



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*

Practical guidelines on how to implement the NEETS at RISK model

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Title

Practical Guidelines on how to implement the NEETS at RISK model

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Introduction

As can be seen in the Guide “Model for Early Identification, Individualized Targeting and Tailored Intervention for potential NEETs: Flexible Pathways and an Effective Methodology for the Transition into the Labour Market” (Soares et al., 2017), the NEETs at RISK project consisted of three interdependent phases:

- The preparation phase
- The implementation phase
- The follow-up / evaluation phase

The model developed as part of this project is closely correlated with these three phases. It consists of five key elements of which the first is equivalent with the preparation phase, while the four remaining elements are all part of the implementation phase. Further details of the follow-up and evaluation phase (which is not a part of the model itself) can be seen in Guide “Model for Early Identification, Individualized Targeting and Tailored Intervention for potential NEETs: Flexible Pathways and an Effective Methodology for the Transition into the Labour Market” (Soares et al., 2017). All documents referenced in this guide can be found on the project website (<http://www.preventingneets.eu/>).

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The **NEETs at Risk engagement model** consists of the following 5 elements:

- **A preparation element** – 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 element** – focussing on reflecting on and learning from the experience and planning next steps, involving both one-to-one and group work.

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



Table 1: Model elements: content, duration, delivery staff and where to find at the project website <http://www.preventingneets.eu/>

Title	What?	Who?	How long?	Where to find it
Preparation	Staff selection and training Multi-agency project group	Counsellors, teachers, youth workers, employers, EET providers	Ongoing	IO2-A5-PreparationOfStaffToApplyThePilotTestingAndTheMeasuresForeseenInTheMethodology
Pre-selection/ induction	Identify students at risk Selection interview Action Plan	Counsellors, teachers, youth workers	1-2 sessions	Identification of students at risk IO2-A1-GuidelinesPilotProjectApplication (EN) – page 9-10 IO2-A1-PautasImplementaciónProyecto (ES) IO2-A1-LineeGuidaApplicazioneProgettoPilota (IT) Selection interview IO2-A3-MentoringCoachingSessionsForEmployabilityAndTransitionVETtoWork (EN) –

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				<p>page 9-10</p> <p>IO2-A3-SesionesMentoringCoachingParaEmpleabilidadYTransicionalEmpleo</p> <p>IO2-A3-SessioniMentoringCoachingOccupabilitaTransizioneTraScuolaFormazioneLavoro</p>
Guidance	<p>Ice breakers</p> <p>Confidence building</p> <p>Employability skills</p> <p>Social competence</p>	<p>Counsellors, teachers, youth workers – local stakeholders</p>	4-6 sessions	<p>IO2-A3-MentoringCoachingSessionsForEmployabilityAndTransitionVETtoWork (EN)</p> <p>IO2-A3-SesionesMentoringCoachingParaEmpleabilidadYTransicionalEmpleo (ES)</p> <p>IO2-A3-SessioniMentoringCoachingOccupabilitaTransizioneTraScuolaFormazioneLavoro (IT)</p>
Experience	<p>Work placement(s)</p> <p>VET placement(s)</p>	<p>Employers</p> <p>VET providers</p>	4-6 sessions	IO2-A4-MentoringCoachingSessionsForWorkExperienceOpportunities (EN)
Consolidation	<p>Job search skills</p> <p>Review</p>	<p>Counsellors, teachers, youth workers</p>	2-4 sessions	<p>IO2-A1-GuidelinesPilotProjectApplication (EN) – page 21</p> <p>IO2-A1-PautasImplementaciónProyecto (ES)</p>

				<p>IO2-A1-LineeGuidaApplicazioneProgettoPilota (IT)</p> <p>IO2-A3- MentoringCoachingSessionsForEmployabilityAndTransitionVETtoWork (EN)</p> <p>IO2-A3-SesionesMentoringCoachingParaEmpleabilidadYTransicionalEmpleo (ES)</p> <p>IO2-A3- SessioniMentoringCoachingOccupabilitaTransizioneTraScuolaFormazioneLav oro (IT)</p>
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The key learning relating to each of these five elements is described in more detail below.



1. Preparation element

1.1. Details

This element includes: Staff selection and training for those delivering the intervention and setting up a multi-agency project group as well as general preparation for the programme.

1.2 Rationale of element

This element focuses on preparing the implementation of the engagement model, 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 students' social networks.

1.3 Steps to implement

First of all, for the success of the project it is important to have a high level of buy-in with the school from the start. Time needs to be invested to get schools and staff on board and have discussions with them so that they are committed to support the implementation of the programme as best as they can.

Second, schools often do not have the contacts or expertise to develop strong links with employers and local employment, education and training providers to help young people to gain more experiences of VET and jobs. Helpful for this is a **multi-agency project group**, which should be set-up at this stage. This group will be valuable to advise on the implementation of the intervention and at a later stage (e.g., organising work placements – Element 4: Experience). The multi-agency project group 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 second element of this stage is the **selection and training of staff**. On the one hand, staff need to be trained to deliver the programme. This includes familiarization with the concepts of the intervention, the three key outcomes and the format and material of the sessions. On the other hand, facilitators with the necessary skills need to be selected for the delivery. The required skill set include the ability:

- to engage students in the programme, as participants can be passive and reluctant engage in group activities at the beginning of the programme.
- to develop programme routines so that students become familiar with the routine and behaviour rules required of them.
- to empower students by, for example, giving them recognition of efforts and participation.

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In addition to these two core tasks of the preparation stage, the implementation of the intervention can be aided through the use of a **checklist** of key parameters of programme delivery adapted to the needs and circumstances of the participating school, including:

- Place of delivery: in the school or outside of school;
- Time of sessions: during school hours or outside of school hours;
- Timing of sessions: number of sessions and length of sessions.

1.4 Further details / references

- See the “Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners’ countries” (Spielhofer et al., 2015) for a description of this element.
 - See the “Preparation of staff to apply the pilot testing and the measures foreseen in the methodology” (Spielhofer, 2016) for an outline of how to implement a continuous evaluation and monitoring of the programme in schools.
 - See the “Results of the application of the pilot project in partners’ countries” (Spielhofer & Hahne, 2017) for insights into the preparation/setting up of the piloting of this programme in three pilot sites (Portugal, Spain and Italy) which differed in their contextual factors.
 - See the “Guide "Model for EARLY identification, INDIVIDUALIZED targeting and TAILORED intervention for young people at risk of NEET.” (Soares et al., 2017) for the checklist of the programme delivery.
 - See the “Application of the pilot projects in partners’ countries Implementation phase” (Vieira, V., 2015) for further information about the programme.
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2. Pre-selection / induction element

2.1. Details

This element includes: Identification and selection of young people at risk of becoming NEET to take part in the intervention.

2.2 Rationale of element

Selection of the young people from the target group for the participation in the programme is the main aim of this element. Participants will be students deemed to be most at risk of becoming NEET and who should also be most likely to benefit from the programme.

2.3 Steps to implement

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There are several ways to **identify** young people at risk. These depend on the particular context in which the programme is implemented. One approach can be chosen, or several ones can be combined, including:

- The identification of young people perceived to be at risk of dropping out early by teachers, the school principal, school counsellors or other school staff. These might be students with low grades, low achievement, low attendance, having repeated one or more years or students from disadvantaged families;
- 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 students;
- Requests by students to be involved in the programme.

Important is that students feel that they have chosen to take part. Thus, instead of simply telling them to participate, it is valuable to conduct an interview as a requirement to join the programme. During the interview students have the chance to explain why they would like to join the programme and what they expect to get out of it. This gives the students a feeling of achievement and ensures that they are more motivated to join 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 while on the programme.
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2.4 Further details / references

- See the “Guidelines for EARLY identification of young people at risk of NEET and identification of possible preventive intervention measures taking into account local specifications” (Krauss et al., 2015) for a list of risk factors associated with being NEET.
- See the “Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners’ countries” (Spielhofer et al., 2015) for a more detailed description of approaches to identify young people ‘at risk’ of becoming NEET.

3. Guidance element

3.1. Details

This element focuses on the improvement of key competences for employment and preparing students for their work experiences. The element consists of several group sessions as well one-to-one meetings with the facilitator(s).

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3.2 Rationale of element

The combination of mentoring/coaching sessions and individual sessions promotes the self-reflection of students, allowing for acquisition of key competencies and a mind-set change towards learning and employment. The facilitator will guide the students through the intervention process.

The intervention seeks to address three main outcomes:

- Improved social capital (contacts, networks, know-how) to find a job;
- Increased ability to choose the most suitable education, employment or training (EET) after leaving school for them;
- A more positive attitude towards learning either in school, the workplace or a VET provider.

This element plays an important role in achieving those outcomes by having the group sessions centred on these components. The facilitator will hold the role of the mentor and the role of the coach at the same time by addressing personal (mentoring-related) aspects as well as professional (coaching-related) aspects.

3.3 Steps to implement

This element starts with the one-to-one meeting of the student and the facilitator. The interview should consist of the following:

- Support young people in identifying their personal objectives and professional expectations;
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- Help students to identify their personal competencies, their achievements but also their weaknesses;
- Get to know their interests and their family circumstances.

Unless it is seen as necessary, only one individual interview will be held at this stage. Information from this interview will be summarized in a user profile. This user profile will be taken as a reference for the following elements. The second and last interview as part of element 5 will refer to the user profile in particular.

The one-to-one meeting with the facilitator is followed by mentoring and coaching sessions. Around six sessions are planned to improve student's social and employability competences. However, if possible, it is advisable to extend the number of sessions.

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Otherwise, two sessions are intended per outcome:

- Social and civic competencies 1 and 2;
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship 3 and 4;
- Learning to learn 5 and 6.

The structure of the sessions can be modified to meet the local circumstances. The intervention can not only be adapted before the start but also during the delivery. Indeed, the pilot highlighted the need for flexibility in delivery to respond to student interest and engagement. While the general structure of the model is kept, sessions can be adapted in response to student's feedback, recommendations from teachers and experiences from facilitators. Other topics such as digital competence and cultural awareness/expression can be integrated in addition. A general recommendation is to design the sessions as practical as possible with a lot of hands-on activities. Students can find it difficult to concentrate on abstract discussions and exercises which require reading and writing. In addition to that, videos and other media material can be very useful to get the students interest and to make sessions as engaging as possible.

After the group sessions students should have:

- Improved their awareness on the need to have basic skills they will need in the labour market;
 - Acquired or improved 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;
 - Started creating a portfolio to help them recognise their skills, competencies, preferences and achievements relevant to different types of EET options.
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3.4 Further details / references

- See the “Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners’ countries” (Spielhofer et al., 2015) for a description of this element.
- See the “Mentoring and coaching sessions: employability and transition for school/VET to work” (Méndez-Fuente, 2015) for template for the individual interview with students and material for the sessions.
- See the “Results of the application of the pilot project in partners’ countries” (Spielhofer & Hahne, 2017) for results of the piloting phase with further recommendations.

4. Experience element

4.1. Details

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This element includes work experiences in companies such as internships, placements or short visits, as well practical experiences of different VET options.

4.2 Rationale of element

Overcoming barriers in the transition from school to work is one of the main issues facing young people across Europe. Countries with the lowest rate of youth unemployment, like Switzerland, Germany and Austria have strongly work-based training systems, which make a strong effort to expose young people to real-life work situations and to acquaint them with a good knowledge of job seeking and career planning skills, as well as a good sense of the expectations of employers. While these systems cannot be copied 1:1 in different circumstances, the general principle of facilitating transitions from school to work through early exposure to employers and real work situations can be applied universally.

Internships, visits to companies, discussions with shop owners, craftspeople and entrepreneurs help students at risk of becoming NEETs to:

- explore deeper the world of work;
- expand their social capital (knowing companies and other agents);
- build their competence to self-reflect and test their own abilities in an alternative environment.

In addition, this can be supplemented by visits to, or short placements with, VET providers for those wanting to access training or not quite ready to move into employment after leaving school. It provides young people with the opportunity to consider alternative routes of education or training instead of the more traditional academic route.

4.3 Steps to implement

In order to be able to provide work based learning experiences schools and VET providers must reach out to the business community and local VET providers. This is best done by someone with strong links with local providers, such as a school internships coordinator/business community liaison officer who is best placed to coordinate activities involving VET providers and businesses. At the same time, it is important to identify key contacts within companies/VET providers who can coordinate the activities with the school.

In addition, the use of mentors/buddies within companies can serve as a contact person for student's questions and act as role models, particularly if they have had similar experiences at school as those participating in the programme.

14 When planning and setting up work and VET experiences, schools need to consider the following questions:

- What is the aim (identifying competencies, exploring various work environments, knowing about the local businesses, finding matching candidates)?
- What is the most appropriate form of experience?
- How should the experience be implemented? (How long should it last? Where? How often?)
- How should it be evaluated?

After each experience, it is important to evaluate: What has been learned? What are the next steps?

Close cooperation between schools and VET providers and the business community is common in many countries. The NEETS guideline referenced below gives a detailed step by step guidance on how to implement various forms of work-based learning experiences, focusing mainly on organising internships as a regular part of the school/VET training programme.

4.4 Further details / references

- See the "Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners' countries" for a description of this element (Spielhofer et al., 2015) for a summary of this element.
 - See the "Guidelines for Work and VET Placements - Mentoring and coaching sessions - provide work experience opportunities" (Marchl, Krauß and Stark, 2015) for further information about this element.
 - See the Guide "Model for Early Identification, Individualized Targeting and Tailored Intervention for potential NEETs: Flexible Pathways and an Effective Methodology for the Transition into the Labour Market" (Soares et al., 2017) for the full guide.
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5. Consolidation element

5.1. Details

This element consists of further group sessions and an individual interview.

5.2 Rationale of element

The aim of this last element is to give students the opportunity to reflect on learning and experiences from the previous elements.

5.3 Steps to implement

The last element of the model consists of two parts: further group sessions and the second individual interview with the facilitator. Both parts should enable students to reflect on learning and their experiences during the Guidance and Experience element. During the group sessions participants shall:

- complete their portfolio. This is an important tool to help students recognise their competencies, achievements and skills that are relevant to education, employment or training possibilities;
- practice further job search skills as this is particularly relevant for making a successful transition to employment after leaving school
- review their experiences of working and learning in different types of EET, via placements, visits, workshops or even one-to-one or small group meetings.

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During the second individual interview the same questions will be asked as in the first interview in order to compare responses. Potential changes in the student can be observed and it allows participants to reflect on their experience during this programme.

5.4 Further details / references

- See “Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners’ countries” (Spielhofer et al., 2015) for a description of this element.
- See the “Mentoring and coaching sessions: employability and transition for school/VET to work” (Méndez-Fuente, 2015) for material for this element.

6. References

Krauss et al. (2015). Guidelines for EARLY identification of young people at risk of NEET and identification of possible preventive intervention measures taking into account local specifications.

Marchl, G., Krauss A., & Stark, G. (2015). Guidelines for Work and VET Placements - Mentoring and coaching sessions 2 - provide work experience opportunities.

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Spielhofer, T., et al. (2015). Guidelines for the application of the pilot project in partners' countries.

Vieira, V. (2015). Application of the pilot projects in partners' countries
Implementation phase.
