Beyond NEETs

The Integrated Guidance Model (IO2)

Handbook

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The project partnership

7 organisations from 6 countries

jugend am werk _

_ vielfalt wirkt

Jugend am Werk Steiermark

Graz, Austria

meath partnership
engage · enable · participate · progress

Meath Partnership

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Introduction

The Beyond NEET(D)s project, funded by the European Commission as an Erasmus+ project, aims to support the most vulnerable subgroups of unavailable or disengaged persons who are not in employment, education, or training, or are even below this status, as they are statistically not registered as NEETs. The project seeks to provide their target group with open, empowering, and low-threshold opportunities that are tailored to the individual, their needs, and their socioeconomic situation. This way, they gain not only access to further education offers and the labour market, but also the necessary confidence and motivation to enter the workforce or a path in further education.

Through a consortium of partners from Austria, Ireland, Cyprus, Italy, Czechia and Portugal, the project aims to support highly vulnerable (young) people in a twofold approach:

1. By supporting those who work with these individuals through the development of the Integrated Guidance Model Handbook, along with a practice toolkit with a wide range of useful resources.
2. By supporting and engaging the individuals through a motivating and rewarding online gamification approach.

This handbook provides theoretical insights for professionals on how to support their target groups using the integrated guidance model approach. You will also find a practitioner's toolkit that coincides with this handbook. While the handbook focuses on support from a theoretical perspective, the toolkit offers a range of activities for practitioners to put the theory into practice, thus offering a twofold approach to support experienced mentors in their work with mentees, using an integrated approach.

The Integrated Guidance Model Handbook and Toolkit seek to address the challenges of working with the NEETs target group that go beyond education and training by offering practitioners a range of insights and tools on all key areas within the Model, designed to enhance understanding, skills, and confidence in working with this target group.

Where Did We Start from?

The Integrated Guidance Model handbook is the second output of the Beyond NEET(D)s project, and offers a methodological framework when working with a target group of highly disadvantaged individuals. This handbook coincides with a practitioner's toolkit, designed to support mentors in their work with mentees.

Recommendations based on IO1

Defining an Integrated Guidance Model for NEET(D)s cannot be done overnight. Within the Beyond NEET(D)s project, research on this topic was first carried out, which resulted in the first output (IO1) of the project: The Transnational Survey of the Target Group.

Before further elaboration on IO2, the Integrated Guidance Model Handbook, an explanation of what was learned from IO1, and what had to be observed when developing the Integrated Guidance Model is provided below.

Redefining our Target Groups: The Mentees

One thing the survey carried out in IO1 clearly confirmed was the diversity of the group of NEETs. They range from recently unemployed young persons to youth who have been unemployed for a longer time due to personal, social or other reasons. They might also range from school drop-out teenagers to young adults with a university degree. Our survey suggested the predominant age range being from 17 to 26 years old.

The survey respondents were mainly recent graduates. This shows that a large group of NEETs might be recent graduates indeed, but, undoubtedly there is also a – maybe smaller – group of NEETs out there whom we didn't reach with our survey. Some of the reasons identified included; NEETs who were too busy taking care of their children, who couldn't find the motivation to click on the link, who lacked proper internet access or were confronted with other barriers to participation. As this project was designed for this particular group in the first place, these 'forgotten NEETs', young persons without a degree, those who are long-term unemployed, must be kept in mind for the further duration of the project. It is this target group who are most at risk and would benefit greatly from a comprehensive guidance model.

All these findings confirmed the need for an integrated guidance model that is suitable for a wide range of profiles. However, it is also key to have a certain focus in the project, to ensure the materials developed are as tailored as possible to the needs of the target group.

Therefore, it was recommended to narrow the heterogeneous group of NEETs a little further, which resulted in the following mentee profile:

- Young adults from 17 to 26 years' old
- Either recent or long-term unemployed
- With or without a higher education degree

Redefining our Target Groups: The Mentors

The respondents who filled out the survey from the perspective of acting as mentors of a NEETs-person also had a certain profile that we needed to keep in mind for further IO-development. We could say that VET-providers who often get in touch with NEETs, work as job coaches, social workers, counsellors, youth coaches, etc. So, similar to our group of mentees, also the group of mentors can be seen as a quite diverse group with different professional occupancies.

Additionally, respondents appeared to be often well-educated as most of the respondents claimed having a Master's degree. This came a little bit as a surprise, as having a Master's degree should not be a requirement for most of the jobs mentioned above. At the same time, this shows that most mentors have a strong academic background and could be interested in an integrated guidance model that can serve as a theoretical guidance framework in their work.

Finally, the respondents in the survey were also quite experienced in working with our target group of NEETs. Most of them were already working in the field for more than 5 years. This could mean they might already have experience with certain career guidance models and they probably have their own way of working with this target group. This brings an extra incentive for our Integrated Guidance Model to be truly innovative and brings an added value to the work of our mentors.

From Success to Progress Factors

After redefining the target groups for this integrated guidance model, there was a requirement to decide on a number of success factors to somehow measure their progress. However, the consortium agreed that talking about 'success' when working with our specific group of mentees, would not send across the message we want in this project. What we hope to reach for our target groups, is not about achieving 'big successes', but more so about taking small steps forward. Therefore, we chose to change 'success' factors into 'progress' factors, emphasising the importance that every step is a step in the right direction, no matter how big or small.

1. The Integrated Guidance Approach

To understand integrated guidance and how to bring the concept into practice.

"*The greatest success we will ever know is helping others succeed and grow.*"

[Gregory Scott Reid]

1.1 Who is my mentee and how can I define their progress?

Working with NEETs as a Target Group

When you work with a target group described as 'young adults not in training, employment or education, who tend to be hard to reach and highly disadvantaged', it should not come as a surprise that this group is in fact quite diverse. Their backgrounds are different, their reasons for not being in employment or education are different and their ideas about their life and future are probably different. It is safe to say that NEETs have different NEEDS.

When you work with someone who is considered to be in this 'NEET' target group – we will refer to them as mentees from here on – it is likely that you will support them on an individual basis. Your goal might be to empower them and support them towards the next step in their lives, whether that be education, training, or any other involvement they would feel satisfied and comfortable with.

Sometimes, (career) guidance is seen as meeting your mentee, asking about what they would like to do, offering an overview of their possibilities and wishing them all the best in their next step. Unfortunately, it is not that easy and there is much more involved in this role than meets the eye. In reality, you might have called them twice already before your first meeting, so they won't forget about it, or they might have been late because their bus arrived late, or you didn't hear back from them after your meeting, or they didn't seem interested during the conversation and you can't really find a reason for that etc. Working with this group of mentees is challenging, engaging and sometimes disappointing, as you might wonder *'is it worth all of my efforts?'.*

Moreover, due to the diversity of your target group of mentees, it might be more difficult to follow a certain methodological approach when offering guidance, and you find yourself more often keeping your head above the water than actually swimming. On top of that, you probably need to report on some evidence of 'success' and steps taken for progression in order to guarantee the continuation of funding streams, and maybe even your role itself. So needless to say, the coaching of this target group of mentees is complex.

Beyond Guidance on Career or Education

The complexity of these situations goes beyond 'career' or 'education' guidance and has more to do with finding their trust, motivation, building self-esteem, working together with other professional services, finding the right way to communicate, etc., in order to keep them engaged. The survey carried out as part of the Beyond NEET(D)s project, with professionals from six different European countries working with this target group, confirmed the main challenges coaches and/or mentors face have to do with **psychological support** and communication. Although professionals working with this target group come from a broad range of educational backgrounds, only a few of them have a counselling background or experience as a mental health professional. Therefore, they sometimes lack the knowledge, skills and/or confidence to psychologically support their mentees.

Offering psychological support is – despite what some might think – not really a 'one-man' job. If one feels supported, motivated, confident and thriving, this usually isn't because of a good therapist, but because they can rely on a supportive network of safe and trusted people that are near to them. Identifying this **social support**, both professional and non-professional, is therefore key, but often difficult for mentees within this target group. The same way it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to thrive as (young) adults.

Another challenge that is at the core of the work that mentors are involved in, has to do with **communication**. The questionnaire from the Beyond NEET(D)s project revealed a friction in the communication process between mentors and mentees. Many mentors experience difficulties reaching their target group and – when finally reached – keeping them engaged and identifying ways of communication that suits both parties. Professionals constantly find themselves looking for new and diverse ways to reach their target group, but due to lack of time or resources, it is often a case of trial and error rather than the result of a thought-provoking process.

Additionally, there is more to communication than reaching your target group. The communication process between the mentor and the mentee is often fractioned. In the guidance approach, aligning communication between mentor and mentee is key. This means the mentor needs to be able to listen carefully to the story of their mentee, the mentee in turn needs to be clear about who they are and what they want. In return, the mentor can identify what the mentee needs and motivate them to work towards this goal.

Measuring Mentees' Progress

In parallel with developing an Integrated Guidance Model, the partners within this project also had to find a way to measure a mentee's progress.

Partners started identifying 4 different domains where mentors could help their mentees to progress: on a personal level (our **self**), on a **contextual** level, progress factors concerning **skills for employability** and finally factors that have to do with staying **on-the-job**. Given the fact that the mentees are such a diverse group, we wanted to emphasise the importance of providing space for other progress factors that might not be visible through the listed progress factors, but come up in the conversation between the mentor and the mentee. We called these '**undefined progress factors**'. This was the first step in the development phase of the progress factors, and later the Integrated Guidance Model, as it resulted in the image below:

Figure 1: Beyond NEET(D)s Progress Factors (2021)

As a next step, we defined 5 specific progress factors for each of these categories. We consciously chose to describe them in a way that each of the factors can be easily measured, as this increases the usability for the factors in the further development of the project.

These progress factors[1] can be used as an additional tool for measuring progress when guiding your mentee. They can be found in the toolkit activity 'Using Progress Factors in the Guidance Process', which supports you in bringing these factors into practice.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Do you feel confident in offering psychological support to your mentees?
2. Are there other professionals who can support you in this role?
3. How well do your mentees communicate with you?
4. How do you currently measure your mentees' progress?

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[1] *Please refer to chapter 6. Work-Based Learning (pg. 57)*

1.2 Being aware of our own unconscious bias

It is very important when working with diverse mentee groups to be aware of our unconscious bias. It is equally important that the young people we are working with are aware of their unconscious bias. So, what is unconscious bias and why is it important?

Bias is a preconception that is in favour of, or against, one thing over another, and usually in a way that is considered unfair. Biases can have positive or negative consequences, can be held by an individual or by a group of people, and can be directed towards any social group. A person's ethnicity, race, age, gender, religion, physical abilities, weight, height, or sexual orientation are just some of the characteristics that are subject to bias.

There are two types of biases, one we are aware of - conscious bias (or explicit bias), and our unconscious bias (implicit bias). According to Renee Navarro, Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Outreach (2020), our unconscious bias "refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner". Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about certain groups of people, and we form these social stereotypes outside our own conscious awareness.

Our unconscious bias is often opposite to our conscious values, beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, it is essential that mentors be aware of their unconscious bias when working with vulnerable young people. It is also necessary to make our mentees aware of their unconscious biases so that they can be more conscious of their actions, behaviour and acceptance towards others.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Can you think of a time when you felt unfairly judged?
2. Do you think that you ever judged another person unfairly?
3. Thinking back, how might you have handled the situation differently?

1.3 Towards an Integrated Guidance Model

Based on the challenges that were identified in the research report that had been carried out in the first phase of this project (IO1) and based on the progress factors that had been defined, the Beyond NEET(D)s project consortium developed an Integrated Guidance Model to support practitioners working with difficult to reach and highly disadvantaged target groups, such as the so-called NEETs.

The Integrated Guidance Model developed as part of the Beyond NEET(D)s Erasmus+ Programme (2021), builds on the model used to define the progress factors and offers a comprehensive yet integrated perspective on the guidance of NEETs as mentees. The model identifies 5 key areas in the coaching process:

- **Self**: An important aspect of the coaching process is to support the mentee in their self-awareness, self-reflection and personal development or growth. This area might include working on their self-esteem, motivation and other topics aimed at getting a better idea of who they are and what their dreams are.

- **Context**: Every mentee carries their own personal background with them. As a mentor, you might find yourself feeling frustrated about this because very often this is what makes it hard for your mentee to take the next step in their lives. It might have to do with family responsibilities, mental health, physical health, no support network, and a number of other things that have an influence on who they are and the stage they are at in their life. Another reason why working in this area might feel frustrating is because it is not always clear 'how far your job goes.' Therefore, when you find yourself working around your mentees' context, it is key to consult your network and bring other (professional) support services on board to support not just your mentee, but also yourself and your professional boundaries.

- **Employability**: As a mentor, you always try to guide your mentee towards something, whether that be towards training, employment, or another step forward in their life. Reaching some sort of employment at a certain stage in their lives, however, is almost always a long-term goal. Therefore, you find yourself working with them on finding that next step, helping them find a course, create a CV, or preparing them for job interviews.

- **On-the-job**: Being able to find a job is a big achievement every mentee should be proud of. However, keeping a job might be even more difficult for some, due to a variety of reasons. Integrated guidance does not stop as soon as your mentee makes that one step of progress, even if that one step was finding a job. If you want to create long-term impact as a mentor, stay on the side-lines for a while.
  You might still be able to coach them in their new position and this might make a real difference in the long-term, as it might result in job security versus having to go through a similar process again after your mentee has been made redundant, or did not receive an extension of their contract.

- **Communication**: At the core of the Integrated Guidance Model is communication. No matter what you do with your mentee, at every step of the way, there is communication. Communication is key. It determines whether your mentee will find their way to your service, if they trust you enough to show up, or to return for their next appointment, or

whether they feel safe enough to tell you the whole story. For each of the domains within the Integrated Guidance Model, both non-verbal and verbal communication are essential and skills such as active listening, showing empathy and being aware of your own bias are incredibly important for the mentor to create a safe environment for their mentee to grow a mutual feeling of trust. Because without trust, your mentee is only moving backwards.

Not only does the integrated guidance model entail all key aspects one can identify in the guidance process, it also acknowledges the heterogeneity of the target group by incorporating '**undefined factors**' into the model. Each mentee is different and in order to maintain an individualised approach, keeping in mind that there might be something else that has a place in the coaching process (other than the 5 domains defined), makes it a truly comprehensive and integrated approach.
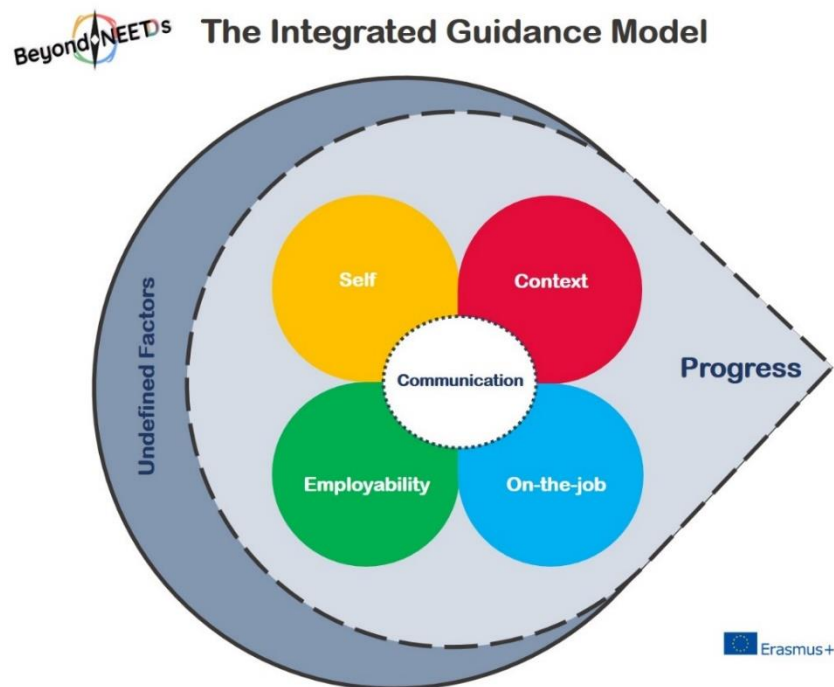
Figure 2: The Integrated Guidance Model (Beyond NEET(D)s Erasmus+ Project, 2021)

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Reflect on your own experiences of looking for employment. Do you believe that these progress factors would have helped you to secure work?
2. Think about your own group of mentees. How do you think you could apply the progress factors in your work?
3. How do you think you could effectively engage your mentees using non-traditional methods of communication?

1.4 Introducing the 'Client Journey'

The client journey is the process by which your mentee interacts with you and others who may be involved in the process of identifying and achieving their goals. In order to ensure that your mentee reaches their goal, you must first understand what has led them to this point, and identify the steps that they will need to take to make their goals a reality.

The client journey cannot be predicted or assumed as it is very specific to the life experiences of your mentee. Therefore, the best way to truly understand your mentee's journey is to work in collaboration with them. Ask them to think about what they want to achieve from the mentoring, get to know them - build up rapport and trust, and work together to set boundaries and expectations. Empower them by allowing them the freedom to set the agendas for meetings and provide each other with feedback and suggestions throughout the process. Assist them in monitoring and reflecting on their progress throughout their journey.

Mentees should be encouraged to reflect on the steps they have taken in life so far to progress to where they are today, and to set goals for where they aspire to be. There are many activities in this chapter's toolkit that can help your mentee to realise their progression to date and to be proud of how far they have come. Mentees' realistic aspirations should be heard and discussed, and these then become their life goals. It is the steps in between that you can help them to take that forms the next part of their journey.

Figure 3: Next Step[2]

To help your mentee better envision their own journey, ask them to create a 'vision map' (toolkit activity 6). This will help them to realise how far they have come, envision what their future could look like, and determine the steps needed to get there. This vision map will outline their journey, and determine how you can work together with your mentee to achieve their goals.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Reflect on your life experiences that have led you to where you are. How have these impacted on your own journey?
2. Think of your goals. Can you identify the steps you will need to take to achieve them?
3. To truly understand the journey of others, we must first understand our own. Having an idea of your personal journey, do you now feel better equipped to help your mentees understand and determine their individual journeys?

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[2] Source: https://pixabay.com/photos/business-the-next-step-next-success-4241792/

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Useful Resources

Tips for mentors: https://www.guider-ai.com/blog/how-to-be-a-good-mentor

Tips for your introduction session with mentees: https://www.guider-ai.com/blog/how-to-run-a-successful-intro-session-with-your-mentee

Tips for mentoring: https://my.lerner.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/Skills_for_Sucessful_Mentoring.pdf

Tips for communicating with mentees: https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/Communications-/listening-amp-communication-skills-for-mentors-final2e3926f16116603abcacff0000bee5e7.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Tips for building relationships and trust: http://dusseldorp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2006/12/MODULE-8_-Building-Relationships.pdf

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2. Taking a Trauma-Informed Perspective

How understanding trauma can help us in providing the right psychological support for our mentee.

"Trauma is not what happens to us but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness".

[Peter A. Levine (Clinical Psychologist)]

2.1 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Explained

As mentioned before, the term NEET is defined as "a young person that is both not employed and does not attend any courses (formal or informal education, or any kind of training)". Despite this definition of "NEETs", it is still considered a very heterogeneous group of people, and the term can be considered very superficial. This includes people with diverse backgrounds, such as: early school-leavers; individuals with disabilities; the inactive female force; single-parent families; economic immigrants and refugees; unemployed young persons. It has been noted that the majority of NEETs are women. This might be explained with the lack of adequate tools for reconciliation between family and work, and the consequent decision for women to engage in informal care activities.

In this category, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, who have run away from wars, terrorism, and adverse environments, are included. People who have been incarcerated and are currently looking for a way into the labour market can fall in this category. These target-groups, due to past experiences, can live traumatised, and psychologically unstable. Therefore, it is important to address this need by educating professionals working with NEETs on how to spot a psychologically unstable person and lead them to a professional for further support.

This module will offer such assistance. It will start with a brief description of what trauma is, the consequences of it on the development of our brain; the different reactions towards a traumatic experience; and finally, provide some information about resilience.

Figure 1 - Understanding trauma

Before any explanation of a trauma, it is important to underline that this definition is very dependent on the person's reaction to the supposed "traumatic" experience.

Herman (1993) defends that "traumatic reactions" occur when experiencing or witnessing an extreme bodily violation, pain, death, or damage in which no avoidance is perceived as possible.

A related conceptualisation is presented by the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994). It defines a potential traumatic stressor as the:

> *"Direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (p. 424)."*

The age of childhood is defined as from birth until 17 years old. Within these years, potentially traumatic events may occur in a child's life that leads to trauma, called Adverse Childhood Experience, or ACE. How can we identify someone who has experienced ACE? The CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention), defines it as:

Someone who has, for example:

- ✓ Lived through a family members suicide attempt or death
- ✓ Witnessed domestic or community violence
- ✓ Experienced bullying, abuse, or neglect
- ✓ Gone through mental health and/or substance use issues
- ✓ Been caught up in a parental separation or a parental figure going to jail

A child living through an environment as such, grows alongside unhealthy or absent concepts of safety, stability, and bonding, potentially leading to chronic health problems, mental issues, and substance use in adult years. ACE's, however, are preventable and, when they occur, there are ways to intervene and limit the scope of their impact.

Note: The examples given do not account for a complete list of adverse experiences, there are many more possible triggers of traumatic experiences that can hinder a person's wellbeing.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. After reading this, how would you accurately explain trauma to friends during coffee?
2. To what degree do you feel able to help someone in such a situation?
3. Have you or someone you know, experienced something like a traumatic experience, that you can relate with?

2.2 The Development of our Brain

As aforementioned, some NEETs can in fact be people who have experienced traumatic experiences in their early life (like refugees or asylum seekers). Therefore, it is important, for their better integration in the labour market, to address these instabilities and consequently help them find a job.

A traumatic experience can lead to serious psychological disorders, like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1994). The literature shows that, even though men report more exposure to traumatic experiences (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995), women develop PTSD more often than men (Christiansen & Hansen, 2015). Since the majority of NEETs are women, it is important to focus on this variable when looking into NEET integration in the labour market.

So, what implications does a potentially traumatic experience have on the development of an early brain?

The brain develops as the child grows from birth to adolescence in a hierarchy way (see the diagram):

3. Thinking, planning, inhibiting & learning (cortical brain)

2. Attachment, emotions, and behaviour (limbic brain)

1. Motor and sensory input (brain stem/mid brain)
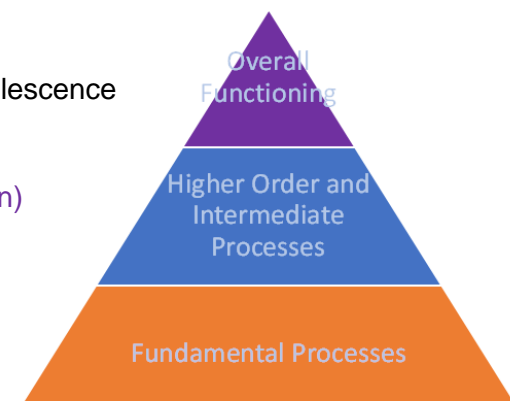
Figure 2 - Bottom-up development of the brain

The most primitive part, which is the area that is developed the earliest (the brainstem) is responsible for keeping us safe. It is the part of the brain that enables us to <u>run</u> from danger, <u>fight</u> for our life or <u>freeze</u> inside. This mechanism is activated if the child is exposed to dangerous environments. In these environments, the brainstem will constantly be on high alert, seeking safety by preventing danger.

The problem for traumatised children is that when they transition into a safe environment, the primitive brain does not turn off. This means the child stays continuously in "survival mode"; and normal every-day events signal danger to their brain.

Whilst they are stuck here, they cannot form secure attachments; manage their emotions or behaviour (in the limbic brain); think, learn or reflect (in the cortical brain), because they "fighting for survival" in a world that they feel is highly dangerous. In sum, children's brains develop from the Bottom-Up, and the higher brain regions do not work properly if the lower brain regions are stuck. This can even impair academic learning, which happens in the cortical brain (Beacon House, 2017).

Studies show that, if not addressed, a traumatised person is more likely to engage in violent behaviour as a solution for their future conflicts (Pomeroy, 1995). A later study underlined this relationship, claiming that falling victim of a violent crime is one of the best traumatic predictors of violence (Neller, Denney, Pietz, & Thomlinson, 2005). The engagement in these anti-social behaviours can be an obstacle for a smooth social integration, especially for the labour market. A more recent study researched the PTSD suffered by Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans. The study showed that almost half of all veterans had some level of impairment in their intimate relationship functioning and about a quarter reported impairments in their occupational functioning. This suggests that PTSD can affect various aspects of your life that are not related to the traumatic experience (Vogt et al., 2017).

These findings highlight the implications of trauma on everyday routines, personal life, and in academic achievements. Therefore, it is important to shed light on trauma when looking into integrating young NEETs in the workforce, since this can be a big obstacle for their labour success.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Have you ever encountered a NEET who has potentially suffered a traumatic experience?
2. Did you know about the implications of a traumatic experience on a persons' life?
3. Why do people who have lived traumatic experiences need help?

2.3. When the Brain Experiences Stress: Fight – Flight – Freeze

As afore-mentioned, the fight-flight-freeze response is your body's natural reaction to danger. It's a type of stress response that helps you react to perceived threats. This response is triggered by psychological fear that has been "learnt". Meaning, you've associated a situation or a stimulus with negative experiences. This psychological response is initiated when you're first exposed to the situation and develops over time.

Specifically, fight-or-flight is an active defence response where you fight or flee the potentially dangerous environment. On the other hand, freezing is a further preparation to protect yourself by either fighting or running. It involves similar physiological changes, but instead, you stay completely still and get ready for the next move.

When you're faced with a perceived threat, your survival mode heightens. That's because it already considers the situation to be life threatening, and your body automatically reacts with the fight-flight-freeze response to keep you safe (Nunez, 2020).

Here are a few physiological responses that are triggered in the fight-or-flight mechanism:

- **Blood-** Blood thickens, which increases clotting factors. This prepares your body for injury.
- **Hands and feet-** As blood flow increases to your major muscles, your hands and feet might get cold.
- **Ears-** Your ears "perk up" and your hearing becomes sharper.
- **Breathe faster-** Your breathing speeds up to deliver more oxygen to your blood. This is done to get us ready to fight or run
- **Feel your heart race-** Your heart beats faster to bring oxygen to your major muscles.
- **Feel Dizzy-** The increase of oxygen in the blood makes us dizzy if we don't use it
- **Eyes-** Your peripheral vision increases so you can notice your surroundings. Your pupils dilate and let in more light, which helps you see better
- **Sweating-** Your skin might produce more sweat or get cold. You may look pale or have goose bumps.
- **Tense muscles-** To get ready to run or fight, your muscles will tense
- **Pain perception-** Fight-or-flight temporarily reduces your perception of pain

(Beacon House, 2017).

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Have you ever experienced the fight-or-flight mechanism?
2. What kind of situations do you perceive to be threatening for you?
3. Do you think you are more of a "fight" or "flight" person?

2.4 The Window of Tolerance as a Guidance to Building Resilience

The Window of Tolerance Explained

People are best able to deal with stressful situations and their triggers when they are within their ability to manage their resulting emotions. This is where the concept of "Window of Tolerance" comes in. Corrigan, Fisher and Nutt (2011) describe it as the optimal zone of arousal for a given person to function in everyday life, where emotions can be experienced as tolerable, and information can be integrated.

Beyond the window of tolerance lie the states of "Hyperarousal" and "Hypoarousal". The first describes a heightened state of activation and energy, that might elicit the aforementioned fight, flight or freeze response, where a person might lose control of their actions. The second is a shutdown or collapse response where a person might feel numbness, emptiness, having a black stare or an inability to speak and express themselves.

The authors outline behaviours that people use to try and get back within their window of tolerance but end up taking them to the opposite end of the spectrum. For example, following a feeling of terror after a trauma flashback, jumping to a hyperarousal state, one might try to calm down, eating for comfort, but then this might lead to feelings of shame for overeating, leading to a hypoarousal state. At last, trying to compensate for this, one might try alcohol intoxication to increase their arousal, but instead of landing in the window of tolerance, it ends up in the harmful hyperarousal state, during withdrawal, potentially leading back to trauma flashback, continuing the cycle.

To avoid these states of dysregulation and the actions associated with them, as the main mode of activity, one must try to stay within the Window of Tolerance. How can you help someone do that?

Figure 3 - Reaching out

Building Resilience: Expanding your Calm/Optimal Zone

Hobfoll (2007) identified 5 principles of the intervention in trauma situations, after gathering a panel of world-renowned experts. These principles guide the most sensitive areas in need of support, promoting the feeling of Safety, Calmness, the sensation of Self-efficacy and community efficacy, the Connection to a social support network and Hope.

Adding to this, Brymer et al. (2006) sets some principles on how to prepare when helping someone who is experiencing trauma, how to establish a relationship, promote stability, safety, and comfort. How to gather information, refer the person for other services and help with coping and social support.

Firstly, according to Brymer et al. (2006) it is important to be mindful of how you step into the situation, understand the circumstances you're dealing with so you can begin to help with the distress signals, such as agitation, isolation, apathy, excessive worrying, and others. It is important to adjust the conversation to the needs and concerns of the target-group and focus on problem solving strategies, not letting the conversation steer into a sum of complaints.

Trauma can elicit strong reactions in people. So, maintaining a calm presence can help build trust and show a hopeful stance on the situation, a state which might be taken as an example and followed. Be mindful of peoples' cultural, ethnic, religious, or linguistic contexts and cultures, as well as people belonging to populations at risk, such as the socially disadvantaged, people who have suffered significant losses. These might be a hint to how the person you're confronted with expresses emotions and attitudes, as well as a suggestion on traditions, rituals, familiar structure that can be promoted and which might benefit the person you're trying to help.

Brymer et al. (2006) emphasises the importance of:

- Observing first, avoiding being intrusive, asking what people need and how you can help.
- Be prepared for the person to avoid you, or, conversely, not to let you go.
- Focus on listening to the needs of the people you're helping when they speak.
- When speaking, do it calmly, patiently and be sensitive. Avoid slang or jargon words.
- Positively reinforce the person's attempts to remain safe and deal with his or her situation.

Knowing this, and joining the contributions of both authors' models, we draw guidelines on how to promote specific key conditions, when faced with a person impacted by traumatic experiences.

To promote Hope, Safety and Calmness, it is important to:

- Normalise stress reactions
- Help people in identifying, amplifying, and concentrating in developing their strengths
- Encourage coping behaviours (deep breathing, muscle relaxation, grounding techniques)
- Help deal with self-deprecating thoughts

To promote Self-efficacy:

- Give people resources
- Involve them in the decision-making process to their recovery
- Promote community activities (gatherings, religious activities)
- Encourage people's belief in their abilities
- Teach how to solve problems and set achievable goals
- Help increase the person's notion of control over their problems

To promote the connection to a social support network:

- Identify those without any support.
- Teach them how to look for help
- Help with disagreements within members of the family
- Provide formal support on useful resources

Throughout this article, in our effort to make clear what trauma is and how to deal with it, we have been revolving around two important major takeaways:

→ Traumatic experiences do not necessarily lead to trauma.

→ Our brains show plasticity, present circumstances can be changed, trauma is not forever.

With this in mind, when helping people who have been through traumatic experiences, you can help them deconstruct long held beliefs and thoughts about who they are, what their experiences meant, to help them build resilience. Some examples are as follows:

- What have you been trying to do, to help you out of your situation?
- What improvements have you been seeing lately?

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Why is it important to help soon after a traumatic event?
2. Name 2 situations when it might be better to redirect someone to a professional therapist.
3. How can you help with someone's traumatic experience in improving their success in the labour market?

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Useful Resources

ACEs- https://youtu.be/8gm-lNpzU4g

Maintaining the Window of Tolerance- https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/learning-loss-trauma-and-our-window-of-tolerance

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOCTxcaNHeg&t=5s

https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/

http://www.smes-europa.org/ERASMUS+%20trauma.htm

https://istss.org/membership/member-benefits-services

https://www.facebook.com/gistt.org

Site de apoio nacional- https://eusinto.me/

Online Psychologists- https://complicated.life/

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3. Building and Maintaining a Social Support Network

"If you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go together."

[African proverb]

3.1 The Importance of Healthy, Loving Relationships in Growing as a Person

Connection is Key

In order to be able to support and accompany young people on their paths, intensive work is required. From establishing contact to a trusting relationship, a lot of engagement and professionalism is required on the part of the mentor. Especially, in relation to the target group of NEETs, this process plays an important role and can be described as a key factor for successful coaching. Keep in mind that the term NEETs describes a diverse group with different needs. For some it can be a temporary status, for others it can be a display of disadvantage[3]. When reaching this target group, it can help to separate those two types of NEETs for the further mentoring process. A strict separation is not possible, but it can help to understand the current situation and the related goals.

With the terms of the mentor or coach, a positive and motivating aspect for the cooperation can already be mentioned. It is a person who provides support and help. The dissociation from the school system, counselling institutions or parents can bring a motivating aspect for the young people to cooperate.

Figure 4: Connection is key (shutterstock)

Particularly, attention and empathy are necessary to pick up the mentee where he or she is located right now in their life. Active listening is necessary to be able to recognise and work out the life situation and possible further goals. Close observation and recognition of the other person's behaviour, language and attitude can make an important contribution to identifying goals and realistic next steps. In addition, this sensitive approach is necessary when working with a sensitive and hard-to-reach target group in order to prevent a possible breakdown of the relationship (see Höher, 2014). Section

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[3] https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20118&langId=en

4 provides suggestions on how communication can be implemented into the coaching process.

Building a relationship is linked to recognition and appreciation of the mentee. The focus can be on personality strengthening. Motivation can be linked to the mentee's strengths. Through this positive and appreciative approach, a basis of trust can be developed. Noting the mentor's observations and assessments can show the mentor's interest and reveal the profundity of the process.

However, suggestions for solutions or ideas that the mentor identifies during the coaching process can be noted, but not directly proposed. Addressing these immediately, can lead to the mentee withdrawing or being overwhelmed, since the objective is imposed from the outside. The time factor plays an essential role in this process. The time factor should not be in the foreground in the coaching process.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Which topics is the mentee willing to talk about? Which topics does she/he avoid?
2. What are the interests of the mentee?
3. Have I listened actively to the mentee instead of presenting proposed solutions?

3.2 Towards a Multidisciplinary Approach

The work in coaching and accompanying people is very individual and personal. That is why the process should be designed and implemented individually for each mentee. In this context, however, every mentor also acts differently. How coaching will be implemented depends on the working style and attitude of the mentor. Therefore, constant reflection on one's own professional role is important and recommended (see Höher 2014).

Multidimensionality in practical work is another essential factor. Different approaches such as psychological, physical and social aspects can be integrated into the mentoring process. For this, it is important to follow the approach of lifelong learning. New approaches and methods can be developed and tested on the basis of further education and training. This expansion of the repertoire supports the mentor in enabling an individual and appropriate coaching process for each mentee.

On the other hand, the exchange with other disciplines and persons can broaden personal horizons in the form of supervision and intervision. Especially when coaching is perceived as personally challenging, a change of perspective can support one's own professionalism.

A checklist can be supportive in this process in order to work on issues at different levels. After all, areas such as the social environment, financial security, the ideas and perceptions of caregivers can also have a great influence on the development of goals. For topics that do not find a place in the coaching setting, the next chapter is listed as a starting point.

The focus should be set on the individual abilities of the metee; by integrating the gender and diversity aspect, direct and indirect disadvantages due to gender, origin, culture, etc. should be eliminated. Furthermore, sensitive language regarding role attribution is another essential aspect of this approach.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. What does coaching trigger in me personally as a mentor?
2. Have I had coaching in a similar situation before and am I maybe biased?
3. Did I get to know the mentee holistically (noted different aspects)?

3.3 Growing your Professional Network as a Mentor

The target group of NEETs usually has to struggle with a multitude of problematic situations. This insurmountable rock is made up of many issues/challenges and makes overcoming them seem impossible at first sight (see Eurofond 2016). As a mentor, all these issues can be identified and pointed out, but working on them is often not within the mentor's area of competence. For this, it is important to know institutions and contact points in order to be able to refer the mentee correctly. Especially in the regional context, this knowledge is required in order to be able to professionally pass on topics that cannot be dealt with during the coaching process.

Examples of this are debt counselling, addiction counselling, psychotherapists, but also doctors and authorities. An essential aspect for successful implementation is the sustainable provision of services. For example, in most cases it is not enough to pass on contact details to the mentee. Joint appointments, reminders and reflection on the meetings can contribute to sustainable implementation and should be implemented into the mentoring.

In order to know the regional network of counselling and guidance services, networking must be part of the mentor's mandate. It makes sense to attend network meetings and get to know the contents of different services in order to be constantly up-to-date.

Figure 5: exchange experiences (Jugend am Werk Stmk GmbH)

In addition, the dissemination of one's own project can be brought into focus. How is the target group informed about my service? Is it known in my region? Often, access to the target group leads through other professional support systems, which - in terms of sustainability - ensure that the young people arrive and stay at the mentoring process.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Am I aware of regional projects/offers?
2. Are there stakeholders I should get in touch with?
3. Is my work/project known regionally?

3.4 Building a Supportive Social Network for Your Mentee

As already described, it takes more than a mentor to motivate and support NEETs in the long term. A network of professionals can be helpful to deal with problems and challenges they are faced with. However, in order to be able to support mentees in the long term, the goal is to reduce the professional network due to reach empowerment. There are different ways of implementation, ranging from the personal environment, to volunteering, to possible peer-to-peer counselling. Two methodological approaches are also presented for identifying and strengthening the network on the mentees. A prerequisite for this work is the knowledge of local conditions about possible projects or initiatives as well as economic and institutional knowledge.

Working with Volunteers - Beyond NEET(D)s and Sinbad Austria

The coaching process via the Beyond NEET(D)s platform brings many advantages for mentees. For example, challenges such as fears, accessibility or no financial means for transport can be excluded. Another positive aspect can be the anonymous form of the coaching setting. Especially for NEETs which are meant to be hard-to-reach, it can offer an easy access for receiving counselling and support.

As the platform and it's functions are described in chapter 5, the mentors can get a deeper understanding on how to use this innovative approach for supporting the vulnerable target group.

Critically, however, this setting also brings disadvantages. These were also identified in the preceding survey (IO1) and should be discussed. For example, personal contact is seen as a success factor for a sustainable coaching process. There is also a lack of digital skills or resources (internet, laptop) seen as possible barriers for mentees to use the platform. Young people who do not feel comfortable in this online setting should be offered an alternative form

of counselling. In Austria, Sinbad Austria[4] provides a successful and innovative form of guidance. Combined with volunteers who make themselves available as mentors, mentees are accompanied and supported on a personal level and far from hierarchical structures. This leads to a positive and easy access to the needs of the target group. However, even if the support is provided by volunteers, the initiative is connected to a professional network and cannot be called the personal network/surroundings of the mentee.

Setting up a peer-to-peer support system

Guidance in a peer-to-peer mode again raises the guidance setting to an innovative level. With this approach, guidance moves a bit further away from systems such as school, labour market or family. The conversation at eye level gets rid of the hierarchical aspect and thus allows for an easier relationship building.

In addition, a peer is an expert in the field of action, i.e. the environment of the interlocutor. Understanding the current challenges and being able to put oneself in the other person's shoes makes it much easier to identify realistic goals[5].

Peer-to-peer counselling can be used to help with orientation and decision-making. The definition of a solution or its success is not within the competence of the peer. Therefore, a training or briefing of the counselling person is absolutely necessary if a sustainable and long-term success of the counselling is desired. The tasks and objectives of the role should be clarified and reflected upon before the guidance process begins.

A combination of a professional mentor and peer-supported counselling can thus represent the connection of the two approaches and cover the understanding of the life situation on the one hand, but also the long-term support and accompaniment of goal achievement on the other. In the course of developing the Beyond NEET(D)s platform, this aspect was not explicitly integrated. A reflection on possible access to peers represents a possible extension and resource of the platform.

Tools to Support your Mentee

If networking is to be integrated into the work in a sustainable and effective way, the mentee's environment must also be considered more closely. The methods network map and resource map refer to the participants and their personal network and life environment.

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[4] https://www.sindbad.co.at/
[5] see Westphal P., Stroot T., Lerche E. Wiethoff C. (2014)

The two methods are easy to use and flexible to integrate into the coaching process. They can be used in personal conversations to work on long-term goals. In the meantime online versions are possible and make it even more easy to implement. It is important to have a personal discussion after filling in the worksheets. Understanding people as resources and possible supports are an important part of working on goals in a sustainable way. The mentees need to understand the potential of their own resources and relationships before using them in the future (see Pantucek-Eisenbacher P. 2019).

Network map:

The method can be used to map the person's network[6]. In order to plan long-term goals or next steps after the training, it can be of interest to reflect on the current network of the mentee. Which people are part of the network? Is the focus on private or professional contacts? Do the participants understand their own network? Have they already reflected on the people around them?

When it comes to personal challenges, the network can be used as a first point of reference. For this, it

Figure 6: network map
(Jugend am Werk Stmk GmbH)

is relevant to know possible professional support systems and to be able to point them out if needed. A possible implementation is attached to this chapter as an example for usage.

Resource map:

This method focuses on people themselves. The method allows a deeper look into the person and its environment[7]. Social contacts are shown in combination with other resources like money, equipment, or education. These areas can also be essential to identify or work on further goals.

Resources can be divided into 4 different categories: The personal resources/competences, the social resources (relationships), material resources and infrastructural resources. Also for this approach an example of usage is attached as activity to this chapter.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Where can the mentee find support concerning the personal environment?
2. Which resources does the mentee have when reflecting about future goals?
3. Which relationships are positively, and which ones are negatively associated by the mentee?

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[6] practical example: http://www.pfeffer.at/egonet/Hollstein%20Pfeffer.pdf
[7] practical examples: https://wayacademy.de/was-sind-persoenliche-ressourcen/
more information: https://luettringhaus.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Merchel-HandbuchASD-buch-SRO2012.pdf

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Useful Resources

https://ejournals.bib.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/sws/article/view/45

https://www.socialwork.org/resources/professional-networking/

https://www.esn-eu.org/

https://www.phoenix.edu/blog/strategic-networking-why-it-pays-to-plan.html

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4. From Communication to Dialogue

Frameworks and strategies to communicate effectively and empathetically with your mentee.

"Verbal communication is essential in order to understand what is going on inside other people. If they don't tell us their thoughts, feelings, and their experiences, we are left to guess".

[Dr Gary Chapman]

4.1 Communication Framework I: Non-Violent Communication

The Origin of the Term Nonviolent Communication

"If we want to be compassionate, we must be conscious of the words we use. We must both speak and listen from the heart."[8] This quote was used by Marshall Bertram Rosenberg, the author of books that deal with nonviolent communication. Marshall B. Rosenberg was an American psychologist, teacher, author and mediator as well. He developed the method of nonviolent communication (NVC) in the early 1960s, which is basically about resolving conflicts between people. Rosenberg also founded the centre for nonviolent communication - an international non-profit organisation. He died at the age of 80 in 2015. He is the author of many books, for example:

- Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life
- Living Nonviolent Communication: Practical Tools to Connect and Communicate Skillfully in Every Situation
- Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion
- A Model for Nonviolent Communication

NVC is based on the premise that all people are capable of compassion and empathy and that people resort to violence or behaviour that is harmful to others only if they are unable to find more effective strategies to meet their needs.

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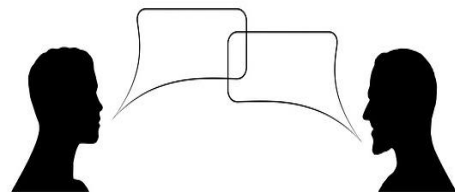
8 Marshall B. Rosenberg Quotes and Sayings. Inspiringqutoes [online]. [cit. 2021-10-5]. Available from: www.inspiringquotes.us/author/1532-marshall-b-rosenberg

Violent and Nonviolent Communication

Let's start with the difference between violent and nonviolent communication. Violent communication results in limitation of liberty, causing hurt and harm, diminishing a person's worth. A person whose communication is violent often uses coercive and manipulative language, which evokes feelings of shame, blame, obligation, fear or guilt in other people. On the other hand, nonviolent communication is communication where we learn to hear our needs and other people's needs. It creates compassion, maximises liberty and helps us to understand the relationship between feelings and needs. Nonviolent communication is the integration of consciousness, language, communication and means of influence.

Four Components of Nonviolent Communication and Examples

The NVC model consists of four components. The first component is Observation. In nonviolent communication, we prefer to describe Observation without evaluation. We state the facts without judgement. We use, for example, adverbs and adjectives in ways that do not indicate an assessment. Do not say, "Thomas does not fulfil his work duties on time," but "Thomas did not complete the last three work tasks on time". For more examples, visit this webpage: https://awarenessagents.files.wordpress.com/2019/06/image-41.png

The second component is Feelings. It is important to be able to express our feelings (happy, irritated etc.), but we should distinguish between feelings and thoughts. Rosenberg underlines the difference between feelings and thoughts.

Needs are the third component of NVC. Each of us has needs and values that sustain and enrich our lives. When those needs are met, we experience pleasant feelings; when they are not met, we experience uncomfortable feelings. Rosenberg says there are four ways to react to a negative message – blaming ourselves, blaming others, sensing and understanding our feelings and needs, and sensing and understanding others' feelings and needs.

The last component, according to Rosenberg, is Requests. The aim is to create a crystal clear request. Be careful about demands: A request turns into a demand if people think they will be punished if they do not say "Yes" to your request. If someone rejects your request, accept the rejection and try to understand their reasons.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Why should a mentor use positive and nonviolent communication when communicating with a mentee?
2. What feelings do mentees feel when they are criticised or inculpated by mentors?

4.2 Communication Framework II: Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing (MI)

Motivational interviewing is a counselling approach designed to help people find the motivation to make a positive behaviour change.

Miller and Rollnick define motivational interviewing as a client-centred method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.[9] In other words, it is a counselling

approach to help people find the motivation to make a positive behaviour change. MI was originally developed by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick to treat addiction (alcohol, nicotine addiction). Motivational interviewing is unique in the way in which people are expected to take responsibility for their life.

The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

The basis is voluntary cooperation on the change that the mentee wishes to achieve.

Collaboration (Instead of Confrontation)

Collaboration is a partnership between the mentor and the mentee. The relationship is based on the point of view and experiences of the mentee. Collaboration builds rapport and facilitates trust in the mentoring relationship. It does not necessarily mean that the mentor agrees with the mentee about the nature of the problem. Although the mentor and the mentee may see things differently, the counselling process is focused on mutual understanding.

Evocation (Rather Than Education)

The method assumes that the motivation for change is in the mentees, inside them. Such intrinsic motivation for change is enhanced by drawing on the mentee's own perceptions, goals, and values.

Autonomy (Over Authority)

Simply put, it is up to the mentee to take the actions necessary to change their behaviour. They must put in the work. This approach gives mentees personal responsibility for their actions. The mentor reinforces that there are multiple ways that change can occur, not just a single "right way".

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[9] MILLER, William and Stephen ROLLNICK. Motivational interviewing. Motivational interviewing: Preparing people for change. 2nd edition. 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012: The Guilford Press, 2002, p. 25. ISBN 1-57230-563-0.

Four Fundamental Processes

MI consists of four key, client-centred processes that work together to help the individual define his or her goals and begin to move toward them. These processes work together to guide mentees toward their motivation for change.

1. Engaging

Establishing a good relationship between mentee and mentor is a foundational component of motivational interviewing. Qualities like empathy, acceptance, a focus on the mentee's strengths and mutual respect create the foundation for such a relationship. The mentor tries to think and feel like the mentee. To be heard and understood is very important for the mentee. This attitude facilitates sharing the mentee's experiences, thoughts and feelings in depth.

2. Focusing

Some mentees know exactly what they want to change in their lives, others do not know what they want to or should change. They only feel dissatisfied, but they do not know the causes or ways to make changes for the better. Focusing is about helping the mentees determine what is truly important to them and using that information to set the goal of mutual cooperation. The goals should, of course, be mutually agreed upon by both mentee and mentor.

3. Evoking

Once a focus has been identified and is mutually agreed upon, evoking involves discovering the mentee's personal interest and motivation to change. Being able to recognize when mentees say something that suggests they may be willing or ready to move toward change is an integral part of the evoking process.

4. Planning

The important thing about the planning process in motivational interviewing is that the plan comes from the mentees and is based on their unique values, needs and self-knowledge. Each of the four processes is geared toward fostering and building the mentee's motivation to change. Any attempts on behalf of the mentor to "take the reins" during the planning process may undermine or reverse the mentee's sense of empowerment.

That said, as a mentor, you are responsible for inserting your expertise when warranted. For example, mentees may express clearly that they want to change, have to change, or are ready to change, but they may be stuck, not knowing how to do so. This situation is where your expertise comes in.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. What are the four fundamental processes of the Motivational Interviewing method and how can you successfully apply them?
2. Why must the goals of counselling be based on the needs and motivation of the mentee and not on the needs and motivation of the mentor?

4.3 Practising Active Listening

What is active listening?

There are many definitions for active listening, but generally, it is a technique of careful listening between the mentor and the mentee(s). The mentor also has to observe non-verbal cues, ask questions to fully understand the mentee's content message and understand the mentee's emotions. This means that, on the one hand, there is an active listener who pays attention all the time and makes sure that everything that is being said is understood (by responding, remembering, timing etc.), and on the other hand, there is a speaker who talks.

Listening and Hearing

There is a vast difference between listening and hearing. Hearing could be defined as accidental, involuntary and effortless. We are constantly surrounded by noise, so 'listening' to the sounds of cars, trains, workers etc. is basically hearing because we do not pay much attention to these sounds. Listening, in contrast, is focused, voluntary and intentional. The listener needs to pay attention to the whole story a speaker tells. It does not mean only paying attention to the content but also to the intonation, how is it said, to the use of language and body language as well.

Signs of active listening

The signs of active listening could be divided into two groups:

- The first are non-verbal signs. Here you can find, for example, a smile or nodding (a way of agreeing or a signal that a message is understood). Eye contact is crucial for active listening (it encourages the speaker). Posture is another sign of active listening (leaning forward or a slight slant of the head). Mirroring is another sign; by this, you can express sympathy, empathy and interest. A good listener will never be distracted by the surroundings (a mobile phone, looking at a watch etc.).

- The second group are verbal signs such as remembering (by remembering details and ideas, the listener encourages the speaker to continue) or asking relevant questions. The listener sometimes needs to clarify what is being said. We can do this by questioning or reflecting. To demonstrate that the listener understands what is being said, reflecting (paraphrasing) is used. Use open questions to provide enough space for the mentee to let them express what they want to say. The last verbal sign of active listening is summarisation; this means summarising what has been said (by the mentee) in the listener's own words.

How to practice active listening

The advantage is that you can practice active listening every day whenever you communicate with people. You should gradually improve in these five basic skills of active listening:

A) Pay full attention to the speaker.
- Ensure you face the speaker.
- Give the speaker your undivided attention, listen, perceive and understand their message.
- Do not divide your attention, Do not look at your mobile phone, other people or activities around you.

B) Show that you are listening.
- Be aware of your body language — crossed arms can make you seem closed or negative. Use friendly facial expressions such as a nod or a smile.
- Encourage the speaker to continue by using brief verbal comments.
- Ensure your posture and demeanour are open and inviting.

C) Ask related and relevant questions.
- Reflect on what has been said by paraphrasing.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand everything.
- Summarise what was said by the speaker.

D) Respond appropriately.
- Avoid attacking the speaker verbally or putting them down otherwise.
- Avoid interrupting the speaker unnecessarily.
- Respond openly and honestly, with an appropriate tone of voice and use a respectful communication style.
- Treat the other person as you would want to be treated during communication.

E) Do not judge and assess messages prematurely.
- Avoid making assumptions.
- Be empathic and non-judgmental.

- Perceive and understand the message from the perspective of the speaker.
- Do not try to change the subject of the conversation to something you prefer.
- Listen to the entire message before starting with your comments.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Can you explain what active listening is?
2. Can you explain why each of the following elements is important in active listening?
   - Pay full attention to the speaker.
   - Show that you are listening.
   - Ask related and relevant questions.
   - Respond appropriately.
   - Do not judge and assess messages prematurely.

4.4 Using Storytelling as a Tool for Empowerment

What is storytelling?

Storytelling is communicating ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life lessons using stories or narratives that evoke powerful emotions and insights. Another definition says that storytelling is an ancient art form that plays an irreplaceable role in the upbringing of children and in human communication in general.

Why use storytelling in counselling?

Storytelling is one of the effective methods used in counselling. This method is very suitable for the target group of NEETs because it is understandable, effective and engaging. Stories have the power to help mentees develop insight into their problems without raising defences. Mentees usually tell their own stories and thus begin to better understand themselves and their life situation. The mentor can also tell the mentee stories (or provide them in written form) of other people who have been in a similar situation as the mentee. Together, they can then discuss the story. Speaking about stories allows mentees to step away from the problem and look at it from a different perspective, more impartially and objectively.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. How would you define storytelling?
2. Why is storytelling a suitable counselling method for working with young people from the NEETs target group?

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Useful Resources

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCbxAMgfkkM - Non-violent communication

www.cnvc.org – The Center for Nonviolent Communication

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3MCJZ7OGRk - Introduction to Motivational Interviewing

https://motivationalinterviewing.org/understanding-motivational-interviewing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq5pJ0q3xuc - How to actively listen to others

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKB_JVNGjLY - Storytelling, Psychology and Neuroscience

https://www.asaporg.com/what-makes-stories-so-powerful

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Source of images in the chapter: www.pixabay.com

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5. Digital Tools to Offer Integrated Guidance

Learning how to use digital tools to reach or communicate with your mentee.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

[CHARLES DARWIN]

5.1 Social Media and Online Communication – Do or Don't?

Where to find your mentee in the online space

When one thinks about mentorship, one of the main things they consider is the real, human connection that's created between two or more people. This image takes us back to the before social media and technology era. Mentoring involves thoughtful conversations, brainstorming and generally has a 'one to one' format. However you see it, mentor/mentee relationships like this are beneficial for their in-person, intimate and focused approach. All things considered, that does not mean that online mentoring cannot function nor that it eliminates its intimate character or lessens its impact. Mentoring has undergone a paradigm shift from a process of transmitting knowledge to a process of 'learning and development' through conversations and a two-way trusted relationship in which everyone takes part, learns and grows, both personally and professionally.

In 2016, around one in five adults with low levels of educational attainment across the EU reported distance and/or the lack of suitable learning provision among the obstacles. Thus, when considering learning opportunities for adults, the concept of flexibility is of utmost importance. (European Commission, 2021) The 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways emphases flexibility in adult education and training by referring to a three-step approach consisting of (1) skills assessment, (2) the provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer and (3) the validation and recognition of skills acquired. (European Counsil, 2016) Distance learning is commonly seen as one of the approaches that can enhance the flexibility of education and training. Contrary to traditional learning, which requires learners to organise their personal or professional commitments around their studies, distance learning allows learners to organise their studies around their commitments.

The digital transformation of everything has opened various doors for mentoring and distance learning as well. Now mentoring is not limited to the mentee's location or country of residence but has become a 'global learning opportunity' in which people from different countries can connect and learn from each other. All of that happens from the comfort of one's home and at a time that is convenient for all the involved parties in a mentoring relationship. Thus, there is a response to the previous need for flexibility and more opportunities as more and more opportunities for distance learning arise through the years, especially after the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Technology has changed the way we communicate and reach each other. Nowadays, we can connect with people living in another country or even on another continent. For that reason, it is essential to use the tools provided by the online space to reach your mentees. There are various platforms where one can find mentees eager to learn and engage with them. However, oftentimes highly disadvantaged youths (our target group) are not very eager to learn, and thus we should promote opportunities for mentoring in an appealing way in order to catch their attention. To do that, we can employ social media and especially the ones that are very popular among youths. Some examples of these platforms are:

Facebook

Facebook is a very well-known social media platform which is being extensively used by a lot of professionals as well. Mentorship is also available through Facebook within selected groups. Group members can choose their mentorship partner and get one-to-one support from another group member. Mentorship can last up to ten weeks and once completed, both parties are still able to see everything that they have previously shared. Group members must be aged 18 or over to offer or request mentorship.

<u>Steps to follow to become a mentor through Facebook:</u>

- From your News Feed, click Groups in the left menu and select your group. If you don't see Groups, click See more. (Try to join relevant groups with the mentoring you want to offer in order to have more impact and success)
- Click Mentorship below the cover photo.
- Click Become a Mentor on the right-hand side.

- Add some information about yourself and the topics that you can help people with, then click Submit.
- You'll be notified when people are interested in mentorship, and you can decide who you want to mentor.

→You can also create a mentoring group in Facebook and start offering mentoring opportunities from there.

Steps to follow:

- From your News Feed, click Groups in the left menu and select your group. If you don't see Groups, click See more.
- Click Settings in the menu on the left-hand side.
- Scroll down to Add extra features.
- To add a mentorship, click Add next to Mentorship, then select a category and click Save.
- For additional support, click Education Centre in the left menu of your Facebook group.

LinkedIn Learning platform

LinkedIn Learning has thousands of professional courses to build your business's most in-demand skills. You can apply to join the passionate instructors who share their expertise and knowledge with the world. You'll collaborate with some of the industry's top producers, directors, and editors so that your content is presented in the best possible light. (Apply here)

As a LinkedIn Learning instructor, you can:

- Help people reach professional and personal goals
- Learn valuable skills applicable to your professional life
- Benefit from the massive visibility this platform provides

Online Mentoring platforms

Over the past few years, and more intensively after the rise of COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of online mentoring platforms were developed. Through these platforms, mentors and mentees around the globe are connected and can form trustworthy and meaningful relationships in which both can grow and learn new things. These platforms are a very useful tool to find your mentees online without struggling too much.

Examples of platforms:

- **Mentspot** is a platform where mentors and mentees can find each other and connect. According to Mentspot, 'to get somewhere in life, business, study, relationships or anything else, it's important to get guidance from a mentor'. Even though sometimes finding a mentee or mentor can be difficult, Mentspot provides a simple way to get connected with mentors and mentees in any category.

- **FINDAMENTOR.COM** is an EPIC (Educate, Propel, Inspire, Communicate) mentor network focusing on lifelong learning utilising mentoring and master mining. There are over 1400 categories of mentoring programs in which you can register to become a mentor.

- **Chronus** is a mentoring software that enables people to learn and develop while delivering strategic value. Chronus connects people through a hybrid workspace and offers different mentoring programs and subscription opportunities so as to cover different needs and audiences.
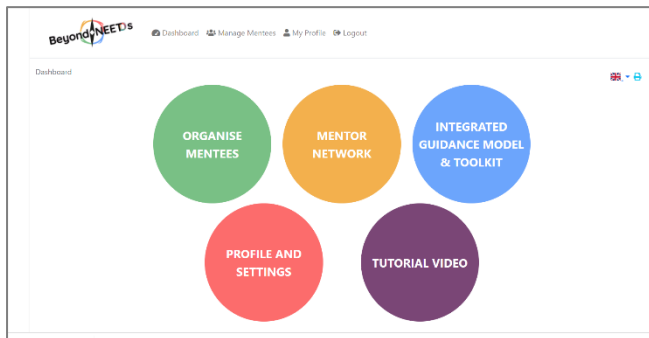
- You can find more platforms here.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Think about your own group of mentees. How do you think it will be best to reach out to them?

2. Think about your mentoring style. Which platform do you think will be more appropriate for the program that you have to offer?

5.2 The Beyond NEET(D)s Online Platform

The Beyond NEET(D)s Personal Integration Map (PIM) is a gamified open education resource which builds on the didactical approach developed in the Beyond NEET(D)s Integrated Guidance Model (IO2) and takes the pedagogical concept a step further. PIM features a modular and customisable open-source online environment, utilising a gamified reward system in order to engage young people at risk of social and economic exclusion that are usually hard to reach. The platform also offers mechanisms for close-knitted monitoring and communication between mentors and mentees so as to facilitate the mentorship process and make it even more effective.

The value of the Personal Integration Map (O3) lies in its ability to empower disadvantaged youth into finding the strength and stamina to make use of individualised labour market services that support their social inclusion. This might be the first time that some of the target group members get in contact with official bodies that allow their formal registration and help them gain a NEET status. For some others, it will be an improvement to be registered as unemployed as specific requirements are in place before this status is granted. And for some it will even be a crucial step into a VET career or employment.

5.3 Integrated Guidance After COVID – What Did We Learn?

Integration of Online Communication Tools

The COVID-19 pandemic altered our world in many ways including the acceleration of digital transformation. A lot of tools focusing on making learning accessible to everyone through technology are now available and have been extensively used during the rise of COVID – 19 and the consequent lockdowns that took place around the world. This was a huge learning opportunity for people engaged in any kind of learning provision to find out what works well and what doesn't work that well for their audience and topic.

Some general tips are:

- *Establish trust and expectations* – A very healthy and proactive way to start a virtual mentorship program is to establish expectations from the beginning. Setting together goals to reach and making those goals as clear as possible will help the participants have a focus and feel respected and heard.

- *Be as communicative as possible* – Communication between mentors and mentees is essential for virtual mentoring programs to flourish and be as successful and meaningful as possible. Constant and meaningful communication allows nuanced expression of feelings and ideas and better intimacy and sense of togetherness. Furthermore, frequent reminders and check-ins from the mentor will remind participants of their commitment to the program and help them feel connected even outside of the mentorship relationship.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Think about how you can make your virtual mentoring program more appealing for a specific group.
2. What changes or adaptations might you make for implementing an online mentoring program?

5.4 Examples of useful tools

Video Conferencing Tools

Microsoft Teams is a free video conferencing application that was released in 2017 by Microsoft as part of the Microsoft 365 products. It offers video conferencing tools, workspace chat, file storage and application integration. It is very user friendly and it also

provides the opportunity to record your meeting so the mentee can watch it again later.
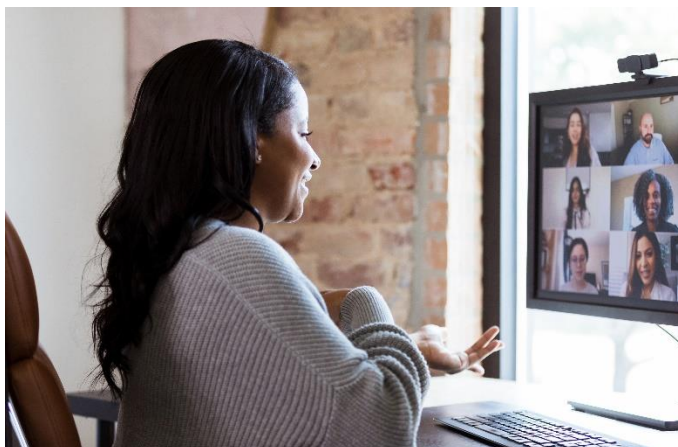
ZOOM is a video conferencing software that offers different subscription opportunities. The free plan allows up to 100 concurrent participants, with a 40-minute time restriction. The highest plan supports up to 1,000 concurrent participants for meetings lasting up to 30 hours. Zoom unifies cloud video communications, chat, and a software-based conference room solution into one platform. There is also the opportunity to record your meeting and save it to watch later.

Skype is a proprietary telecommunications application that specialises in providing VoIP (Voice over internet protocol) - based video calls, videoconferencing and voice calls. It also offers instant messaging and transmitting of files and images but it does not offer recording features.

Google meet – (previously known as Hangouts Meet) is a video – communication service developed by Google. It offers the possibility of different subscriptions (with a free option as well). This video conferencing platform offers a lot of possibilities and features (screen-sharing, raise and lower hand, join through a web browser or through Android or IOS apps, etc.). However, this platform does not offer the possibility to record your meeting.

Platforms To Create Engaging Content

Kahoot! – a platform to create online learning games which can also be used in a live class as a quiz or sent to the participants as an evaluation of a session. Creating a learning game of Kahoot! only takes minutes. You can create a kahoot from scratch, use our question bank to mix and match existing questions, edit a template, or customise existing kahoots created by other users. Host a kahoot live in class or via a video conferencing tool to connect students virtually! Questions and answers are displayed on a shared screen while students answer on their devices but you can choose to display questions on their devices, too! In assigned student-paced kahoots, questions and answers are displayed on players' screens and you can turn the timer off. Assign them as part of distance learning or for review and formative assessment in class. Now you can assign kahoots directly in Microsoft Teams!

Jamboard – is a digital whiteboard that lets you collaborate in real time using either the web browser or mobile app. Up to 50 users per session can work on a jam at once. When using a web browser, each Jamboard browser tab counts as a session.

Using Jamboard on a computer, you can use a web browser to:
- Write and draw using a mouse or trackpad.
- Search Google and insert images or webpages.
- Drag and resize text and images.
- Present your jam to a Google Meet video call.

Conceptboard **–** an infinite canvas for your whole team to work together. This tool provides a collaborative online whiteboard that can be shared with the participants and allow them to work simultaneously (all together or in groups) and at the same time be able to see what others are doing. Conceptboard powers remote meetings and workshops that are more efficient and

productive. It is a very powerful tool when it comes to brainstorming, Use sections and ready made templates for easy navigation and better content layout.

Moodle LMS – Moodle is a free online Learning Management System, providing educators around the world with an open source solution for eLearning that is scalable, customisable and secure with the largest selection of activities available. It also offers live chat functionality.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Which platform do you think is more appropriate for a small and intimate mentorship group?
2. Which platform do you think is more appropriate for a group of 15 people?

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https://www.instagram.com/csi_cy/

Useful Resources

Connecting Mentors and Mentees | Mentspot

Services | Chronus

LinkedIn Learning: Online Courses for Creative, Technology, Business Skills

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6. Work-Based Learning

Become introduced to the concept of work-based learning and how it can be used in an integrated guidance approach.

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

[Benjamin Franklin[10]]

6.1 What Is Work-based Learning?

As a mentor, we are sure that in one way or another you have already made use of work-based learning in your work.

However, in this chapter, we are going to analyse with you some basic concepts in relation to work-based learning opportunities. We will go through different aspects of work-based learning in order to have a stronger idea of what it is from a theoretical point of view and how you can improve its usage in order to motivate your mentees to continue their educational path or to enter the labour market. In the "Useful resources" section of this chapter you will also find useful links to go deeper in the subject as well as additional readings and tools you can use in your work to deepen your knowledge.

So, what do we mean by the expression work-based learning?

Work-based learning (also called WBL) is an educational strategy that brings learners in a workplace environment (both a real one or through simulations and workshops). Therefore, it offers practical work experiences to better prepare the learner for the challenging world of work. It provides learners with the opportunity to put theory into practice and to explore what they have learned in the classroom within a real-world context. Last but not least, it gives them the opportunity to think about what they want to do after high school diploma/graduation or, in general, to reflect on future professional careers.

Some of the most common types of WBL are the following:

1. Apprenticeship and traineeship: they constitute the first types of existing WBL. They help in acquiring professional qualifications. The learner spends a large amount of time in the work environment, undergoing practical-based learning to learn the job. Every apprenticeship / traineeship includes a training contract between the apprentice and

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[10] Retrieved from https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kim_reynolds_1106133 consulted on the 9th of November 2021.

the employer, which legally binds the two together for the duration of the study. Apprenticeships can give individuals the opportunity to earn an income while completing a qualification. The legislation of apprenticeships and traineeships varies among EU countries.

2. Structured work-placements or curricular internships: they are meant to achieve a specific, often accredited competency and can be mandatory or optional, depending on the educational course.

3. Work experience or non-curricular internships: they give young people the chance to train and prepare for the labour market providing the mentee with real-world experience within a profession. They are not embedded in a formal VET course. From the learner's perspective, work experiences are a great way to develop their careers, on a paid or unpaid basis.

The literature also states job shadows, job fairs, workplace tours, formal interviews with employers as WBL experiences which may be used especially with high school students who are having their first contacts with the labour market. Among WBL opportunities for NEETs we can also include the EU Youth Guarantee, as stated in the OECD report "Work-based learning for youth at risk: getting employers on board"[11]

WBL bridges the gap between theoretical learning and practical learning (or learning by doing), helping mentees to learn more effectively.

Other benefits of WBL experiences include the improvement of the mentees' awareness of career opportunities as well as the possibility to explore several professions;

- The possibility to build relationships with adult role models other than families, friends, and teachers to increase mentees' support network;
- Acquire experience, competences and workplace skills also in view of a personal and professional development;
- Set individual career goals based on workplace experiences.

Work-based learning may involve the following target groups:

- Students of primary and secondary education undertaking work-oriented projects or tours in local companies;

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[11] Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/work-based-learning-for-youth-at-risk.htm consulted on the 3rd of November 2021.

- Vocational students undertaking a period of work experience as a part of their training programme;
- Apprentices;
- Adult learners within (or looking to enter) the labour market, taking part in continuous learning with a view to improve their employment opportunities (our potential target group!);
- Young people (our target group!) wishing to gain both hard and soft skills undertaking a WBL activity.

Of course, WBL brings benefits also to employers, even though they may not always be so noticeable.

In the case of employers, in fact, WBL may build positive relationships with the educational world by helping in the creation of better-prepared and motivated potential employees. In addition, employers learn about the knowledge and skills of today's students and make contacts with potential candidates for job positions which might be available in the company.

Lastly, it strengthens employees' supervisory and leadership skills thanks to their role as in-company tutors for mentees.

As a last point of our short overview about what we mean with work-based learning, it is fundamental that you are aware of the different actors which may be involved in a WBL activity.

They can be school, college, university, training provider or adult education provider and service provider workers: in this case they can be teachers, trainers, mentors/tutors, educators, career counsellors / job coaches and classroom assistants. In the company / enterprises they move from managers to personnel: human resources personnel and individual staff taking the role of in-company tutor or advisor.

To conclude, it is important to point out that at National level WBL policies are highly diverse and cover a broad variety of work-based learning practises. In some European countries, WBL has a long tradition, often within vocational education and training such as in Austria and Germany. There are other countries where WBL is recognised as a new

Figure 7. *Three young interns at the workplace learn how to use the call center with their in-company tutor.*

trend such as in Ireland, Finland, France, and the Netherlands. As a mentor, it is useful for you to be aware of the WBL policies and practises of your country as well as how you can apply them to the Beyond NEET(D)s target group.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Think about your group of mentees, how do you think they can benefit from a work-based learning experience?

2. Which connections have you already got in order to implement a WBL activity for your mentees?

3. Which additional benefits, excluding the ones mentioned in this subchapter, can you see for employers involved in WBL?

6.2 Guidelines for Using Work-based Learning as Part of an Integrated Guidance Approach

How do you think WBL experiences are useful in an integrated guidance approach?

This is the first question you, as a mentor, should ask yourself before proposing this kind of activity in an integrated guidance model, especially when addressed to highly disadvantaged young adults who need to re-enter the world of work or the VET system.

Of course, you need to keep in mind that with the Beyond NEET(D)s target group you cannot make use of all the types of existing WBL activities as some of them are in closer relation with formal education activities such as the traineeship.

In addition, there are some important factors that you should take into consideration before offering to the Beyond NEET(D)s target group to carry out a WBL activity.

At first, we can mention the personal or familial situation of the mentee. It can play a significant part in facilitating or limiting access to WBL opportunities. When planning WBL experiences, you must take into account any other commitments that mentees may have included those related to childcare, health, welfare support or family support.

In some cases, often among those that left education at an early age, there might be one or more psychological barriers to learning (fear of failure, anxiety about the use of new tools, fear to be judged, etc.). In all such cases, it is important to put the mentee at ease, explaining that you will provide support and help, together with the in-company tutor.

Lastly, it is not always easy to find companies willing to provide learning opportunities such as hosting mentees in WBL experiences. In this case, it is important to confirm the benefits for companies from facilitating or delivering WBL such as access to new potential employees,

reducing skills gaps, etc. (for further issues about this topic please have a look at subchapter 6.3).

How can you deliver WBL in an integrated guidance approach?

In order to help your mentee benefit from this experience, we provide you with some guidelines you should keep in mind for the successful delivery of work-based learning in an integrated guidance model. Effective planning is a must for a successful WBL and these guidelines can help you!

1. Identify the stakeholders needed to help with the implementation of the WBL experience (representatives of employers and/or employer associations). You can build a database of potential employers willing to collaborate with you in work-based learning experiences.
2. Collect information on your mentee career interests.
3. Based on mentee's interests, select the right company for the job shadow, internship, apprenticeship experience or any other type of WBL. Employers' mapping and recruitment can take time, so an early start is strongly advisable (see subchapter 6.3).
4. Prepare the host company and your mentee for the WBL.
5. Throughout the WBL, provide your mentee with opportunities to reflect upon the WBL experience and support / motivate him / her (for further info about how to motivate your mentees please read subchapter 6.4).
6. At the end of the WBL, get evaluations both from your mentee and the host company. For this, you can use a standard evaluation form that you can draw in advance.

To know and to motivate your young mentee e. g. what qualifications they have already got and what they are capable of, to create a relationship with him / her and to better support him / her, it is vital to use suitable tools. This will be useful in order to find, right afterwards, the most adequate work-based learning placement, especially if he / she comes from a highly disadvantaged background as our target group.

You also need to develop an understanding of the mentee's disability and how this may affect them in the workplace (in the case of mentees with a disability).

A tool you can use for this purpose is the One-Page Profile.

A One-Page Profile records all the important information about a person on a single sheet of paper under three headings: what people appreciate about me, what's important to me and how best to support me.

This tool helps mentors to build better relationships by understanding what is important for the person in their life and the way in which they are supported to live it.

Furthermore, being regularly updated, it can be used by different services and staff (it always mirrors the person changing circumstances and aspirations).

We advise you to implement the activity related to this subchapter in the Toolkit, to start using the One-Page Profile with your mentees.

As long as you have understood the strengths and interests of your mentee and you have created a good relationship with him / her, you can match your client with a company for the WBL opportunity.

It is now time to develop the Individual Learning Plan (also called Personal Learning Plan) which allows the setting of learning objectives for WBL.

Personal Learning Plans are also used to track the progress of mentees during and after WBL. After a defined period of time, in fact, mentor and mentee meet and revise the learning plan.

This progress can also be recorded in the WBL diary (see subchapter 6.4).

When you design a Personal Learning Plan for your mentee, you have to make sure that the learning plan is individualised and that the learning objectives are both realistic and challenging for your mentee. Furthermore, you have to make sure that the mentee is clear about what is required of him / her before they start the WBL experience and who to ask for help in the work placement if they are having difficulty.

To support your mentee in the definition of his / her learning objectives for the WBL experience, you can make use of the SMART goals. According to this method, each goal is reachable if it is:

- **S**pecific (simple, significant)
- **M**easurable (meaningful, motivating)
- **A**chievable (attainable)
- **R**elevant (reasonable, realistic and results-based)
- **T**ime bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited).

    If you want to know more about the SMART goals method, you can look for information on the Internet[12]. We are sure you can find a lot of information on how to use this technique with your mentees.

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[12] You can have a look, for example, at the following links https://www.mindtools.com/page6.html and https://www.smartsheet.com/blog/essential-guide-writing-smart-goals consulted on the 10th of December 2021

Do not forget to produce a formal Learning Agreement between your centre, the mentee and the company. In this agreement it is important that you point out the duties and responsibilities of each actor involved in the WBL process. You will enclose to the Agreement the Personal Learning Plan of your mentee. Here below we give you some insights on what you can include in the agreement for each actor involved in the WBL:

Mentee:

    1. Complies with the rules of the work-based learning placement;

    2. Observes the same regulations that apply to other employees.

Your centre:

    1. Assists in implementing an appropriate work-based experience based on the mentee's objectives / integrated guidance pathway;

    2. Works with the in-company tutor / supervisor in developing a training plan for the mentee.

    3. Visits the work-based learning location to verify that mentee's duties correlate with job description. Mentor also observes working conditions, helps in developing progressive skill-building activities, observes and evaluates mentee progresses and solves questions, issues or concerns.

Employer / in-company tutor:

    1. Provides supervision and instruction in each of the applicable tasks listed on the Training Plan to help the young mentee in acquiring those competencies;

    2. Assesses and documents mentee's progress;

    3. Employs a non-discrimination policy with regard to race, colour, handicap, sex, religion, national origin or age (this is applicable especially for employers);

    4. Completes the work-based experience Evaluation and send it to you / your centre[13].

Remember to provide your mentees with some information concerning health and safety at the workplace before your mentee starts the work-based learning activity.

Lastly, before (but also during) the WBL opportunity you should always be ready on how to face barriers. It is important to identify practical barriers before starting a placement and how to deal with them. This is extremely important in consideration of the target group of

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[13] The information has been adapted from https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/16-Training-Agreement.pdf consulted on the 3rd of November 2021

youngsters you are working with. Thus, you must think about how to deal with difficult situations arising in the course of WBL e. g. how to deal with inappropriate behaviour, or physical barriers e. g. technical instruments.

We are confident that you now have all the required information in order to implement an effective and successful WBL for your mentees! So, let's move to the next step!

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. How do you think WBL experiences are useful in an integrated guidance approach?
2. Think to one of your mentees. Which undefined progress factors can you use in order to measure the impact of the WBL experience on him/her?
3. In this subchapter we gave you some insights about the One-Page Profile. Which tools do you use in your work in order to create a relationship and get to know your mentee better before implementing a WBL activity?
4. Think of one of your mentees, which barriers do you envisage in his / her WBL? How would you overcome them?

6.3 Engaging Employers in Work-based Learning Initiatives

This subchapter addresses effective employers' engagement and how to build relationships with local companies as well as how to prepare and support the host company in a WBL experience.

Therefore, the overall objective is to strengthen your skills to work with employers in order to promote WBL as a successful methodology to facilitate the entry into the labour market of NEETs with high disadvantages and to understand how to approach and increase the engagement of host employers.

The mapping of the local labour market to create an up to date and extensive network of companies in the area willing to receive learners in a work-based learning experience is the first necessary step that you should undertake.

Mapping can take many weeks to be completed before being able to implement a WBL experience, this is why you must foresee in advance a reasonable amount of time for that purpose. In addition, creating a database that records contact, information sent and responses will be an effective way of seeing what works to commit employers in WBL.

When you introduce WBL activities to a new potential company, it is wise to start with those that are easiest to implement successfully. A good strategy might be to start with WBL activities like workplace tours or informational interviews that give employers the opportunity

to interact with young NEETs with minimal risk. Positive early experiences may lead to employer willingness to engage in WBL activities requiring a higher level of engagement, such as internships.

It is also important to point out the benefits that employers may have in participating in WBL such as improving mentoring, coaching and training skills of their staff and improving diversity in the workplace.

Remember that the main outcome of the first contact with an employer (especially if it happens by phone call) is to secure a face-to-face meeting with him / her.

Of course, make sure if possible, that the discussions include the appropriate level of staff e.g. those which will be involved in the day-to-day support of the mentee rather than just senior managers or employers.

During the first face-to-face meeting with potential companies for WBL, you should try to use some principles of business communication (e. g. business communication language) and persuasive techniques. Therefore, it is useful to prepare yourself before the meeting. In any case, how you communicate with employers plays an important role on how you involve and engage them all along the activity.

Thus, during the whole WBL activity, the communication with employers should be brief, informative, clear and tailored to the recipients' needs and organisational cultures. Whenever possible, communication should build on employers' previous WBL involvement. Because WBL is not a one-time initiative, special efforts should be made to retain employers as WBL participants year after year.

As already said, employers whose first experience with WBL is positive are much more likely to participate again in the future.

Other important elements that you should take into account to engage employers in WBL concern:

- match between employers' expectations on WBL and how the WBL activity is implemented in reality;
- provide feedback and recognition to employers to improve future WBL activities. At the end of the WBL you can, for example, contact the company asking for their thoughts about the experience.

It helps, when talking to employers to activate a WBL, to make it clear that you have specific individuals in mind. People respond well to human stories rather than statistics. So, be

prepared to produce short presentations of your young clients which do not include personal information but which do cover their past experience and their strengths.

If dealing with NEETs with disabilities, try to provide reasonable accommodations (or ideas on how to set up a free-of-charge reasonable accommodation if possible) in order to help them at the workplace e. g. the devices they can use, the tasks they can perform, etc. Try to be positive and to provide support to the employer.

When choosing the young mentee for the WBL placement, ensure that they have conducted research into the company and are familiar with its main activities, products etc. This encourages confidence and is a key aspect for a more successful placement.

Another important aspect where you, as a mentor, should try to involve the employer as much as possible at the beginning of the WBL activity, is the designing of the specific training programme for the mentee. You, your centre and the company must define altogether the learning objectives and the activities foreseen for each mentee during the work-based learning. Involving employers in the definition of learning objectives and in the overall training programme, shows your willingness to engage them.

Lastly, keep paperwork to the minimum to ensure a successful placement which does not overload the employer / the in-company tutor.

Figure .2 *Young girl in a job interview.*

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. How can you map companies in your local area in order to create a network of potential companies for your WBL activities?
2. How can you encourage employers to give WBL opportunities to highly disadvantaged NEETs?
3. Think about one of your mentees, which weaknesses of this person could be turned into strengths for the company?
4. How do you communicate with employers in order to engage them in WBL?

6.4 Motivating your Mentee for a Work-based Learning Experience

Motivation is the process of encouraging someone in a way that he / she is driven to behave with enthusiasm to achieve a desired goal.

To prepare our target groups for their future career in the labour market, you need to motivate them to learn. This is true for a WBL activity too. Therefore, it is important to foster young

mentees' learning motivation, because its existence is meaningful for the act of learning to the goals to be achieved. In fact, a young person who has been motivated to learn something, will try to learn it well and meticulously, hoping to get good results.

Of course, motivation is an important element for learning, but it is also a very hard factor for highly disadvantaged NEETs who are often strongly demotivated and who have often low self-esteem. This is why, your role as mentor consists of continuously encouraging your target group during the entire integrated guidance approach.

Monitoring and tracking your target group's progress as well as making your mentees aware of them, will for sure be a key element of great support in motivating them both for the success of the WBL experience and for their future professional career success.

In order to continuously motivate your mentees for a WBL experience, there are a lot of available tools and we are sure you already know at least some of them.

However, in this subchapter, we are going to briefly explain the personal diary and the Beyond NEET(D)s progress factors that you can use as a checklist allowing your mentees to have control over what happens in the WBL to keep them engaged.

You can use both tools to support your mentees and to encourage their self-reflection on what they are learning (and how) through the WBL experience, in their integrated guidance pathway with you.

The personal diary
Developing a WBL EXPERIENCE'S PERSONAL DIARY as a key method of recording the day-to-day activities in a placement, young mentees will learn how to evaluate it and how to decide whether it has met its learning outcomes. This will increase motivation as they will be able to constantly see their progress and to decide upon their future career.

You may point out that some of the things the mentee sees and does while he/she is on a placement will be useful to describe in future job applications, in the CV and job interviews.

"Writing down the tasks you have done each day will also help you reflect on the WBL experience and what it has brought to you. It is also essential to write down how you feel about doing particular things as this may help you decide on future career choices": this is something that you as a mentor can say to motivate your mentees for WBL.

In the Beyond NEET(D)s Toolkit you can find an activity which shows you how you can help your mentees in developing their own personal diary for WBL, in order to engage them in this experience and make them reflect on its outcomes. Learners are more motivated by

constructive learning methods, this is why drawing and building their own personal diary is, in our opinion, more engaging for them.

Self-assessment Checklist based on the Beyond NEET(D)s progress factors

The following table has been designed by the Beyond NEET(D)s project partnership. It defines 5 main areas in which the 20 progress factors for the integrated guidance model developed by partners have been divided.

You can use it with your mentees, in order to discuss, reflect and track together with them their progress during the WBL. They can even use it as a self-reflection checklist, highlighting their progress as well as areas of improvement. This can be very rewarding and motivating!

Category	Progress Factor	Description
SELF	Self-esteem	I believe in myself. I believe in my abilities as a person and as a professional.
	Self-awareness	I know my strengths, weaknesses and learning opportunities as a person and as a professional.
	Future Self	I know where I want to see myself in 1,2 or 5 years.
	Self-directedness	I consider myself as someone who takes matters in their own hands.
	Motivation	I am motivated to work on my goals.
CONTEXT	Social Support	I have the right social support to start looking for a job/training (e. g. childminder, housing, etc.).
	Financial Barriers/Support	There are no financial barriers that keep me from finding a job/training (e. g. debts, etc.).
	Logistic Support	I have no logistic barriers that keep me from finding a job/training (e. g. no drivers' licence, no car, living in a rural area, etc.).
	Physical Health	I have no physical health barriers that keep me from finding or doing a job/training.
	Mental Health	I have no mental health barriers that keep me from finding or doing a job/training.
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS	Education/Training	I have no educational barriers that keep me from finding a job/training (e. g. no or not the right degree, etc.).
	Market Knowledge	I know how to search for the opportunities that exist on the market (especially regarding my professional interests).
	Planning	I have a clear career aspiration and an idea of the steps that I need to take to reach this goal.
	Personal\Professional Profile	I know how to create, prepare and present my personal/professional profile in a CV, cover letter, interview or pitch.
	Entrepreneurship	I know what knowledge, skills and competences are required in my desired profession.
ON-THE-JOB-PROGRESS	Critical Thinking	In a professional environment, I recognise problems and I can consider the relevant criteria to make a judgement well.

FACTORS (21st Century Skills)	Productivity	I can work in a fast-paced environment, while keeping an overview of the tasks needed to be done and prioritise accordingly.
	Collaboration	I like to work as a team to achieve a common goal.
	Communication	I can express my own ideas in an appropriate way, I can listen to others well and I accept constructive feedback.
	Flexibility	I acknowledge that a job requires flexibility, both for the employer as for the employee.
Undefined progress factors		*If you think about your current situation, are there any factors that have an influence on your current situation, or on your search for a job or training, that were not identified in the previous list?*

Finally, as already explained in subchapter 6.2, be clear about objectives. It is very frustrating for mentees to complete an assignment if there aren't clearly defined objectives. Mentees want and need to know what is expected of them in order to stay motivated to work. Therefore, before starting the WBL activity, do not forget to set clear learning objectives with them!

You can even speak directly with your mentees about their expectations so that there is no confusion and they have clear goals to work towards.

To define clear and realistic goals, you can use the SMART goals technique (presented in subchapter 6.2). The use of clear goals is another important element to keep mentees' motivation high during WBL!

In any case, motivation depends on each mentee and we advise you to use the most suitable tool for the specific needs of your young clients. Definitely, there are not right and wrong methods and techniques to motivate them, and you need to find the most appropriate one for each mentee!

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. How can self-assessment play a role in the motivational process of your mentees during a WBL activity?
2. How can you help your mentees to turn obstacles into motivational incentives during their WBL?
3. Which tools do you use in order to motivate your mentees during the WBL activities?

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7. Recognition of Prior Learning

How can you validate or recognise previous learning experiences so your mentee has tangible evidence of their skills?

"Formal education teaches how to stand, but to see the rainbow you must come out and walk many steps on your own."

[Amit Ray]

7.1 The Importance of Recognising Prior Learning

While formal education is a cornerstone in a person's life path and leaves an imprint on anyone who has gone through some form of formal schooling, it is a known fact that people acquire much of their knowledge, as well as the skills and competences they have, outside of formal schooling and training. A person who does not have any formal degrees obtained through formal education can at the same time have many professional competences and skills which can only be gained through personal immersion and other styles of learning.

Cedefop (European Center for the Development of Vocational Training) provides a definition of what learning is and describes it as a process "in which a person absorbs information, ideas and values, and in this way acquires knowledge, skills and competences." The various settings, arrangements and circumstances in which the process of learning itself takes place are extremely diverse and colourful. Overall, there are three types of learning which are internationally recognised: **formal** qualification, **non-formal** learning, and **informal** learning. All of these types of learning are essential and they all play an important role in a person's individual educational development.
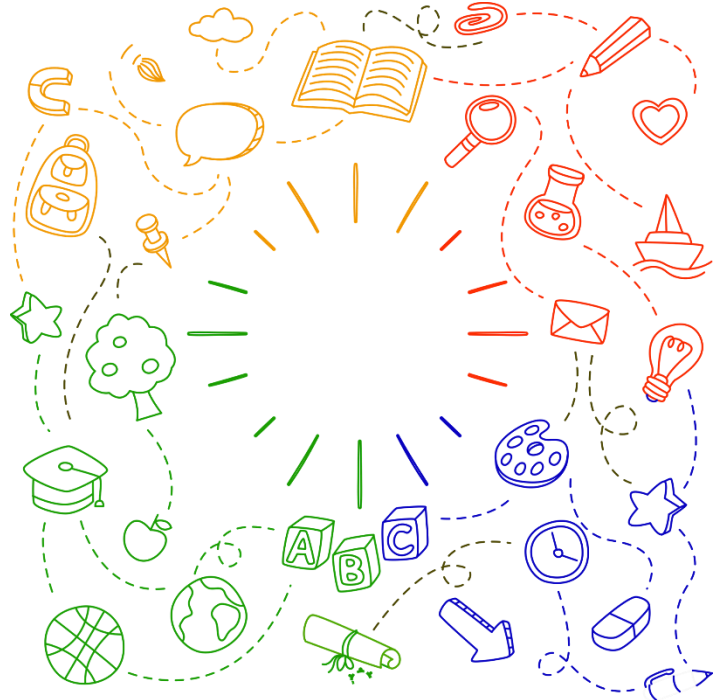

Figure 1: Pixabay/ArtsyBee

In order to benefit from formal or non-formal learning, a person has to make the decision to participate in a learning process either voluntarily or mandatorily (in the case of compulsory school, education or workplace training)

while informal learning happens constantly and in everyday situations. Whatever prior learning is based on and wherever learning experiences are made – what they have in common is that they enrich a person's life, provide them with new skills and competences, let them experience new things, improve their knowledge and add to their personality. To make this learning visible and tangible, it is therefore essential that prior learning is recognised in order to validate the learning outcomes in professional settings.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. What is something that you have learned that makes you feel proud and wish it would be formally recognised?
2. Why do you think it is important to recognise prior learning?

7.2 Formal Learning

While we are at school or attending any other kind of **formal learning**, we can expect that the teacher or trainer has set up a formal lesson plan or curriculum, including set learning goals, timing and methodology of lessons, as well as a form of assessing if we have internalised the learning content to a satisfying extent. Formal learning has a concrete start and end, and upon completion, there usually awaits a certificate or diploma stating that the student has successfully attended and finished the lessons and courses.

Figure 2: Pexels/ArthurKrijgsman

Reflective question for the reader:

1. Think about your own learning in a formal setting – what did you find especially challenging, what did you enjoy about it?

7.3 Non-formal and Informal Learning

Figure 3: Pixabay/Pexels-PorapakApichodilok

Learning of course also happens outside a formal classroom and without the aim of gaining a certain qualification. When learning is organised and there is the intention of extending knowledge or skills, it is called **non-formal learning**. Its main goal is to inform the learners, not to add to their professional or scholar qualification, for example in a hobby class or in a company internal training.

But most of our main learning processes happen without us even noticing or making a conscious decision to do so. This is called **informal learning**. We learn in everyday life for example by practising our skills maybe by cooking a meal, working with a specific software or playing football, by observing others through role model learning for example how they approach a situation and the consequences they experience, by communicating in social situations, and when we are reading a book, watching TV or playing a game. There is hardly

a situation that does not have the potential to teach us something about ourselves, others and how the world works. This kind of informal learning is hard to grasp, because sometimes we have this "Aha!" moment and we consciously know that we have learned something, but many more times the learning happens under our radar, completely

Figure 4: Pixabay/Mojope

unconsciously. What is extremely important is to be aware that these informal learning experiences and life lessons learned in such settings can be made more visible.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Think about your own learning experience – how much of what you know today did you acquire in formal, non-formal, or informal settings?
2. In which ways do you think that personal hobbies and everyday "life lessons" can be useful professionally?

7.4 How can Prior Learning be recognised?

Formal, non-formal, and informal learning have to be assessed differently, as they are very diverse approaches and are based on different experiences. Qualification analysis is useful to recognise formal qualifications, while competency assessments can facilitate validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Such competency assessments thus also provide a chance for people without formal qualifications to have their experiences and skills validated and recognised.

To advance this recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences gained in non-formal and informal settings, there is a central effort towards establishing standardised and recognised qualifications and competence assessment procedures, which will hopefully make these approaches more feasible and attainable.

Recognition of Formal & Non-Formal Learning Through European Instruments

One important way of communicating learning outcomes in a transversal way are the available European Transparency Instruments. There are three main frameworks that apply to validating formal, non-formal and even informal learning achievements, which will be explained in more details below:

1. ECVET including learning outcome methodology and ECVET credit system
2. Micro-Credentials
3. EQF including the descriptors of EQF levels
4. CEFR including the internationally accepted language levels.

ECVET credits help to summarise the time spent on a formal or non-formal learning activity. They can be featured on a certificate and are recognised all across the EU. The **ECVET learning outcomes** help to formulate transparent, achievable and assessable learning goals a learner should accomplish by participating in a formal and non-formal learning offer. They follow a certain structure and are categorised into knowledge, skills and competences (sometimes autonomy/responsibility). Learning outcomes provide a fuller picture of the learning achievements and what a learner should have internalised upon completion of a course or training.

In 2021, the European Commission has started to focus on so-called **Micro-Credentials**, which will enhance and maybe even replace the ECVET system in the near future. Micro-Credential promises to be an interesting new approach and can be particularly useful in terms of prior learning recognition and European comparability and transparency.

The **European Qualification Framework (EQF)** is a transparency tool to translate between national qualification frameworks using learning outcome-based descriptors. Each formally achieved qualification is corresponding with a level from 1-8, with level 1 representing that a person is able to perform basic tasks under direct supervision in a structured context and level 8 representing that a person is extremely qualified and proficient, has specialised skills and has authority as well as a lot of responsibility. The EQF level is stated on formal certificates and diplomas, which allows the comparison of education and training accomplishments between EU member states. The EQF level is based on what a person is able to do, not only how much time they have invested in a learning offer.

Last, but not least, the **Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR)** is an internationally accepted system that communicates the language proficiency in 6 levels, from basic (A1/A2) to independent (B1/B2) to proficient (C1/C2). Language courses, the used textbooks and the achieved certificates usually state the achieved CEFR level. But there is more to this, because the CEFR also comes with a self-assessment grid and a person can have different language proficiency in different areas such as understanding (listening & reading), speaking (interaction & production), and writing.
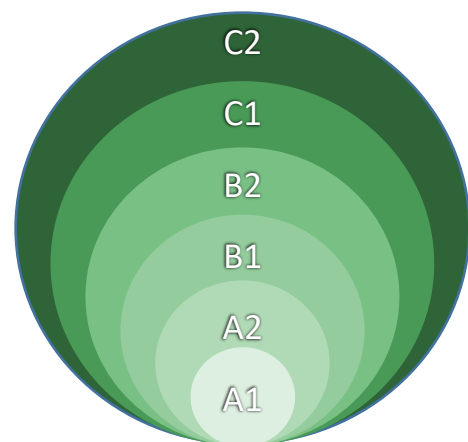
Figure 5 - CEFR Levels

Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Through Digital, Individualised Methodologies

Today, learning happens not only in physical space, but also in virtual settings. Online learning is often self-directed and prompts the individual learner to take action and work on learning content. In formal learning contexts, this is often organised in a blended setting, which means that the self-directed learning happens in turns with directed, often face-to-face settings and is certified in a usual, formal manner.

When learning happens exclusively self-directed in online settings, it is often in a non-formal or even informal context. Depending on who provided the learning opportunity, there may be pedagogical objectives and strategies in place, which wrap the learning content in a digestible format for learners. If this is the case, the following three crucial steps are usually applied.

1) Learning Goals: Defining *Knowledge – Skills – Competences*

Learning content must always serve the purpose of gaining new knowledge, skills, or competences, which are described in learning goals or learning outcomes (e.g. ECVET system).

Knowledge itself can be defined in many different ways, for example as theoretical and factual knowledge on a given subject. The process of assessing knowledge can be divided into categories, mainly into language skills, formal/non-formal/informal education, consultation on the recognition of qualifications, work experience, and social skills.

Skills are capacities and abilities gained through systematic, continuous and deliberate effort to achieve transferable qualities. Existing skills can be measured and assessed through a variety of different methods and methodology types which give a clear picture of a person's skills.

Competences can be acquired in work placements, internships, job shadowing and similar situations – these settings are effective engagement tools within the labour market and allow measuring and assessing competencies that people have, for example in preparation for them to enter into the labour market.

There are many ways to describe learning goals, but they always focus on what the learner will be able to do after working through the provided content. Usually, it follows the general structure: "The learner will be able to – verb/action – object/content", so for example: "The learner will be able to – recall – the three types of learning settings." By clearly defining the aims of an individualised learning approach, it is possible to assess if a learner has reached their goals and if acquired knowledge, skills, or competences can be validated.

2) Didactic Concept: Using Serious Gaming as Motivation or Content Delivery Strategy

As self-directed learning centres on the individual it is crucial to find didactic strategies that keep a person engaged and motivated. Due to the human tendency to always search for meaning in what we do, it is a pedagogical fact that it is easier to learn something when it is wrapped in a story, a song or a game. In recent years, this strategy has been re-discovered and mixed with newer media such as video gaming, resulting in the **serious gaming** trend.

When used as a content delivery strategy, learning goals are usually defined at the beginning and the game is developed around it. In other cases, creative pedagogic professionals can use games made mainly for entertainment purposes and use them in a serious context to train e. g. literacy and numeracy skills or spatial thinking using games such as Scrabble, Minesweeper, or Tetris. This means that players play the game and internalise the learning objectives as a side effect.

Serious gaming elements are also excellent measures to motivate a learner to begin, pursue and finish tasks. By splitting up big objectives into smaller milestones, it is possible to engage the learner to take small steps towards their goal. It is always important to convey a sense of achievement and gratification when a step is accomplished. This can be anything from verbal praising (e. g. "Good job!", "Well done!") to a visualisation of achievement with colours (e. g. green or silver/gold elements) or a visualisation that reinforces the feeling of completion (e. g. showing 100%, 10/10, full progress bar, check marks). Additionally, typical game-related vocabulary or imagery can be used to further suggest a fun and engaging setting instead of strictly structured learning content.

3) Validation: Granting Digital Badges to Celebrate Achievements

In order to make the learning effects visible, serious gaming is sometimes paired with another, relatively new methodology: **digital badges**. Badges are used in entertainment games, too, as they have the main purpose of motivating the player to continue playing by providing gratification upon a completed task. Open badges, as introduced by the Mozilla Open Badges Project for example, go one step further as they validate the achieved learning outcome behind the badge. Unfortunately, these badges are not yet broadly used at the moment. Nonetheless, digital badges are extremely useful and can potentially be combined with European Micro-Credentials in the future. As this methodology of validation is still in a development phase across Europe, the upcoming years will show exciting new ways to recognise prior learning.

Reflective questions for the reader:

1. Think of a foreign language you speak and try to rate yourself according to the CEFR.
2. Think of how you could apply a tool such as digital badges with your mentees.
3. How can elements of serious gaming be included as motivational factors?

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https://www.enter-network.eu

Useful Resources

The Council of Europe's take on Non-formal learning and education: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/non-formal-learning?desktop=true

More information about the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET): https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/european-credit-system-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet

More information about Serious Gaming: https://grendelgames.com/what-are-serious-games/

How to identify your EQF level: https://www.theeducators.com/home/certificate/system-guidelines/

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