodology

Work in Progress is a project defined and implemented taking into account transversal principles of institutional cooperation, empowerment, participation, empowerment and sustainability, with

the aim of promoting involvement and co-responsibility in the development of successful social and professional paths for young people at risk. The project includes a set of strategies that aim to empower young people in autonomy, adopting a methodology that follows the proposed conceptual structure by the Center for Democracy and Governance (US Agency for International Development), which defines three essential components for an integrated and sustainable strategy:

- (i) the empowerment of citizens,
- (ii) the strengthening of civil society and
- (iii) the exercise of political influence (Fox&Helweg, 1997).

In this way, the training component aims to increase the capacity of young people to organize themselves collectively, seeking to promote their involvement in existing social structures; the Intervention Component aims to make young people more informed about their rights and duties as active citizens in the development of their own social and professional life projects, as well as about the mechanisms and instruments available. Therefore, considering that trained individuals are in a better position to defend their own and others rights and to develop mechanisms that promote true autonomy and inclusion, the actions developed aim to work and develop democratic and participatory skills in young people, giving rise to true autonomy and ownership of rights. In addition, participatory methodologies advocate an intervention consistent with the principles inherent to community intervention, promoting the involvement of target groups in all phases of project implementation: needs assessment, priority setting, design, implementation and evaluation of the intervention. Thus, the project will also follow a participatory model giving for young the opportunity to express their opinions, facilitating

communication, creating spaces where young people can be heard and implementing, where appropriate, their ideas (Lundy, 2007). In short, all project activities will be defined and implemented through participatory methodologies, with the support of the Young Experts informal group, in order to achieve sustainable and sustainable results and adapting to its needs.

Success Factors

- Training grant and support (sub. transport and meals) for young people who attend the training;
- Partnerships with other entities that, by virtue of their work, come into contact with the target audience and/or previous fieldwork with the target audience.
- Financial capacity to support the high costs associated with developing an app.

Competences of the LifeComp addressed

- Flexibility
- Wellbeing
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Critical Thinking

Related resources /Link

- <https://apdes.pt/pt/portfolio/work-in-progress/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyFABRDqd94P3Tq0uW-FUFA>
- <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CT22X6do4HM/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/apdes/videos/409398380580220>

5. Integrating LifeComp in Youth Work: Focus Groups

This activity consists of an effective qualitative research method to determine the needs of youth workers supporting young people neither in employment nor in education and training. Contextos performed this activity with **24 participants** divided into 6 groups, choosing to use a pedagogical perspective to better engage the partners in smaller groups. As the main objective of the activity, it is possible to establish the need to understand the challenges of youth workers and project managers, their pains in their current training practices and jobs-to-be-done, and possible gains deriving from the InKey platform. Besides that, the focus group was helpful to have a good view of the current situation of youth organisations working with young people and how they can be more effective in supporting NEETs and to create Tailored Training programs for them in R2.

The profile of participants were defined in advance and appropriate to the purpose of the research. This means that the participation of youth workers, youth leaders, trainers, educators and representatives of youth organizations was chosen to enrich the perception of the current pedagogical situation and show the experience obtained with young people.

The Focus Groups had **two experts** for their development:

- A **moderator** selected to guide all the questions and offer support and direction of the turns.
- An **observer**, with the only purpose of taking notes of the interviewees' answers.

Both were experts in focus group management and they followed a standard questioning plan but adapted for each country. Firstly, the moderator introduced the topic of the discussion and himself/herself, then introduced the InKey project. Finally, the moderator explained how the activity was going to be developed and invited them to participate, starting with introductions. After that, the moderator started with the Questioning Plan, that had five important questions:

- **QUESTION 1:** Together, today, we're going to discuss opportunities and challenges to develop young NEETs' key competences, particularly the competences set out in the European Framework for the Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Competence ("LifeComp framework"). Have you heard about the LifeComp framework before this focus group?

In this question, the image below (Fig. 7) was presented to further specify the LifeComp concepts for those who were not identified with the theme.

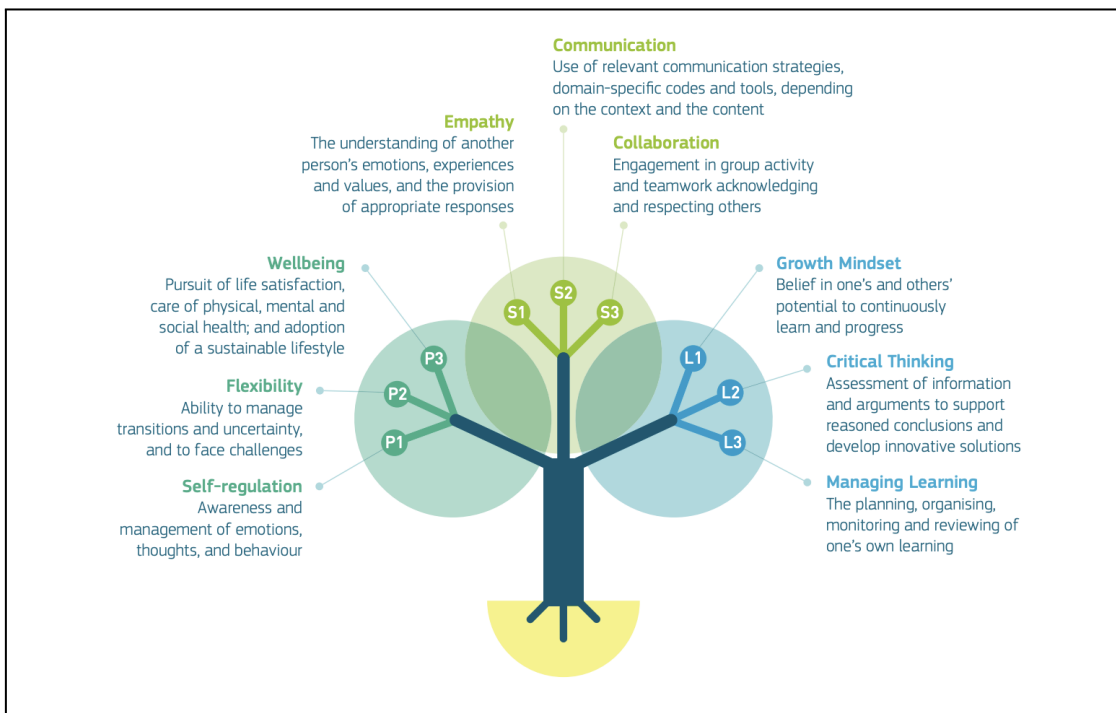


Fig. 7- LifeComp at a Glance

- QUESTION 2: Do you have any experience **applying the LifeComp** in training programs for young people? If yes, could you share some examples?

To answer this question and for the next ones, the table (Fig 8) below was used as a collaborative tool to collect the opinion of all participants and generate the necessary reflections.


		 		
		OPPORTUNITIES Possible methods, approaches and tools to develop the competences	CHALLENGES in applying the identified methods, approaches and tools	SUPPORT Resources and tools that could support youth professionals in overcoming the challenges
PERSONAL	Wellbeing Flexibility Self-regulation			
SOCIAL	Communication Collaboration Empathy			
LEARNING TO LEARN	Growth mindset Critical thinking Managing learning			

Fig 8. - Support document for Focus Group activities

QUESTION 3: What do you think are the possible methods, approaches and tools to develop the competencies set out in the competence areas of LifeComp?

QUESTION 4: What, in your opinion, are the challenges in applying the identified methods, approaches and tools?

QUESTION 5: What resources and tools could support youth professionals in overcoming such challenges?

The results are presented below with the respective date, location, meeting format, participants and answers for each question.

Organisation	Associação Juvenil MOJU (Olhão)
Date of the activity	24/10/2022
Format	In-person
Participants	Number: 7 Profile: Youth Workers
Facilitator	Marta Costa Lima
Observer	Sofia Aurora Rebelo Santos
Results	
Q1	All participants were not familiar with LifeComp.
Q2	All participants know and apply life skills strategies and techniques that are included in LifeComp. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-formal education methodology with all the skills presented in LifeComp • Practical activities and exercises.
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting field trips and out-of-school practices usually helps to motivate young people (Peddy Paper, visits to museums). - Support: Psychological, psychoeducational, cognitive training. - Reinforce and improve personal relationships between students/teachers/technicians to create bonds of trust. - Sharing of experiences between the youth technician and young people. Development of interpersonal relationships, flexibility of the context and of the educator himself to identify what is happening with young people; Importance of creating a 1 to 1 relationship, gives children and young people more emotional trust. - Constant positive reinforcement, give positive feedback to young people for all achievements and support in failures/frustrations; Active listening; - Opportunity to acquire and use new technologies to learn in groups and motivate young people;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use board games to turn into a challenge; - Learning with others “outside the Virtual World”;
<p>Q4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requirement of norms and regulations in project applications (objective numbers) that they have to fulfill and sometimes do not suit individual needs and can have a huge negative impact on young people. - Difficulties in motivating young people. - Qualifications of the physical space of the Association, there are times when there is a high number of young people in the space with different ages that sometimes influences the execution of tasks. - Young people look for immediate gratification when they work or play. - Few human resources to work with young people, which influences their accompaniment. - Establishment of boundaries in young people. - Absence of physical spaces to welcome young people when it rains, there is a need to change work strategies and methodologies. - Weak public transport network for travelling with youth groups. - Adjust curriculum vitae for students and young people according to what they already know and like (already assigned competences) to motivate; adjust to needs and potential. - The education system is very rigid, not very flexible; teachers' tiredness, the existence of a rigid evaluation method makes individual approaches difficult; very high workload for students that makes relationships with parents difficult and they are unable to perform other activities they would like. - Lack of youth life goals, lack of self-regulation and organization, growth mindset (perhaps to blame for parents who continue to support a sedentary lifestyle).
<p>Q5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical limitation of closed spaces. - Need for outdoor recreational spaces (gardens, parks, skate park, etc.); More Public transport.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for more Human Resources; - Human Resources' well-being and mental health care; prevention of technician burnout; - Need for external support for technicians. Team Building, happy managers. - All members of the educational community must be on the same page about student/youth learning; networking; focus on youth goals; creation of a multidisciplinary team working on the youth's life project; - Integrate non-formal education in schools and use other learning strategies at home.
Additional notes	

Organisation	Escola Profissional de Alte; Agrupamento de Escolas Tomás Cabreira (Faro) e Agrupamento de Escolas Dr. Francisco Fernando Lopes (Olhão)
Date of the activity	25 /10/2022
Format	Online
Participants	Number: 4 Profile: <i>Trainers and teachers.</i>
Facilitator	Marta Costa Lima
Observer	Sofia Aurora Rebelo Santos
Results	
Q1	All participants were not familiar with LifeComp.
Q2	All participants know and apply life skills strategies and techniques that are included in LifeComp. Examples:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-formal education methodology with all the skills presented in LifeComp • Practical activities and exercises.
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of active methodologies: games, videos, practical/dynamic activities. - Creating informal situations and contexts helps to gain young people's trust in teachers and vice versa, as well as students' self-confidence. - Praise young people to gain motivation and believe in themselves. - Conducting sessions with course tutors, in informal contexts, such as inviting former students with a successful path as a good practice and provoking motivation from other young people; - Exchanges between young people and other institutions.
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch personal challenges for recognition of their own abilities and skills; - Do individual tutorials/specific follow-up; - Fewer students per class to help capture everyone's attention; more concentration and better group work; - Technical and discipline-specific materials to facilitate practical classes;
Q5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less bureaucracy in schools and in the classroom; - Conduct exchanges between young people; sharing experiences; - Better vocational assessment to prevent young NEETs; - Create marketing strategies to promote professional courses; - Sharing of good practices between technicians/teachers/trainers.
Additional notes	

Organisation	Instituto PIAGET (Silves); Agrupamento de Escolas Pinheiro e Rosa (Faro)
Date of the activity	26/10/2022
Format	Online
Participants	Number: 2 Profile: <i>Teachers and youth trainers</i>
Facilitator	Marta Costa Lima
Observer	Sofia Aurora Rebelo Santos
Results	
Q1	All participants were not familiar with LifeComp.
Q2	All participants know and apply life skills strategies and techniques that are included in LifeComp. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-formal education methodology with all the skills presented in LifeComp • Practical activities and exercises.
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be empathetic and friendly with students,; show/give importance to students; - Emotional management work and support; - Working together; group and individual/independent work; - Do practical activities outside the classroom; - Improvement of the training of teachers and trainers; be more sensitive to human and student issues; - Modern School Movement; Pedagogy of José Pacheco; Paulo Freire, Waldorf, Democratic Schools (summerhill).
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unfamiliarity of other educational activities (non-formal education); - Classes separated by subject sometimes hinder general learning in a given activity, for example on a study visit students can work/learn material from several subjects; - Very bureaucratic educational system;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resistance to change on the part of teachers, technicians and young people themselves; - targeted educational policies with better representation/execution on the ground.
Q5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More follow-up time for young people; - Mentorships, - Create and carry out a new vocational test at the end of secondary education in order to lead to a new life project; - Use of practical methodologies that promote critical thinking, such as: Group reflections, “street classes”, outings, walks, study visits; - Internships throughout the school year and after completion of secondary education; - Conducting youth exchanges to promote the sharing of experiences with other young people, “with, by and for young people” - Articulation between different levels of education.
Additional notes	

Organisation	Fundação António Aleixo (Quarteira), Associação Vicentina (Monchique)
Date of the activity	27/10/2022
Format	Online
Participants	Number: 3 Profile: Youth Project Managers.
Facilitator	Marta Costa Lima
Observer	Sofia Aurora Rebelo Santos
Results	

Q1	All participants were not familiar with LifeComp.
Q2	<p>All participants know and apply life skills strategies and techniques that are included in LifeComp. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-formal education methodology with all the skills presented in LifeComp • Practical activities and exercises.
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being and creating empathy with the young people and the target group to create trust bonds; - Give voice to the young people, make them responsible managers of their own life project; - Give and assign personal challenges for self-motivation; - Promote the action of young people in their own life context; - Active school/civic/social participation; - Promote study visits and practical outings; - More practical and less theoretical intervention in classrooms; - Hold debates to promote critical thinking; - Promote the practice of youth and community associations.
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve the young people in the change and in their own life change; - “People don’t belong to us, we must give them autonomy” - Attracting young people to participate in the developed actions; - Make communities sensible to the importance and value of young people about their own community; - Break down prejudices against young people; - Empathy/trust/involvement.
Q5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More support/union on the part of the municipalities on the actions promoted by the different entities that intervene directly with young people; - Culture and art as a way of knowledge and a motor for the intervention of young people in society; - Sharing and networking/direct contacts with institutions/services;

	- More involvement of companies to welcome young people in a professional practice.
Additional notes	

Organisation	Associação Sê Mais Sê Melhor; SPEAK Faro; ECOS; Contextos; Núcleo de Juventude de Vila Real de Santo António.
Date of the activity	28/10/2022
Format	In-person
Participants	Number: 8 Profile: 6 Youth Workers and 2 Youth Project Managers
Facilitator	Marta Costa Lima
Observer	Sofia Aurora Rebelo Santos
Results	
Q1	Most participants were not familiar with LifeComp. Only 2 already knew the tool. Filipa Fonseca - became aware during a European training that took place in the pre-2018 LifeComp development period Sofia Justino - she knew all the domains and skills but didn't know the tool itself.
Q2	All participants know and apply life skills strategies and techniques that are included in LifeComp. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-formal education methodology with all the skills presented in LifeComp • Practical activities and exercises. • Volunteering.
Q3	- More non-formal education, examples: exchanges, volunteering, activities and projects developed by young people.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educator/teacher/youth coach as a facilitator and representative of young people with decision makers and funders, but giving young people the power to decide on the development of their educational project and on the development of LifeComp skills in peer relationships; empowerment and empowerment of young people. - Gamification techniques. - Transferable participatory methodologies and alternatives integrated into curricula program and other educational programs - Communication techniques: such as storytelling for example, editing and creation of media content such as video and photography - Labour market integration methodologies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) job shadowing 2) Internships 3) Create an innovative intermediate model that allows young people to experience in a short period of time, more than a profession related to a certain course or area of study. To allow the student to know different real applications of the same academic or professional training, but before taking on a commitment as serious as an internship. In case the student, at the end of the experience, comes to the conclusion that after all that course is not what he imagined, give the opportunity to restart the process with other professional areas and other courses. - Training of education professionals (educators, teachers, youth technicians): in all the references mentioned above; in communication (video and photography); in interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence; digital literature; affections; self-assessment and self-diagnosis;
<p>Q4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The concept of success is outdated and distorted: fighting prejudices and outdated notions of success linked to the university academic path and the notion of “Dr”. Involve multiple stakeholders, including the media,

	<p>for the dissemination and awareness of multiple successful educational paths other than the traditional ones; valorization of professional technical courses. Local, regional and national campaigns to change this notion of success of “being a doctor”, and promote the realistic appreciation of young people who complete an educational path.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reconciling personal life with work and studies: developing these skills among young people, and also in education professionals. - Break the generational cycle of failure. - Barriers and obstacles to the transition from education to the labour market are too persistent and remain even beyond the age limit of the NEET definition.
<p>Q5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building a community of practice: multidisciplinary groups of professionals who present cases of young people and who, as a team, seek solutions and alternatives beyond the available offers of the school where the student is. - Online platform that allows professionals to share resources, cases, information; create support groups/multidisciplinary teamwork. - Digital tools: games and quizzes that present different educational paths and different ways of entering the job market; gamification of simulated practices or case studies; - Funding and support for youth technicians who establish a relationship with young people even before they leave school and have the objective of transition and integration into the job market: Office of Support to Transition. - TIME: more human resources; less administrative burden, more availability to actually be with the young. - Dissemination of online opportunities, less restricted to the geographic radius of the school where the young person is enrolled. - Training of employers for the integration of young people.

Additional notes	

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