



P R O J E C T

EARLY identification, **INDIVIDUALIZED** targeting
and **TAILORED** intervention for young people at
risk of NEET

*Flexible pathways and an effective methodology for
the transition into the labour market*

IO2 –A1

Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners’ countries

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
1. IO2 Methodology of INDIVIDUALIZED targeting and TAILORED intervention for young people at risk of NEET	5
2. A1 Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners' countries	8
2.1 The target group.....	8
2.2 The selection/identification of young people at risk.....	9
2.3 Expected outcomes	10
2.3.1 Selection of outcomes.....	10
2.3.2 Evidence on relevance of outcomes	11
2.3.3 Expected outcomes	14
2.4 Designing the intervention.....	18
2.5 The elements of the intervention	18
2.4.1 Preparation.....	20
2.4.3 Guidance	21
2.4.4 Experience	22
2.4.5 Consolidation.....	23
3. Conclusions and next steps.....	24
3.1 Overview of the NEETs at Risk model	24
3.2 Next steps.....	25
APPENDIX 1: NEETS AT RISK POTENTIAL MODELS	26
APPENDIX 2: MODEL FEEDBACK SUMMARY	29

**Title**

Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners' countries

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Executive Summary

The main objective of IO2 is to develop an innovative methodology to identify and support young people at risk of being NEET and to implement and test it in three pilot locations (Spain, Italy and Portugal) – it is proposed that this methodology will provide an individualized and tailored approach to meet the particular needs of each young person at risk of being NEET, adaptable to different local contexts. The methodology aims to be preventative – identifying at risk young people and providing them with a smoother transition into the labour market and/or further learning or training.

This document sets out the proposed methodology and core intervention measures of the NEET at Risk project, including:

- The target group
- The methods for selecting/identifying young people for inclusion in the project
- The expected outcomes of involvement in the project
- The mechanisms for achieving these outcomes
- The main elements of the intervention

It is based on an six step iterative process involving:

- Face-to-face discussions with partners
- An initial specification of four broad, contrasting delivery models
- Drawing on good practices in the delivery of activities aimed at preventing young people from becoming or remaining NEET as part of a 5-day learning activity in London
- An initial workshop with project partners organised as part of the learning activity to identify key issues the project is trying to address
- Drawing on the results of IO1-A1 to identify common risk factors for becoming NEET and of IO1-A2 to identify existing best practices in the reduction of young people being or becoming NEET
- Organising a Theory of Change workshop with partners as part of the first transnational project meeting

This document presents the results of this iterative process and prepares the ground for subsequent activities (IO2-A2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) as part of this intellectual output.

1. IO2 Methodology of INDIVIDUALIZED targeting and TAILORED intervention for young people at risk of NEET

The main objective of IO2 is to develop an innovative methodology to identify and support young people at risk of being NEET and to implement and test it in three pilot locations (Spain, Italy and Portugal) – it is proposed that this methodology will provide an individualized and tailored approach to meet the particular needs of each young person at risk of being NEET, adaptable to different local contexts. The methodology aims to be preventative – identifying at risk young people and providing them with a smoother transition into the labour market and/or further learning or training.

IO2 consists of six logical activities across three distinct phases (Preparation, Implementation and Follow-up) – including:

Preparation

- Activity 1 (A1): Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners' countries: this activity aims at developing the methodology with reference to existing best practices and of relevance to the needs and situations in the partner countries (July-August 2015)

Implementation

- Activity 2 (A2): Application of the pilot project in partners' countries
- Activity 3 (A3): Mentoring and coaching sessions 1: employability and transition from school/VET to work
- Activity 4 (A4): Mentoring and coaching sessions 2: provide work experience opportunities
- Activity 5 (A5): Preparation of staff to apply the pilot testing and the measures foreseen in the methodology (September-October 2015)

Follow-up

- Activity 6 (A6): Results of the application of the pilot project in partners' countries (October-December 2016)

As described in Section 2 below, IO2 builds on and extends the work done as part of IO1 – in particular, identification of the main reasons for young people being NEET in the partner countries and existing best practices in addressing this issue. Thus the main factors and characteristics associated with being NEET described in IO1¹, include the following:

- “Young people with low levels of education are three times more likely to be NEET than those with higher education and two times more likely than those with secondary education

¹www.fch.lisboa.ucp.pt/resources/Documents/CEPCEP/NEETS%20PROJECT_IO%201%20final%20version_FOR%20PUBLICATION.pdf

- Young immigrants are 70% more likely to become NEET compared to other young people
- Young people with poor health or disabilities have a probability of over 40% of being NEET than those who have a good health
- People living in remote areas and small towns are up to 1.5 times more likely to be NEET compared to those living in medium to large cities;
- Young people from low-income families are more likely to become NEET than others.

Along with these individual characteristics, certain intergenerational and family influences were identified as having a significant impact on the probability of being NEET, such as:

- Having parents who experienced unemployment increases the probability of being NEET in 17%
- Young people with parents with a low level of education are up to 1.5 times more likely to be NEET than young people whose parents have a secondary education and up to two times more likely than those whose parents have a higher education
- Young people whose parents are divorced are 30% more likely to be NEET than other young people” (IO1, p.20-21).

Thus, being NEET was described in IO1 as a “result and a defining characteristic of disadvantaged young people and those at highest risk of social exclusion. Education is the most important variable, and it has the strongest effect in influencing the probability of being NEET in individual and in family terms. The family context is an important factor that increases the risk of becoming NEET, such as those with divorced parents or parents who have a history of unemployment” (IO1, p.21).

The findings from IO1 described above were further extended in IO2 via a structured Theory of Change planning process, involving all partners in order to:

- Identify key issues or reasons for why some young people are NEET
- Prioritise key issues for the project methodology
- Specify expected outcomes as a result of the project methodology
- Discuss activities that can achieve these outcomes based on evidence from best practices (IO1) and on professional experience of partners
- Agree mechanisms of change linking key issues, activities and expected outcomes.

Overall, the NEET at Risk methodology specifies:

- **The target group** – the age and characteristics of young people at risk of being NEET to be involved in the pilot projects – rather than targeting all such young people, it will aim to identify those for whom this intervention is most suitable
- **The selection/identification of young people at risk** – the methods/approaches used to identify young people at risk and to be included in the pilot projects (facing the priority issues identified and who are deemed to have a realistic chance of achieving the expected outcomes as a result of the intervention)
- **Expected outcomes** – the short, medium and longer-term outcomes the methodology is expected to achieve among young people at risk of being NEET involved in the pilots
- **The elements of the intervention**, including:
 - The activities delivered as part of it
 - The duration of these activities – over what period and how often
 - The location of activities – where the activities are delivered
 - The mode of delivery – whether they are delivered in a large or small group or just one-to-one
 - Delivery personnel – who is expected to deliver the activities
- **The expected mechanisms of change underlying the agreed Theory of Change** – a formulation of how the intervention is expected to address the priority issues identified via the planned activities to bring about the expected outcomes.

This methodology, including the core intervention measures (developed as part of IO2-A3 and A4), will be tested in pilot projects in Portugal, Spain and Italy, following preparation of key staff (IO2-A5) and based on guidelines provided by the lead partner (IO2-A2). These pilots aim to explore issues in implementing the methodology and whether and to what extent it is able to achieve its intended outcomes (IO4) – with the aim of formulating a reviewed methodology in the form of a guide (IO3).

2. A1 Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners' countries

The main aim of this activity (IO2-A1) was to work with all partners to agree the methodology to be piloted as part of the project. This involved:

- Face-to-face discussions with partners as part of the project start-up meeting (January 2015)
- The specification of four broad, contrasting delivery models (see Appendix 1) – and asking project partners to review their perceived strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis – see Appendix 2) (March 2015)
- Drawing on good practices in the delivery of activities aimed at preventing young people from becoming or remaining NEET as part of a 5-day learning activity in London (May 2015)
- An initial workshop with project partners organised as part of the learning activity to identify key issues the project is trying to address (May 2015)
- Drawing on the results of IO1-A1 to identify common risk factors for becoming NEET and of IO1-A2 to identify existing best practices in the reduction of young people being or becoming NEET (June 2015)
- Organising a Theory of Change workshop with partners as part of the first transnational project meeting (June 2015) to prioritise key issues, specify expected outcomes, discuss the most effective intervention activities and agree mechanisms of change linking key issues, activities and expected outcomes.

This IO presents the results of this iterative process in the form of a methodological outline of the proposed intervention, covering the main elements outlined in Section 1 above.

2.1 The target group

The project application form identified the following broad target group for the intervention:

- Students/trainees from 15 to 24 years who are in the schools or in the training system, ending their compulsory education but at risk of becoming NEETs;
- Persons who are not in the schools or in the training system (as well as unemployed persons) ranging from 15 to 24 years.

Discussions with project partners suggested that this target group was too broad to be addressed by one single methodology, as the needs of students, for example, aged 15 and still attending compulsory education are likely to be very different from the needs of those aged 24 who are completing further or higher education and are at risk of being NEET.

This meant that the project methodology needed to be re-focused based on the following criteria:

- The practical contacts and resources available to project partners – to engage young people and influence delivery of services
- Which age group was most suitable for a ‘preventative’ intervention to reduce the risk of becoming NEET, as compared to a ‘reactive’ intervention to engage young people who already are NEET

It was decided therefore that the project would be targeted at young people:

- who are not yet NEET – who are still in education/training, although there is a risk that they might become NEET
- based in schools/educational institutions
- as something additional to their normal curriculum rather than instead of it
- less than 18 years old (at most 19).

2.2 The selection/identification of young people at risk

As O1-A1 and the Learning Activity (May 2015) has shown, there are various different approaches to identifying young people ‘at risk’ of becoming NEET – these include statistical approaches to link particular objective characteristics or circumstances (such as low attainment, socio-economic background, ethnicity, etc.) with an increased probability of becoming NEET or ways of identifying particular attitudes or behaviours (via observation, teacher referral or self-completion questionnaires) which are seen as predicting an increased chance of becoming NEET in future.

The particular approach adopted needs to be adapted to the particular situation or context in which the proposed model is piloted – but is likely to include one or more of the following components:

- The identification of young people perceived to be at risk of dropping out early by teachers or other school staff
- The analysis of available school data to identify ‘risk factors’ which in previous years have been shown to be associated with an increased risk of becoming

NEET – these may differ depending on the particular area, but are likely to include low attainment, socio-economic status, school failure, etc.

- Completion of risk assessment questionnaires by the learners
- Requests by learners to be involved in the programme.

Evidence from the Learning Activity has also shown that whatever specific approach that is adopted, young people need to feel that they have actively chosen to take part in the programme – this is best achieved by requiring all participants to attend a short ‘interview’ in which they have to explain why they should be included in the programme. This gives those who are selected to take part – even if this is most or almost all of those who applied – a sense of achievement and ownership of the programme. This is preferable to telling young people to attend the programme – as this can immediately lead to a sense of resistance among some participants.

2.3 Expected outcomes

2.3.1 Selection of outcomes

As described in Section 2 above, an initial discussion (January 2015) and a workshop with project partners (April 2015) were used to identify the key issues explaining why some young people are or become NEET. This built on the evidence from IO1-A1 on the characteristics and risk factors associated with becoming NEET from each of the partner countries. These were combined to create a master-list of ‘issues’ or ‘risk factors’ of particular relevance to the project target group (see Section 2.1).

This included the following potential reasons for being/becoming NEET:

Personal characteristics/attitudes

- Lacking the motivation to continue in learning (after leaving school)
- Lacking the motivation to find a job
- Lacking the motivation to do well/working hard at school
- Having a negative attitude towards school/learning
- Lacking the self-confidence to find a job or continue in learning

Personal barriers

- Having serious personal problems (drugs, alcohol, mental health, etc.) that are barriers to participating in education, employment or training (EET)

Knowledge/skills

- Not having the (vocational/employability) skills to get a job, etc.
- Not knowing how to find a job (or other learning opportunities) after leaving school
- Not knowing how to choose the most suitable EET for them
- Lacking a clear vision of the options available to them in future

Structural issues/barriers

- Not having the social capital (contacts, networks, know-how) to find a job
- Not being able to find a job because of how they look/how they talk/where they come from etc.
- Not being able to find a job because there are no/very few jobs where they live

Attainment

- Leaving school/college with no or very few qualifications

All 14 project partners participating in the London Transnational project meeting (June 2015) were asked to prioritise these issues, by assigning up to 5 points each to one or more of the issues listed above. In particular, partners were asked to identify – given the proposed target group involved in the project (see Section 2.1) – to identify the issues the project methodology needed to address most urgently to reduce young people’s risk of becoming NEET and achieving a smoother transition to the labour market.

This exercise resulted in the following three key priorities:

- Ensuring that young people have the social capital (contacts, networks, know-how) to progress after leaving school
- Ensuring that young people know how to choose the most suitable EET for them
- Ensuring that young people do not have a negative attitude towards school/learning

2.3.2 Evidence on relevance of outcomes

Social capital

There is strong evidence from the literature highlighting the way each of these is linked to being NEET. Raffo and Reeves (2000)², for example, argued that social capital plays a crucial role in the social exclusion of young people in the transition from school to work. Through qualitative research on marginalized British youth, they provided evidence of how limited or culturally inappropriate social resources limit the later-life chances of at-risk young people.

Similarly, a more recent study (Siraj et al., 2014) in the UK, for example, used qualitative interviews to explore the experiences of a sample of 20 young people who were NEET six months after the end of compulsory schooling. The study suggested

² Raffo, C. & Reeves, M. (2000) Youth transitions and social exclusion: Developments in social capital theory. *Journal of Youth Studies* 3 (2), 147-166.

that: 'Young people's social capital in the form of family, friends and other networks was exceptionally important in helping them out of their inactivity and into EET' (p.6). The study authors explained the concept of social capital and how it impacts on young people's choices in the following way:

'Social capital includes the network of people known to the young person and the ability they have to tap into opportunities and resources outside the immediate family (...) In the case of many NEETs, access to social, cultural, educational and economic resources is often limited which reduces their ability to negotiate structures in ways that are advantageous to them' (p.9).

Another study (Robson, 2008)³ drawing on the longitudinal European Community Household Panel (ECHP) data tried to link social capital with being NEET in a more quantitative way. This was done by exploring the engagement of young people who were NEET in any club, such as a sport or entertainment club, a local or neighbourhood group, a party, etc. to test the hypothesis whether young people who are NEET have weaker networks than their peers. The study found no clear correlation, with the exception of young people in Greece and Spain. However, it should be noted that asking someone if they are a member of any club, including sport and entertainment, provides only a very limited view on their social capital. Furthermore, as Robson (2008) observed, it could be that these young people simply had more time to socialise than those in education or work.

In contrast, a more detailed exploration of this issue was conducted as part of the recent Eurofound (2012)⁴ study on NEETs, suggesting a much stronger link between social capital, as measured by trust, political engagement and civic participation, and being NEET. This was done via a systematic quantitative analysis of a set of indicators drawn from two data sources: the 2008 ESS (European Social Survey) and the 2008 EVS (European Values Study). It found that:

'NEETs distinguish themselves by having a substantially lower level of political and social engagement and a lower level of trust when compared with non-NEETs. This implies that they are not just disengaged from the labour market and education system but are also at high risk of being politically and socially alienated from their societies' (p.4).

³ Robson, K (2008) Becoming NEET in Europe. A comparison of predictors and laterlife outcomes. Paper presented at the Global Network on Inequality Mini-Conference on February 22, 2008 in New York City.

⁴ Eurofound (2012), NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

Choice of pathway

An analysis of the post-compulsory education destinations of young people aged 16-17 in the UK (Spielhofer et al, 2009)⁵ identified three discrete subcategories of NEET young people, including:

- 'Open to learning' NEETs – young people most likely to re-engage in education or training in the short term and with higher levels of attainment and better attitudes towards school than other NEET young people.
- 'Sustained' NEETs – young people characterised by their negative experience of school, higher levels of truancy and exclusion and lower academic attainment than other NEET young people, and the fact that they are most likely to remain NEET in the medium term.
- 'Undecided' NEETs – young people similar in some respects, such as their attainment levels, to those who are 'open to learning' NEET, but with a tendency to be dissatisfied with the options available to them and/or are very likely to drop out of post-16 learning without completing a qualification.

The last category shows that there are many young people who become NEET as a result of not choosing the right pathway – suitable to their preferred learning styles and career goals – to enable them to continue in work or education. This was confirmed in the study by Siraj et al. (2014)⁶ who found that:

'There was a high incidence amongst NEETs of not knowing what they wanted to do after leaving compulsory schooling that often persisted for some considerable time. This resulted in non-linear, 'yo-yo' transitions, where young people started and stopping in either education or various forms of work. Particularly in relation to education, there often resulted in young people trying out courses with little overall direction or idea of what they might do afterwards'.

Negative attitude towards school and learning

The Eurofound (2012)⁷ report identifies two principal risk factors associated with being NEET: disadvantage and disaffection. The concept of social capital explored above is strongly associated with the concept of 'disadvantage', but the latter also includes

⁵ Spielhofer, T., Benton, T., Evans, K., Featherstone, G., Golden, S., Nelson, J. and Smith P. (2009). Increasing Participation: Understanding Young People Who Do Not Participate in Education or Training at 16 and 17 (DCSF Research Report 072). London: DCSF

⁶ Siraj, I., Hollingworth, K., Taggart, B., Sammons, P., Melhuish, E. and Sylva K. (2014). Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-16 Project (EPPSE 3-16) Report on students who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). London: Institute of Education, London/Department for Education.

⁷ Op. cit.

other aspects such as poverty, ill-health and poor housing. The concept of 'disaffection' on the other hand relates to the way young people lose interest in school, leading to low attendance figures, truancy, behaviour that leads to school exclusion and often school drop-out. Indeed, research shows that clear signs that someone is losing interest in school usually present about one to three years before a young person drops out (Bridgeland et al, 2006)⁸.

Research has also highlighted a link between disadvantage and disaffection, which explains the disproportionately higher numbers of 'drop out' from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, Archer, et al. (2005)⁹ and Steer (2000)¹⁰ both found that some young people cited a feeling of 'vulnerability' – being looked down on in school because of their background – as a factor that led to disengagement from learning. 'The young people sensed a 'lack of fit' between their 'working-class' identities and a predominance of what they saw as middle-class language, school ethos and staff' (Spielhofer et al., 2009)¹¹.

2.3.3 Expected outcomes

For each of the three issues identified in Section 2.3.1 and discussed in Section 2.3.2, project partners were asked to identify what changes or outcomes they would hope to see as a result of the intervention – or, in other words, what changes they expected to see that could be demonstrated or measured.

These are listed below for each of the three issues:

Ensuring that young people have the social capital (contacts, networks, know-how) to find a job – this includes that project participants:

- have met other young people working/studying in different EET fields
- have met with at least one potential employer in an area of their interest
- have been provided with training on how to conduct job searches
- have had at least one work experience placement or internship
- are more aware of the skills or experience needed for different jobs

⁸ Bridgeland, J. M., DiIulio, J. J. and Burke Morison, K. (2006), *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts, A report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates*, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Seattle.

⁹ Archer, L., Halsall, A., Hollingworth, S. and Mendick, H. (2005). *Dropping Out and Drifting Away: an Investigation of Factors Affecting Inner-City Pupils' Identities, Aspirations and Post-16 Routes*. London: Institute for Policy Studies in Education.

¹⁰ Steer, R. (2000). *A Background to Youth Disaffection: a Review of Literature and Evaluation Findings from Work with Young People*. London: Community Development Foundation.

¹¹ Op. cit.

- are more aware of the difference between the school and work environment
- are more aware of what organisations or individuals are available locally to help them find a job or further training opportunity
- are more aware of how to behave in the work place

Ensuring that young people know how to choose the most suitable EET for them – this includes that project participants:

- are more aware of their own social competencies and talents relevant to the world of work
- are more aware of the EET options available to them locally after leaving school
- have developed job search skills, including writing a CV, looking for a job and attending a job interview
- have put together a portfolio of achievements to help them visualise what they have achieved and what they are good at
- are more aware of what skills, qualifications or personal attributes are needed to access different types of EET locally.

Ensuring that young people do not have a negative attitude towards school/learning – this includes that project participants:

- are more aware of the relevance of what they learn at school to the world of work
- are more aware of what qualifications, skills and knowledge are needed to move into particular types of EET
- are more motivated to do well in their place of learning, including school or college
- feel more confident that they are able to do well at school
- are more willing to continue in learning, in school or via some other type of education or training, after completing compulsory education

It seems that for these different outcomes to be achieved, the methodology needs to include:

- Different ways of making real engaging links with other young people, employers and professionals with experience of working and learning in different types of EET, via placements, visits, workshops or even one-to-one or small group meetings
- Training to support the acquisition of skills needed to make a successful transition after leaving school, including writing a CV, looking for a job and attending a job interview, and the possibility of applying or testing out these skills

- Putting together a portfolio to help young people recognise their skills, competencies, preferences and achievements relevant to different types of EET options.

The concrete parts of such a proposed methodology are explored in the following section, while Table 1 on the next page sets out the overall Theory of Change for the proposed model. It is based on the following assumptions:

1. Pupils with relevant risk factors can be identified
2. Pupils with relevant risk factors can be targeted in a preventative way (that is effective)
3. Dosage of intervention (sub-set of activities or combination of activities) is strong enough to affect change
4. The right people deliver (to the right Young people)
5. Most young people will complete the intervention
6. To work, the model needs to be adapted to different contexts. This adaptation will not affect its effectiveness
7. A multi-agency approach is key to success
8. Teachers, counsellor, youth workers or any other staff are willing to deliver the intervention.

Table 1: Project Theory of Change

Issues	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
High proportion of young people in EU member states are NEET	Project preparation	School staff trained in delivering intervention. Multi-agency project group established and working	Young people have improved their social capital
Risk factors associated with being NEET are low social capital, lack of ability to make suitable EET choices and not valuing learning	Pre-selection & Induction	15 pupils per pilot area identified and selected	
Being NEET (long term) is associated with negative labour market outcomes	Guidance	15 portfolios started 1 preparation session organised	Young people have a less negative attitude towards school / learning
Institutions and staff responsible for engaging NEETs and at risk young people often do not have the necessary resources and contacts to help them adequately	Experience	15 work placements arranged per pilot area 15 short-term VET placements arranged per pilot area 3 meetings or visits organised with local EET providers per pilot area	
	Consolidation	15 portfolios completed Consolidation sessions organised	
			Young people are more able to choose suitable EET

2.4 Designing the intervention

The identification and analysis of good practices from partner countries as part of IO1 suggested that effective models need to build on the following principles and key learning points:

- The model needs to ensure an early identification and intervention, with special attention to those who, for one reason or another, are in a more disadvantaged situation; whatever method that is adopted for identifying at risk of being NEET students, it should, where possible, draw on the involvement of school, the family and the local/ community support services.
- Being NEET is a multi-dimensional phenomenon: this means that, its resolution needs to adopt a similarly multi-dimensional approach addressing several areas of need, such as dropout prevention measures, employability skills training, workplace learning or social inclusion.
- The way education and VET systems are inclusive and capable of providing support within the school, in an integrated manner, or encouraging and enabling early school leavers to continue their previous studies, or helping them to find other more appropriate training alternatives, is fundamental. This requires innovative and non-standard approaches, involving formal and non-formal contexts, in order to adapt to the needs of students at risk of becoming NEET.
- There is a need to provide guidance and mentoring services, within and outside the education system, as a way to help young people to make their choices and their transition processes. These services should give young people at risk of becoming NEET the opportunity to develop self-awareness and confidence in their own abilities and vocations; improve their “personal marketing” towards future employers; and enlarge their social capital not only to facilitate their transition to the labour market but also to enhance social inclusion and civic participation.
- Promoting employability also requires looking for filling in the gaps in young people’ skills such as transversal and specific work skills, ideally via direct or indirect experiences of the workplace and raising their awareness of the value of qualifications in finding work.

2.5 The elements of the intervention

Based on the discussions with partners, the review of existing best practice approaches (see Section 2.4 above), the main expected outcomes of the intervention and the chosen target group, the project methodology will be built around the following key components:

- **A preparation phase** – in which school or other staff are trained in delivering the intervention and a multi-agency project group is set up and has met to discuss how to increase the social capital of programme participants
- **A pre-selection/induction element** – ensuring that the right young people are chosen to take part and are engaged in the process right from the start
- **A guidance element** – focussing on preparing young people for their placement(s) and their transition to EET, mainly as a group but also some one-to-one meetings
- **An ‘experience-of-EET’ element** – involving one or more direct experiences of the workplace and/or other learning environments
- **A post-placement consolidation period and future planning period** – involving both one-to-one and group work.

The following table provides further details of the proposed content, duration and delivery personnel for each of these five elements of the model.

Table 2: Content, duration and delivery staff for model elements

Title	What?	Who?	How long?
Preparation	Staff selection and training Multi-agency project group	Counsellors, teachers, youth workers, employers, EET providers	Ongoing
Pre-selection/induction	Application Selection interview Agreement	Counsellors, teachers, youth workers	1-2 sessions
Guidance	Ice breakers Confidence building Employability skills Build portfolio	Counsellors, teachers, youth workers – local stakeholders	4-6 sessions
Experience	Work placement(s) VET placement(s)	Employers VET providers Counsellors	4-6 sessions
Consolidation	Job search skills Complete portfolio Review	Counsellors, teachers, youth workers	2-4 sessions

It is anticipated that partners will include each of the five key components into their pilot testing model – however, there is flexibility in the length of each module and what each component will consist of, depending on local resources, circumstances and opportunities.

The following sections provide further details of each of the five elements.

2.4.1 Preparation

This element focuses on preparing the pilot programmes in each of the 3 pilot areas, including selecting and preparing staff to deliver the different elements of the project and setting up a multi-agency project group. The purpose of this group is to provide advice and support for the pilot, but also access to different types of work and VET experiences to increase pupils' social networks. These could include:

- VET providers/schools and their staff such as teachers/trainers/technicians/tutors/counsellors and other VET and school professionals
- Employment services/counsellors
- Education and training system policy representatives
- Enterprises and social partners;
- Local or regional authorities with VET and employment responsibilities
- Families and other members of the local community.

The implementation of this element of the project will be supported by the provision of support materials produced as part of IO2-A2.

2.4.2 Pre-selection/induction

This element focuses on selecting 15 young people in each of the pilot projects to be involved in the project in the 2015/16 academic year. The focus here is on identifying pupils at risk of being NEET *and* most likely to benefit from this kind of programme.

However, as discussed in Section 2.2, the particular approach adopted needs to be adapted to the particular situation or context in which the proposed model is piloted – but is likely to include one or more of the following components:

- The identification of young people perceived to be at risk of dropping out early by teachers or other school staff
- The analysis of available school data to identify 'risk factors' which in previous years have been shown to be associated with an increased risk of becoming NEET – these may differ depending on the particular area, but are likely to include low attainment, socio-economic status, school failure, etc.
- Completion of risk assessment questionnaires by the learners
- Requests by learners to be involved in the programme.

In addition, it is advised that young people need to feel that they have actively chosen to take part in the programme – this is best achieved by requiring all participants to attend a short 'interview' in which they have to explain why they should be included in

the programme; furthermore, those accepting to join the programme should sign an agreement stating:

- What the programme involves
- What help and support they will receive from others as part of the programme
- What they are expected to do and how they are expected to behave as part of the programme.

2.4.3 Guidance

This element focuses on preparing young people for their placement(s) and their transition to EET, mainly as a group but also via one-to-one meetings with guidance staff or other personnel. These mentoring and coaching sessions are meant to facilitate the self-reflection of participants, promoting a proactive attitude towards employment where the acquisition of soft skills plays an important role. The intervention process will address personal (mentoring-related) topics, dealing with both intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities, with a focus on professional (coaching-related) aspects. For this reason, coaches and mentors will be referred to by a single term as “facilitators”.

The aim of these sessions is the acquisition or improvement of key transversal competences for employment, with a special focus on proactivity: adaptability, creativity, leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, etc.

The methodology revolves around 2 separate but complementary actions: 2 *individual interviews* and a series of *group gatherings*.

The process will start with a face2face guidance session, where the participant will meet the facilitator. The aim will be on helping the youngster to identify and reflect on his/her personal objectives and professional expectations. Ultimately, the hope is that it will help the participant to be aware of his/her current competencies, raising awareness of personal strengths, individual achievements and the “where I do well”. All the information, collected by means of a semi-structured interview based on pre-defined *items for a questionnaire/user profile card*, will be discussed with the participant to know his/her “debit and credit sides”, becoming then acquainted about what s/he needs to improve.

Unless it is deemed necessary to organize additional sessions for the benefit of the participant, this methodology foresees only 1 interview at the beginning of the process and 1 upon its completion (see Section 2.4.5). During the last one-to-one meeting, the participant will be asked once again about the same aspects as in the first session, in order to compare the ex-ante and ex-post answers and observe the possible changes on participants and, therefore, the potential impact of the methodology.

The information collected during the interviews will be taken as a reference for the group sessions, in order to address specific individual matters but also of general interest for the audience. They will revolve around some of the key competences for

lifelong learning¹² with a high intra-personal component and a further impact on the professional life, including:

- learning to learn
- social and civic competences
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

A total of around 8 sessions will be organised and distributed throughout the general intervention plan of the pilot project, one for each competence. They will be developed to be as interactive as possible, to help participants learn from their own debates and reflections. The facilitator will help them in this process, addressing specific issues for youngsters to build the content by themselves.

Every pilot partner will set the agenda according to the particularities of its action plan, given the local perspective of the intervention. It will also tackle the topics based on the peculiarities of the audience (with an eye on the information collected during the one-to-one interviews), so there is no specific syllabus to strictly follow but a *general index* to be adapted. Therefore, topics like social interaction, conflict resolution, adaptability, teamwork, social networks and the personal footprint on the Internet, proactivity, etc., will be matters of discussion among other subjects. Each session will be summarized in a report, to briefly describe the specific topics addressed, the atmosphere of the gathering, the debates generated, the impressions of participants and an overall conclusion.

Upon completion, it is expected for participants to have improved their employability by their awareness on the need to have basic skills they will need in the labour market. Therefore, they will be able to assess whether they have such required competences, need to improve or lack some of them to weigh their likelihood of gaining employment. The basic aim is to achieve the reinforcement of youngsters' appropriate behaviour, not only with regard to others but also with their peers, improving their self-confidence as individuals and their job prospects.

The implementation of this element of the project will be supported by the provision of guidance materials produced as part of IO2-A3.

2.4.4 Experience

A key focus of the pilot programme is one or more direct experiences of the workplace and/or other learning environments. The main aims of this include, among other things, helping young people at risk of NEET gain a greater insight into the option available, develop relevant skills and competence and widen their social network of employers and learning providers.

The implementation of this element of the project will be supported by the provision of materials produced as part of IO2-A4.

¹² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:c11090>

The materials will aim to provide a general model, which can be adapted to the specific needs of individual pilot projects. Training content, methodologies and habitual factors are factored in, which are relevant for the assessment and development of the trainability and employability of the young people. Internships are an open learning process for both sides, youth and companies alike. This learning process must be informed and regulated by mutual feedback about progress and difficulties. Training experts from within the company or from training providers must support this reflection and mutual feedback. They encourage and support the interns to reflect, review and evaluate the experiences made along clear and transparent criteria.

The guideline will help to identify and develop the potential of young people qualitatively and quantitatively, independent from their academic achievements. Therefore it will be particularly suitable for introducing NEETs to genuine work experiences in companies. More young people should be exposed to experiences in companies and companies can be introduced to a broader spectrum of applicants. The system described has been tested successfully in a number of different situations.

Experience has shown that internships which are systematically prepared according to the specific needs of the individual company and orientated along the individual strengths of the participants can be beneficial for both sides. The overall goal is the systematic identification of those competencies of the interns, which are really relevant for employment and training in contrast to those competencies which are only relevant in a school or academic context.

2.4.5 Consolidation

The final element of the model is a consolidation period – used to reflect on learning experiences from the experience element, complete the portfolio, a second meeting with the facilitator (see Section 2.4.3) and attend further group sessions to help develop relevant job search skills.

3. Conclusions and next steps

3.1 Overview of the NEETs at Risk model

This document has set out the proposed methodology and core intervention measures of the NEET at Risk project, including:

The target group – to include young people:

- who are not yet NEET – who are still in education/training, although there is a risk that they might become NEET
- based in schools/educational institutions
- as something additional to their normal curriculum rather than instead of it
- less than 18 years old (at most 19).

The methods for selecting/identifying young people for inclusion in the project: It was decided that the particular approach adopted needs to be adapted to the particular situation or context in which the proposed model is piloted – but is likely to include one or more of the following components:

- The identification of young people perceived to be at risk of dropping out early by teachers or other school staff
- The analysis of available school data to identify ‘risk factors’ which in previous years have been shown to be associated with an increased risk of becoming NEET – these may differ depending on the particular area, but are likely to include low attainment, socio-economic status, school failure, etc.
- Completion of risk assessment questionnaires by the learners
- Requests by learners to be involved in the programme.

The expected outcomes of involvement in the project include:

- Helping young people to develop the social capital (contacts, networks, know-how) to find a job
- Ensuring that young people know how to choose the most suitable EET for them
- Encouraging young people not to have a negative attitude towards school/learning

The mechanisms for achieving these outcomes include:

- Different ways of making real engaging links with other young people, employers and professionals with experience of working and learning in different types of EET, via placements, visits, workshops or even one-to-one or small group meetings
- Training to support the acquisition of skills needed to make a successful transition after leaving school, including writing a CV, looking for a job and

attending a job interview, and the possibility of applying or testing out these skills

- Enabling participants to put together a portfolio to help them recognise their skills, competencies, preferences and achievements relevant to different types of EET options.

The main elements of the intervention will include:

- A preparation phase – in which school or other staff are trained in delivering the intervention and a multi-agency project group is set up and has met to discuss how to increase the social capital of programme participants
- A pre-selection/induction element – ensuring that the right young people are chosen to take part and are engaged in the process right from the start
- A guidance element – focussing on preparing young people for their placement(s) and their transition to EET, mainly as a group but also some one-to-one meetings
- An ‘experience-of-EET’ element – involving one or more direct experiences of the workplace and/or other learning environments
- A post-placement consolidation period and future planning period – involving both one-to-one and group work.

3.2 Next steps

There are several steps that still need to be made to prepare the model for piloting in the three areas. These include:

- Developing guidance materials as part of IO-A2, 3 and 4 to support the preparation, guidance, experience and preparation elements of the model
- Developing a portfolio to record the strengths, achievements and qualities of young people participating in the pilot projects
- Developing an agreement form for young people selected to take part in the project to sign at the start
- The selection and training of ‘facilitators’ in schools or other agencies
- The setting up of a multi-agency project group for each of the pilot sites.

APPENDIX 1: NEETS AT RISK POTENTIAL MODELS

Model 1:

Target group:

Young people of compulsory school age; aged 15-18
At school but at risk of becoming NEET

Selection:

List of potential participants identified by teachers on the basis of specified criteria, including for example: low attainment; bad attendance record; etc.
Potential participants are asked to participate in programme (with parental consent) – with the aim of selecting 15 participants per pilot site (Total 45).

Intervention

The programme consists of 12 sessions lasting about 3 hours each – onsite and offsite – and a mixture of group/individual support. They include:

- A group session to get to know each other and clarify objectives, select activities etc.
- Sessions delivered by guidance staff to motivate/raise self esteem/clarify employability skills
- Individual meetings with guidance staff to discuss areas of interest, types of employment, further education/training etc.; as well as possible pathways into education, employment or training
- Visits to and from employers

Intended outcomes

Increase motivation to achieve at school
Develop employability skills
Clarify post-18 pathways in education, employment or training

Model 2:

Target group:

Young people of compulsory school age; aged 15-16
At school but at risk of becoming NEET

Selection:

List of potential participants identified by teachers on the basis of specified criteria, including for example: low attainment; bad attendance record; etc.
Potential participants are asked to participate in programme (with parental consent) – with the aim of selecting 15 participants per pilot site (Total 45).

Intervention

15 students in each school are assigned a mentor (an employee from a local company) whom they meet with twice a term over the course of a year. The mentors work with the students to help them to realise how their interests and skills can steer them towards a suitable and fulfilling career path and ultimately help them reach their full potential.

Intended outcomes

Gain greater insight of what is needed to get a job and do well in employment

Increase motivation to achieve at school

Clarify post-18 pathways in education, employment or training

Model 3:**Target group:**

Young people aged 15-24

Currently in education or training, but at risk of becoming NEET

Selection:

Local schools, colleges and universities identify students at risk of becoming NEET

Potential participants are asked to participate in programme (with/without parental consent depending on age) – with the aim of selecting 15 participants per pilot site (Total 45).

Intervention

The intervention consists of:

- Individual support to explore possible employment opportunities
- A work placement with an employer

Each participant meets with guidance/project staff 3-4 occasions at the start of the intervention to discuss interests, previous education, ambitions etc.

Based on these discussions, they are matched with 15 different employers for work placements – these consist depending on age of student on between 1-4 weeks.

Each participant meets with guidance/project staff once more at the end of the placement to discuss what they have learnt from the placement.

Intended outcomes

Gain greater insight of what is needed to get a job and do well in employment

Clarify employment interests.

Gain employability or work-relevant skills.

Model 4:**Target group:**

Young people of compulsory school age; aged 15-18

At school but at risk of becoming NEET

Selection:

A particular class (or cohort of students) is identified for inclusion in the project – who all receive the intervention.

Intervention

The programme lasts for one academic year and consists of one hour per week focussing on one or two vocational area (e.g. secretarial skills or engineering ...).

Provision is mainly onsite, but there are opportunities for some limited offsite visits.

The programme includes:

- A group session to get to know each other and clarify objectives, select activities etc.



- Sessions delivered by guidance staff to motivate/raise self esteem/clarify employability skills
- Hands on practical work to develop vocational skills relevant to a particular area

Students have the opportunity to achieve a certificate to recognise what they have learnt.

Intended outcomes

Increase motivation to achieve at school

Develop employability skills

Develop work-related skills

Clarify post-18 pathways in education, employment or training

APPENDIX 2: MODEL FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Model	Summary	Strengths	Weaknesses/Suggested changes
Model 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-18 year olds at school • Targeted/Individually selected • 12 sessions – 3 hours each • Employability, motivation, guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainable/easiest to implement • Relevant to project objectives: preventive • Build on existing project (in Italy) • Can be done across several schools • Involves several stakeholders, including guidance staff, teachers, partners etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need flexibility to adapt length and content of programme to individuals • Need to get agreement from families/involve families could be difficult • Age group – expand to end of compulsory schooling rather than age limited
Model 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-16 year olds at school • Targeted/individually selected • 2 meetings per term • Pathways to work, motivation, ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes corporate social responsibility of employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal barriers • Difficult to engage employers • Involve guidance experts as well • Need for preparation of mentors
Model 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-24 year olds in school. College, university • Targeted/individually selected • Preparation, work-placement and post-guidance meeting • Access to work, ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong link with finding work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to find work placements for target group • Insurance/legal obstacles • Not preventive • Too much focus on work
Model 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-18 year olds at school • Group of students • 1 session per week – one hour • Employability skills/vocational skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for broader focus and not just on specific vocational areas – provide tasters instead • Quite challenging to implement over a whole year • Who delivers programme?

