

# OUTREACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING

## A Practical Manual for Outreach



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This report has been prepared by the European Training Foundation in cooperation with the University of Tirana (Albania), University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), University of Pristina (Kosovo\*), University of Montenegro, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius (North Macedonia), and the University of Belgrade (Serbia).

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# PREFACE

Western Balkan economies have committed to the **Youth Guarantee (YG)**, a commitment to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good-quality offer of employment, continuing education and an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

Outreach to **young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)** is a crucial phase for the success of the YG. However, **outreach remains one of the most significant challenges for countries** aiming to reintegrate inactive and disengaged individuals into society, learning and/or work through the YG scheme, as does the subsequent challenge of monitoring progress and ensuring the quality of outreach work. Public employment services often delegate outreach activities to civil society organisations, municipal youth services or social workers, which requires quality assurance mechanisms, coordination and cooperation, thereby adding to the list of challenges.

The European Training Foundation (ETF), a decentralised agency of the EU, and the Finnish Institute for Educational Research, based at the University of Jyväskylä, have therefore partnered with **universities from all six Western Balkan economies** to support the development of a **practical implementation, monitoring and quality assurance tool** for outreach workers, public employment services and other actors engaged in outreach to NEETs.

This manual is the result of joint work initiated in 2024 to develop a career management skills (CMS) framework for young NEETs. It defines the knowledge, skills, attitudes and social networking aptitudes that they need to join the YG. Since the YG is not just a reactive measure, the CMS framework also can be applied as preventive measure to reduce dropouts from education and unsuccessful transitions from education to work. It can be used to inform career-related education and career guidance from early primary education onwards, under the umbrella of career management skills development, which should incorporate social and emotional learning, citizenship and career learning and develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

The manual was developed through a highly participatory process involving desk research and focus groups and has become a basis for the development of outreach support tools.

## Target audience

This **manual provides guidelines** for all stakeholders engaged in outreach through ministries, public employment service offices, youth and social work centres, NGOs, etc. It is structured as follows.

**Part I** provides policymakers with guidance to on how to design effective outreach. At the same time, it provides a conceptual background for the work of those involved and supports appropriate operationalisation of the approach adopted.

**Part II** outlines practical tools and is primarily intended for those conducting outreach to young people and their supervisors. It offers hands-on approaches to day-to-day work through youth organisations, NGOs, social work and other channels. Together with the annexed [CMS framework for young NEETs](#), it is also relevant to those designing education and training programmes for young NEETs or working with them to prepare them for their tasks.

Outreach in this manual focuses on young NEETs who are not yet ready to participate in any formal offers of learning or work and who are in need of further support due to various barriers or challenges. Therefore, it never involves any direct communication about the Youth Guarantee.

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# CONTENTS

---

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| <b>PREFACE</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| Target audience | 3        |

---

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> | <b>4</b> |
|-------------------------|----------|

---

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| <b>CONTENTS</b> | <b>5</b> |
|-----------------|----------|

---

|                                                                                                                  |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>1. PART I: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUTREACH</b>                                                             | <b>6</b> |
| 1.1 Outreach as a non-formal learning process                                                                    | 6        |
| 1.2 Open youth work in youth centres or similar settings                                                         | 7        |
| 1.3 Digital outreach through social media and online platforms & physical outreach through in-person street work | 8        |
| 1.4 Outreach phases                                                                                              | 9        |
| 1.5 Support for experiential learning: a core task of outreach service providers                                 | 10       |
| 1.6 Learning career management skills                                                                            | 14       |

---

|                                                                                                                    |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>2. PART II: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR OUTREACH</b>                                                                    | <b>17</b> |
| 2.1 Assessment tool for the selection of outreach partners by public employment services and/or other stakeholders | 17        |
| 2.2 Guidelines for supporting non-formal learning in outreach                                                      | 20        |
| 2.3 A progress monitoring tool for outreach service providers                                                      | 28        |

---

|                                                                                                |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>ANNEX – MONITORING FRAMEWORK: THE CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS FRAMEWORK FOR YOUNG NEETS</b>    | <b>32</b> |
| 1. Learning outcomes for the identification phase and the contact and engagement phase         | 33        |
| 2. Learning outcomes for the programme delivery phase and the support after registration phase | 35        |

---

|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| <b>ACRONYMS</b> | <b>40</b> |
|-----------------|-----------|

---

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| <b>REFERENCES</b> | <b>42</b> |
|-------------------|-----------|

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# 1. PART I: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUTREACH

## 1.1 Outreach as a non-formal learning process

### 1.1.1 Definition

Outreach refers to targeted activities aimed at identifying, contacting and actively engaging NEETs. It is understood as a **non-formal learning process** facilitating the personalised development of knowledge, skills and attitudes (collectively known as competences), to achieve agency and independence for young people.

The aim of outreach is to **empower young NEETs to be ready to self-directedly (re-)engage** with society, non-formal and formal learning and/or work, take initiative and shape their own lives. It follows the **principles of open youth work** and operates through:

- youth centres or similar settings;
- digital outreach through social media and online platforms;
- physical outreach through in-person street work.

### 1.1.2 Principles of open youth work

The following principles are core to the practice of outreach through open youth work.

- **Voluntary participation:** engagement is always voluntary. The young people themselves initiate contact and determine its duration and intensity (without any pressure to participate). In justified individual cases, contact can also be terminated by the outreach worker.
- **A judgment-free, open-minded approach:** outreach workers are empathetic and inclusive. Young people are holistically accepted as individuals, without judgment and free from prejudice. Listening, creativity, flexibility, spontaneity, gender-sensitivity and adaptability to the rhythm of life and habits of the youth scene are essential.
- **Holistic lifeworld orientation:** young people are recognised with all their strengths and challenges in the context of their living environment and social relationships (their world). Outreach workers act as trusted contacts for a broad range of life concerns, facilitating referrals to specialised services such as psychological, housing and financial support.
- **Confidentiality and anonymity:** engaging with young people does not require knowledge of their real name or identity. No personal information is shared without consent. This principle is essential for building trust, which is vital for deeper relationships and support.
- **Partisanship:** outreach work is conducted in support of and in the best interests of young people, regardless of their views or beliefs.
- **Transparency:** openness and honesty are essential principles in establishing trusting relationships with young people. Outreach workers must clearly explain their working methods, as well as the possibilities and limitations of outreach work.
- **Low-threshold access:** outreach work must be easily accessible by design, based on the needs and capability of the target group. It should allow access without preconditions or prior commitments. This means eliminating all physical, digital and procedural barriers.
- **Continuity of services:** the ongoing presence and long-term retention of outreach workers in the youth scene are essential for building trust and enabling effective, sustained engagement with NEETs.

- **Safe and protective environment:** outreach work must follow a child/youth protection concept that precludes violence and ensures a safe space, respecting the local context including staff availability and financial means. For example, working in pairs and never alone with young people would be one such standard precaution.

Proactive community outreach is the first stepping stone in the outreach process. Conducting such work means being present where young people are, physically such as at shopping malls or skate parks or online such as on social media or gaming platforms. The aim is to identify young people in need of support and build a trustful relationship as basis for support provision. Community outreach aims to reach out to those not stepping into a service centre by themselves. It is therefore different from specific support offers such as information stands, with brochures about learning activities and service offers from the local employment office.

## 1.2 Open youth work in youth centres or similar settings

Open youth work in youth centres or similar settings aims to create accessible, low-threshold entry points for young people in line with the principles outlined above. It offers engaging, enjoyable activities that support non-formal learning, especially in relation to personal development. EU experience has shown that open youth work is particularly effective in reaching inactive, disengaged and disadvantaged youth, because direct discussions about education and employment issues are mostly ineffective from the outset. It creates opportunities for societal re-engagement and lays foundations for rebuilding trust, (re)building relationships with non-judgemental adults and (re-)gaining self-confidence, while providing space for self-expression and renewed aspirations. On that basis, further support can follow and opportunities are created to talk about learning and work.

This whole non-formal learning process, from first contact to the establishment of a trusting relationship, enables young people to acquire important life skills. Finland, Austria and Estonia have taken an exemplary lead in creating strong and successful outreach networks for reintegrating those dropping out of the formal system. They have achieved this through national/regional youth policies that fund youth centres or one-stop-shops that cover the whole country/region as inter-service open spaces for young people that offer as well both digital and in-person street work.

EU experience also shows that effective outreach requires trained professionals capable of building relationships with disengaged youth and applying structured, professional working methods. Outreach should not be considered an 'add-on' task for existing public institutions but a dedicated, structured, adequately funded initiative. Public Employment Services (PES), youth and social services often lack the capacity to conduct outreach effectively if it is simply planned as an 'add-on' activity, particularly in areas with high rates of unemployment and inactivity and areas that are difficult to reach or which have little or no public transport.

### 1.2.1 Ensuring sustainability: outreach must be a continuous and structured effort

One of the biggest challenges facing outreach is funding instability, as many programmes currently depend on short-term, project-based financing. In order to be effective, the concept of outreach within the Youth Guarantee framework must be characterised as a continuous, well-structured effort and not an ad hoc temporary add-on or a one-off donor initiative. It is a policy to stay, not a project.

In the short term, project-based NGO outreach can thus temporarily help bridge gaps. In the mid to long term, however, it is strongly recommended that a comprehensive network of open youth work centres be established. Of course, NGOs should continue to play a role in outreach, building on their existing networks and community trust, but their involvement must be supported through stable, long-term funding.

Any truly sustainable outreach model must be institutionalised within national or regional policy frameworks (e.g. youth strategies) to ensure consistent long-term financial, structural and regulatory backing. Countries like Finland, Denmark, Austria, Estonia and Portugal have successfully integrated outreach into their public youth policies, securing operational consistency and long-term impact.

### 1.2.2 Strong multi-stakeholder cooperation is essential

Successful outreach programmes rely on partnerships between PES, youth and social services, CSOs, youth organisations, and municipalities. These partnerships should be clearly structured, defining each actor's roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. Legal frameworks or formalised agreements ensure clear responsibilities and avoid duplication of efforts. A national cross-institutional and cross-sectorial outreach strategy can fulfil such a role.

## 1.3 Digital outreach through social media and online platforms & physical outreach through in-person street work

Digital and physical in-person community work consists of targeted outreach to young people where they naturally spend their time, both online and offline, it means being present on their social media or gaming platforms, physically visiting parks, urban centres, sporting areas and community hotspots, mingling with peer networks and setting up info points in public places (in front of supermarkets, sports centres or at local events).

The aim is always to create relationships and spread awareness about engaging, fun activities offered at youth centres and CSOs, to integrate disengaged and disadvantaged youth back into a stable and supportive environment. It also involves directly offering support, if needed and desired, in line with the open youth work principles.

Digital outreach should always take place in a **transparent** manner: all contact and communication must be via accounts linked to the organisation and bearing its name and logo; there must be complete transparency as to what it is and what it does.

Social media plays a particularly vital role in reaching young people today. While they might change phone numbers or address, they rarely change their social media accounts. Hence, digital outreach offers a window of opportunity for consistent and accessible communication for outreach workers. The main objective of such communication is to make young people aware of low-threshold, engaging, fun activities, which serve as an entry point to open youth work.

Digital outreach allows discreet, low-pressure interaction. This is especially important for young people who prefer private engagement or are less comfortable with physical spaces. For example, while young men may be more present in physical youth centres, young women may prefer to ask for advice digitally. Therefore, opening channels for communication and support through chats, private messaging or similar tools can create important entry points for engagement.

For hard-to-reach groups, increased engagement with outreach efforts might be achieved via trusted community members; for example, local influencers; Roma youth leaders for the Roma population, etc. Messaging should frame youth centres and CSOs as welcoming, inclusive, engaging, fun, neutral spaces rather than formal institutional services or spaces directly linked to the Youth Guarantee itself.

Outreach workers (trained youth workers, peer mentors and social workers) proactively engage with young people in their own environments, taking a friendly, informal approach to building relationships and introducing them to activities. This applies equally to digital outreach, which shares a similar strategy of engaging with NEET youth on social media, in gaming communities, via messaging apps, or wherever they naturally spend time.

### 1.3.1 Adapting approaches to diverse NEET groups and their needs

EU experience shows that different approaches are needed to effectively engage specific NEET sub-groups, depending on their specific barriers to participation in society, employment and/or education. Hence, when creating open entry points, the diverse needs of different NEET groups must be taken into consideration. Outreach must therefore be flexible and culturally competent, particularly when working with youth facing systemic disadvantage (e.g. gender roles, ethnic discrimination, or rural isolation).

#### Sustainable versus fast activation

The Youth Guarantee seeks to offer young people a quick chance to re-enter formal learning or work, ensuring that young people aged 15–29 receive an offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of registering with PES.

It is crucial to **invest the necessary time in outreach**, before a young person registers with PES, to really support them and **ensure that they are ready to engage in formal learning and/or work offers**. Outreach must support young people in **gaining the confidence, motivation and agency** needed to make informed and self-directed decisions about their future, based on career management skills. Taking the necessary time for each individual increases the likelihood that they will remain in support schemes, rather than drop out prematurely.

**Quick referrals** and registrations to PES and the Youth Guarantee **only make sense for those who are truly ready**.

## 1.4 Outreach phases

Outreach models to disengaged youth often consist of four key phases, which ensure that NEET youth are identified, supported and guided towards opportunities for personal and professional development. However, good practice suggests including a fifth phase: continued support after registration. This additional phase ensures sustained engagement and reduces the risk of dropout.

The phases are relevant to this outreach manual, as the support to non-formal learning needs to follow a sequenced approach, with each step building on the previous one. Outreach cannot start by discussing or inviting inactive and disengaged young people in formal or structured trainings. Rather, it must start with relationship building and support based on the young person's needs and context.

In some countries, access to social, health and/or financial services is linked to PES registration, meaning that many young NEETs may already be registered. However, registration alone does not change the fact that they are inactive or disengaged and not actively involved in any support activities.

The outreach phases outlined below thus remain equally relevant to both registered and unregistered NEETs. For registered NEETs, identification is simply easier, while contact, engagement and programme delivery remain equally important as for those not registered.

*The following phases outline the key objectives and the main activities per phase. Each phase supports personalised learning and trust development, moving gradually toward readiness for re-engagement:*

1. **Identification:** outreach strategies will vary in this first phase, which involves identifying target candidates and collecting certain personal information. Since it can be highly challenging and legally difficult to access and share data between public institutions and beyond, these strategies will need to involve partnership referrals and open youth work, including digital engagement and personal street work.

2. **Contact and engagement:** once identified, the next step is to establish contact and build a connection with the young people. The primary purpose is to create direct communication, understand the young person's situation and build a relationship of trust. A central task is to get the young people involved in low-threshold, engaging, fun activities to kick-start informal and non-formal learning.
3. **Programme delivery:** this phase is characterised by the continuation of non-formal learning, building on the engagement phase, whether in youth centres, through community outreach, or in digital or face-to-face settings, through professional open youth work. Depending on the readiness and willingness of the young person, this phase can begin to offer more structured support and development programmes tailored to their needs. These may include life skills workshops, community learning activities, educational or vocational guidance, psychological support, substance addiction support, housing support, etc.

The key focus here is readiness-building in line with the career management skills framework (see [annex](#)). For many young people, addressing basic needs, emotional safety and intrinsic motivation is a necessary precondition before they can consider education, training or employment.

Another important element in this phase is accompanying young people to other service providers that offer targeted support, especially when their immediate needs must be addressed first and they are not yet interested in enrolling in a formal learning programme or entering the labour market, or not ready to do so.

Here, the emphasis is on maintaining a trusting relationship and supporting the young person in getting the support that they need. This is in line with the principles of open youth work and the concept of sustainable activation. The learning assessment remains the main tool for monitoring progress of outreach work in this phase (see Part II below).

4. **Monitoring and adjustment:** continuous monitoring is necessary to ensure that outreach efforts remain effective. This cross-cutting phase focuses on continuously tracking the progress of young people engaged in activities, identifying the challenges they face and adapting support mechanisms according to their evolving needs. Monitoring should include observation of behavioural change and competence development, such as improvements in communication or increased self-confidence. These signs help to determine when a young person is ready for more structured or formal opportunities. Part II of this manual provides concrete solutions.
5. **Support after registration:** outreach work must not end with PES registration. After young people register with PES, outreach partners who have built trusting relationships remain in close contact to prevent dropout and sustain the young person's engagement.

These phases are flexible. Some young people may move through them quickly; others may need months or even years. The key here is staying in step with the young person's pace without insisting upon a predefined timetable.

## 1.5 Support for experiential learning: a core task of outreach service providers

Outreach, as a non-formal learning process, supports the personalised development of knowledge, skills and attitudes (collectively, competence) to foster agency and independence among young people so that they are empowered for (re-)engaging in non-formal and formal learning and/or work.

### 1.5.1 How can this learning be facilitated during outreach?

This manual prioritises **supporting young people in experiential learning as the core learning support** in outreach work (see [Chapter 2.2](#) of Part II for practical guidelines).

The concept of experiential learning is based on David Kolb's theory of the same name. It is a model of human development that describes the learning process as a spiral through which experience is transformed into knowledge and ultimately into skills that guide behaviour.

The approach is particularly useful for the non-formal learning setting of open youth work, where the most common working method is individual support for young people through **conversations and accompanying them** on their journey. Conversations should avoid top-down advice or intrusive messages, as per youth work principles. Asking questions is a common method of engaging with young people and entering into constructive conversations, but this approach still leaves people without a concrete working method to deal with their personal development.

Support to **experiential learning**, on the other hand, maximises the effects of conversations by **providing a tool to young people** to learn from their experience in support of personal development, while offering a very practical tool for outreach workers to use the **method of conversation** in an effective way.

This is achieved by guiding young people through the **experiential learning spiral**, as per the below steps:

**Step 1: initiate the learning spiral** – outreach workers **initiate conversations when real-life situations arise, including within youth work activities**. For example, a young woman who loves to sing and would love to record a song at the youth centre studio is afraid of performing in front of others. The key role of outreach workers here is not to set learning goals for her but to facilitate her identification of her own learning priorities and help her engage and set her own learning goals. In this case, it is a matter of developing self-esteem and self-efficacy, public speaking skills, risk-taking and more. This will also help her develop skills in focusing attention, which is relevant to the next step.

In early phases of outreach at street level, support for active experiential learning can be introduced in informal exchanges. For example, outreach workers can ask young NEETs questions when topics arise such as drugs, violent behaviour or depression and frustration about life or society. This **supports self-awareness regarding behaviour** like how individuals have 'programmed' themselves to react in certain situations (e.g. fight, run or freeze in a conflict), consciously or unconsciously.

**Step 2: support young NEETs in actively developing** their self-awareness – young people are encouraged to consciously observe **their own daily behaviour** in relation to the identified learning area, as with our example of being afraid of singing in front of others. This involves helping them gain a bird's-eye view of themselves, which raises their awareness of their own behaviour so they can consciously realise the areas in which they struggle, the challenges they perceive and their own vision of what they do well by focusing their attention on their experiences. In later stages, 'exploration assignments' may also be encouraged, like motivating the aforementioned young woman to intentionally sing in front of close friends to explore how it feels, or asking a young man to intentionally experience how he behaves when he engages in a quarrel or conflict with his father. This intentional focus on lived experience encourages self-awareness and lays the groundwork for personal growth. Each person will have different topics to approach. Examples might include, 'how do I react to a conflict with a friend or with my parents?' or 'am I able to express my needs towards an adult?'. 'Am I able to ask for help?' is another one, or 'am I aware of my own strengths?' Actively experiencing one's own behaviour can **and must** be learned by everyone as a key learning skill,

especially for social and emotional skills and personal development. This skill cannot be taken for granted.

**Step 2.1:** ideally, young people can be motivated to [write down their experiences](#) (or record a voice message, if writing is a challenge) immediately or shortly after the experience of their own behaviour in a certain situation. This ensures that they have a fresh recollection of the emotion related to the situation, and it helps them to permanently integrate the experience into their active consciousness.

Too often people experience the same situation and repeatedly behave in the same way, as they have not learned from past experience. We [do not learn from experience per se, only from experiences that are observed, analysed, reflected upon and integrated into existing knowledge](#). Recording experience in writing helps to create awareness of one's own behaviour, for example if one has problems resolving conflicts and subsequently engages in self-destructive behaviour, such as the consumption of alcohol or drugs. This step [increases emotional awareness and helps transform raw experience into reflective insight](#).

Step 2 is a crucial component in guiding young [NEETs to actively experience the areas of learning they need to develop the most](#). Ultimately, only they can decide if they wish to progress in this sense, and the areas in which they wish to further develop personally. This can never be imposed on a person from outside. In this way, young people do not perceive this approach as externally defined learning outcomes that have to be achieved, but as [learning in their own interest to meet the needs of their daily lives](#), better manage situations and even improve their lived experience.

**Step 3: support young NEETs in reflecting upon their experiences** – this next step in the experiential learning spiral is about transforming experience into a subject of learning. This requires a safe space in which such [experiences are reflected upon jointly with the outreach worker](#) in personal exchanges as well as in a de-personalised way through workshops with peers. The goal is to facilitate [critical reflection upon experiences](#) and actions, as well as their consequences and the surrounding social context, [from different perspectives](#). This supports the development of competence in (self-)reflection and helps participants to recognise 'automated' behaviour, raising awareness of such behaviour and allowing for adaptation through reflective insights. Reflection should be embedded in everyday outreach practice, not limited to formal sessions.

**Step 4: support young NEETs in achieving abstract conceptualisation of experience** – abstract conceptualisation means [integrating new knowledge, that was gained through reflection, into existing knowledge about myself, the world and how it works](#). This step builds internal frameworks that guide future choices and behaviour. This can also occur in personal exchanges, individual sessions or in workshops with peers, in a de-personalised form.

Theories of the world are used as [bases for decision-making](#) (instructions for action) [and problem-solving](#) in daily life (experimentation). Being conscious of one's own experience and behaviour in certain situations, such as conflict with another person, or of one's strengths, such as communication skills, and being consciously aware of insights/learning from past behaviour, is of benefit when trialling new behaviour. This stage supports young people in re-authoring their personal narratives, helping them to reach the level of consciousness at which they regain their position as social actors with motivation and agency.

The overall goal is to help young people learn to move through the learning spiral.

**Figure 1: The experiential learning spiral**

**Step 1:** Supporting young people in focusing their attention on a potential learning area in a real-life situation

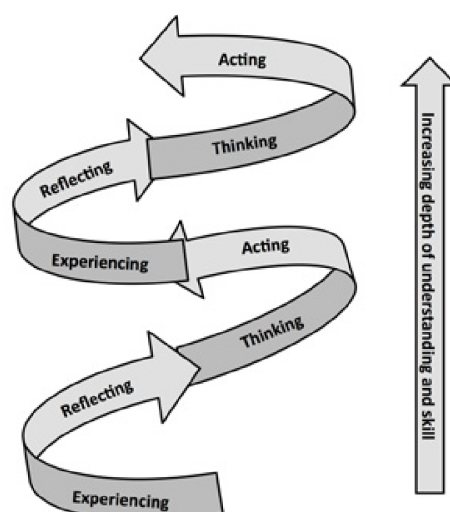
**Step 2:** Supporting young people in actively, consciously making experience (experiencing)

**Step 3:** Supporting young people in reflecting upon their experiences (reflecting)

**Step 4:** Supporting young people with the integration of new knowledge gained through reflection (thinking)

**Step 5:** Supporting active experimentation with new behaviour to restart the learning spiral (acting)

In practice, the spiral can start at any step and return to other steps, but this figure shows the ideal flow.



Source: <https://learningfromexperience.com/downloads/research-library/eight-important-things-to-know-about-the-experiential-learning-cycle.pdf>.

**Step 5: Support active experimentation;** this final stage focuses on supporting young people in applying their new understanding of themselves and the world in daily life and testing them. Here, outreach work shifts from reflection to real-world application (enabling young people to test new behaviour). To return to our earlier example, the young woman sings in front of others and experiences herself in that moment. This also marks the start of a new cycle of active experience.

The core task in supporting learning is that of guiding young NEETs through the experiential learning spiral. By personalising the process of competence development in terms of the content, duration and method of learning, increased relevance and relatedness of the learning content is expected, which leads to increased learning motivation and a greater chance of success. This learner-centred, adaptive approach enhances engagement and ownership.

### Example in action

**Situation:** Maria loves singing but is afraid to perform in front of others at the youth centre.

| The five-step learning process (simplified)<br>This happens through regular conversations, not formal sessions. Outreach workers guide young people through reflecting on real life experiences. | Action:                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Step1: Identify learning opportunities                                                                                                                                                           | Help Maria identify the situation as a learning opportunity about confidence, self-expression, strengths                                                                                                              |
| Step 2: Pay attention to experiences                                                                                                                                                             | Encourage Maria to pay attention to what happens in her body and mind when she thinks about singing in front of others and encourage her to intentionally seek such an experience again to consciously experience it. |
| Step 3: Reflect on what happened                                                                                                                                                                 | Talk with Maria about these experiences to help her reflect on them, with questions like, 'what was going through your mind?' or 'how do you feel?'                                                                   |
| Step 4: Connect insights to broader behaviour patterns                                                                                                                                           | Help Maria connect her insights to broader patterns by asking questions like, 'do you notice that you avoid other situations where you think people might judge you?'                                                 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The five-step learning process (simplified)</b><br>This happens through regular conversations, not formal sessions. Outreach workers guide young people through reflecting on real life experiences. | <b>Action:</b>                                                                                                                                                        |
| Step 5: Try new approaches                                                                                                                                                                              | Support Maria in making a small step forward, such as singing for just one friend rather than a whole audience, and pay attention to how that feels different to her. |
| Then the cycle starts again with each new experience                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                       |

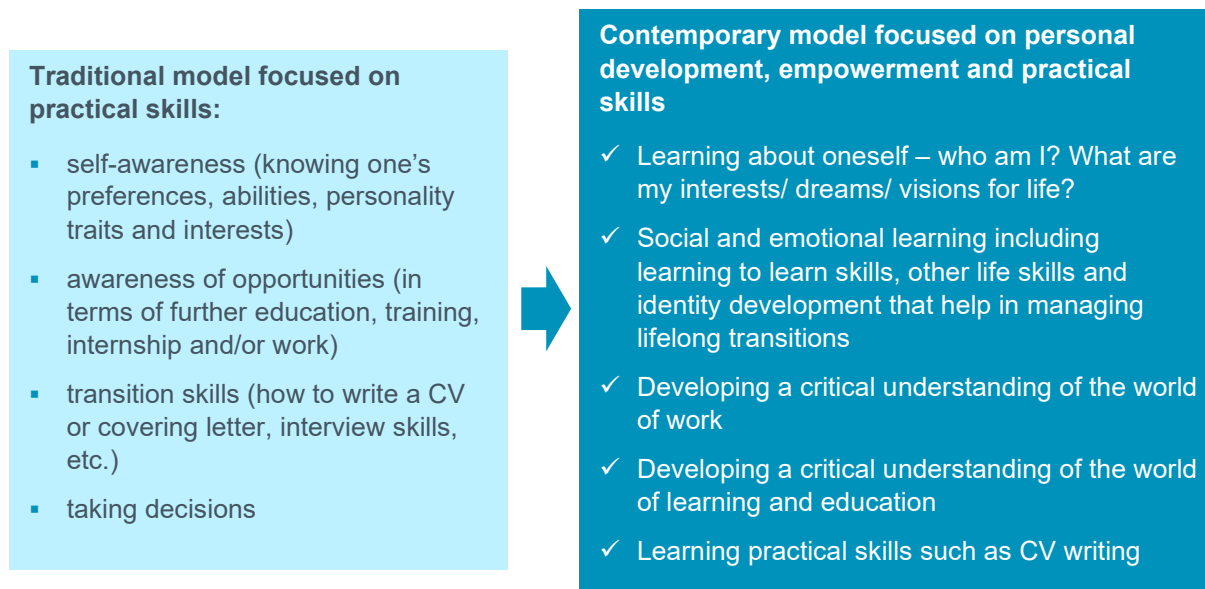
The learner thus changes roles, from actor to observer, from direct involvement to analytical detachment. Learning is therefore an active, self-directed process in the sense of constructivist learning theory, which is why personal responsibility is an important concept in this approach, which advocates a dominant position of self-assessment and formative competence assessment over performance assessment. This positions young people as agents of their own development, in contrast to passive recipients of education.

The voluntary nature of active participation in non-formal experiential learning is a prerequisite for the success of competence development, because competence development is clearly linked to personal benefits/development and well-being and is placed in the learner's area of responsibility. The voluntary nature of this approach ensures that dignity, agency and trust remain fundamental to outreach principles.

Due to the relevance of the learning content to personal well-being and personal development, and the associated support offered, increased motivation to participate is expected. When young people see learning as personally meaningful, participation becomes natural and sustainable.

## 1.6 Learning career management skills

### 1.6.1 What are career management skills?



The concept of CMS has to be understood in the context of changing labour markets and work organisation. It is a holistic concept integrating life skills learning and career learning:

1. The first learning area is learning about oneself. This goes beyond interest tests. It is focused on the question of 'who am I?' and what are my interests and what is my vision for life. It's about social and emotional skills, including learning to learn skills, which is a core competence supporting career learning. This is especially relevant for vulnerable groups such as young NEETs because it sends the message that skills can be learned and one can manage one's life and career.
2. The second learning area is learning about the world of work. This is not just about occupations, it's about understanding the labour market and its trends, and developing a critical understanding of the economy and its impacts on our environment, society and oneself. For instance, learning about the impact of working in the informal economy on oneself, one's family, the community and society, or learning about labour rights.
3. The third learning area is learning about education and the world of learning. It involves raising awareness of the need to engage in lifelong learning (LLL) and understanding its positive effects for oneself and others. A central message is that one can change one's life through learning.
4. The fourth learning area is learning practical skills, such as CV writing. In combination with the above, practical skills will support the ability to manage lifelong transitions.

The important point is that career guidance means more than fast activation or skills matching. It is about supporting competence-building, at the core of which lie social and emotional skills. It is about empowering individuals. Here, the [concept of career development support overlaps with that of open youth work](#).

The present outreach manual proposes a [learning outcome framework that places social and emotional skills at its core, along with career management skills in a more traditional sense](#) (see [annex](#)). [This framework](#) builds a guideline for outreach workers to support young people in the personalised development of knowledge, skills and attitudes (collectively, competences) to achieve agency and independence, to be ready to (re-)engage with society through non-formal and autonomous formal learning and/or work.

However, outreach workers are not working alone in supporting the acquisition of career management skills. They are [joined by social workers and psychologists, public employment services, training providers and others, who jointly support the achievement of learning outcomes](#) among young NEETs.

### Understanding the term 'career'

The term 'career' is often understood exclusively as something employment related. A modern understanding, which this manual adopts, would be more akin to the following:

**'Career is the interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person's lifespan, including how they balance paid and unpaid work, and their involvement in learning and education'** (ELGPN Glossary).

This wider perspective explains also why the learning outcomes in the **career management skills framework** include personal development and social and emotional skills as core competence elements, because it is not possible to separate personal and career biography and development. They are intertwined and mutually influential.

## 1.6.2 Core principles for non-formal learning of career management skills for NEETs

The following core principles for non-formal learning should guide outreach workers:

- **Personalise learning.** Support young people in [setting their own learning priorities and goals](#) to make it more relevant and engaging to them. This includes helping them connect learning to immediate personal needs, challenges or aspirations.
- **Create appealing, engaging, inclusive environments.** This is fundamental. Whether digital or physical, including mobile outreach, contact spaces must be youth-friendly, safe, welcoming, engaging, inclusive and accessible to all young people, regardless of their background or current situation. These spaces should reflect young people's cultural realities, languages and preferred communication styles [and enable them to express themselves freely, explore their identities and engage in activities without fear](#) of judgement or exclusion.
- **Ensure that the activities provided are closely aligned with young people's interests and everyday realities.** Successful non-formal learning activities typically [build on what young people already enjoy or are curious about](#). This might include music, sports, gaming, digital media, street art, crafts, outdoor pursuits, etc. Activities should also be flexible, allowing young people to take initiative, contribute their own ideas and shape the process according to their own pace and preferences. [Co-creation with youth increases ownership](#), relevance and engagement.
- **Facilitate reflective practices through informal conversations, peer groups, and self-assessments.** [Reflection is a critical component](#) of non-formal learning. Outreach workers should therefore always encourage young people to reflect informally on what they have experienced and learned, either through casual [conversations, creative storytelling, peer dialogues or simply individual exercises](#). Reflection helps young people make sense of their experiences, recognise their own growth and build self-awareness of their competences and strengths. Reflection can happen spontaneously or through informal prompts.
- **Systematically document skill and competence development.** To facilitate reflection, outreach workers should systematically observe and document the development of young people's competences over time. Documentation should be light-touch and non-intrusive, using simple methods to [track engagement, emerging skills and personal progress](#). This not only helps to monitor learning outcomes but also provides valuable insights for strengthening support strategies and adapting activities to better meet the evolving needs of young people. Examples include written notes, youth-generated portfolios, or creative records such as drawings, videos or audio clips.
- **Ensuring inclusivity.** It is important to ensure that activities are [inclusive, gender-sensitive and mindful of diversity](#) in all its forms. Special attention should be given to removing barriers that might prevent certain groups of young people from participating fully, such as young women, ethnic minorities, young people from rural areas, or those facing mental health challenges. Inclusivity also means addressing practical barriers such as timing, transport, safety, and emotional accessibility.
- **Supporting transitions for learning or work.** While respecting the voluntary and open-ended nature of youth work, outreach workers can gently introduce young people to opportunities for further learning, skill development, volunteering or employment, where appropriate and when the young person expresses readiness and interest. This should be done carefully, [ensuring that young people retain agency over their choices](#) and that transitions are supported through continuous encouragement and accompaniment. Outreach should empower young people to see transitions not as external pressure, but as self-chosen steps aligned with their aspirations.

## 2. PART II: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR OUTREACH

*The following practical tools for outreach work with NEETs serve as a guideline for relevant stakeholders including service providers. These tools may need to be further contextualised and adapted to local realities to be fit for purpose.*

*The tools aim to ensure consistent quality in outreach service provision, facilitate structured and personalised support for young people and enable meaningful monitoring and evaluation processes, in accordance with open youth work principles.*

*The following tools are described:*

1. an assessment tool for the selection of outreach partners by public employment services and/or other relevant stakeholders;
2. guidelines for supporting non-formal learning during open youth work (see [definition](#)); and
3. a progress monitoring tool for outreach service providers.

### **In the words of young people...**

'I'm ready for anything. I studied and graduated, and I don't want those years to go to waste; for everything I planned for my life to just disappear. I don't want to end up cleaning rooms or scrubbing floors while my diploma gathers dust at home. I'd be willing to go anywhere, even to Mars, if that's what it takes.'

*(Female participant, focus group in Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 2025)*

'I have the same in my environment, where they say, for example, they see that someone is educated and think, "well, you're educated and you can't get a job, so why would I try to study? I'll go earn money abroad; I'll make money; I'll open something of my own," and that's how it usually goes.'

*(Participant, focus group in Montenegro, April/May 2025)*

### **2.1 Assessment tool for the selection of outreach partners by public employment services and/or other stakeholders**

*This tool supports assessment of the quality of outreach partners applying to provide services to NEETs. This is especially relevant for the selection of NGOs, but public organisations like youth centres and social service centres alike need to meet those requirements. These are not ensured through outsourcing/contracting but rather through regular public quality assurance measures.*

*The tool promotes transparency, accountability and the professionalisation of outreach partnerships. It ensures that the providers selected have the necessary capacity, relevant experience and alignment with outreach objectives and youth work ethics. It also helps to self-assess a service provider or develop training sessions for service providers.*

## 2.1.1 Selection criteria for outreach partners

*To ensure quality and accountability in the outreach phase, service partners must meet minimum eligibility capacity and service criteria as outlined below – whether they are civil society providers (through contracting out) or public providers (through public quality assurance measures):*

### Eligibility criteria:

#### Legal status and focus

- Registered legal status as CSO/municipal youth or social service centre/other in the country.
- Explicit mandate/work focus as an organisation of working with young people, especially vulnerable groups (NEETs, Roma youth, rural youth, female youth, etc.).
- Non-profit orientation in delivering services.
- Ability to prove no conflict of interest of any kind in service provision.

#### Local presence and procedures

- Existing presence or partnership for at least three years with another organisation in the target municipalities, or a readiness to be active in target municipalities based on technical and operational capacity.

- Follows a child/youth protection concept aiming to prevent violence and to provide a safe space, or a commitment to setting it up as activities begin.



Source: Jaana Kettunen, entrance to the Streetwork Wieden office of Verein Rettet das Kind, Vienna, Austria

### Technical and operational capacity:

#### Experience with youth engagement

- Demonstrated experience as an organisation that offers youth-centred, engaging activities, which attract young people: engaging fun activities like cultural or sports offers.
- Demonstrated experience as an organisation that supports youth programmes (min. 1–2 similar activities in the past five years).
- Demonstrated adherence to principles of open youth work (e.g. code of conduct for staff).

- Demonstrated experience as an organisation in delivering non-formal education and mentorship related to life skills and personal development, ideally also related to career development.

#### Qualified staff

- A team with at least one trained youth or social worker in the target municipality or municipalities.
- Demonstrated experience as an organisation implementing in-person and digital outreach work, or a commitment to engage in capacity building.

#### Facilities and partnerships

- Demonstrated availability of youth-friendly space suitable for the organisation of engaging, fun activities for individuals and/or groups.
- Demonstrated experience as an organisation coordinating and cooperating with related services: social and psychological support; formal and non-formal education and training providers offering short training courses in active job hunting and the development of soft (transferable) and basic digital skills; services offering experiential learning opportunities through work trials, internships, volunteering, etc.

### Monitoring and reporting capacity:

- Demonstrated experience using digital or paper-based monitoring and tracking tools.
- Demonstrated experience of and/or commitment to regular data collection,

reporting and participation in multi-stakeholder coordination meetings.

## 2.1.2 Minimum quantity and quality of outreach services to be delivered

*Each selected organisation must deliver a core package of outreach services that is harmonised across the whole country or pilot areas and is consistent with the overall Youth Guarantee model. This is relevant to budgeting for the service delivery.*

*The minimum service package outlined below ensures comparability, coherence and service effectiveness across regions, while adhering to quality standards.*

### Minimum service package for outreach partners:

*All services must be in line with the quality principles of open youth work; in particular they must be:*

- youth-centred, voluntary, inclusive and safe;
- tailored to the individual's situation and needs (gender sensitive, etc.);
- delivered in line with Youth Guarantee principles (partnership, empowerment).

| Service component                                                                            | Minimum quantity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Quality standards                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Outreach activities supporting identification, contact and engagement                        | Offering five days per week physical and digital street work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Quality principles of open youth work                                                      |
| Information and awareness-raising campaign supporting identification, contact and engagement | Designing and implementing 12 events per year that raise awareness about engaging, fun activities of open youth work [only for those ready to engage, awareness raising takes place also about the Youth Guarantee].<br>Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Youth meetups and pop-up info stands in local youth centres, sports clubs, shopping malls, schools, etc.</li><li>▪ Workshops and interactive sessions in partnership with municipalities and CSOs, bringing career guidance and motivation training to local communities.</li><li>▪ Information days provided by mobile units in remote or rural areas, ensuring that young people in smaller municipalities also have access to support.</li><li>▪ Local media engagement (radio, TV, newspapers) to promote opportunities in the regions where digital outreach might be less effective.</li><li>▪ QR codes in places where youth spend their time (online, in educational institutions, in the streets, cafes, etc.).</li></ul> | Quality principles of open youth work                                                      |
| Low-threshold entry points supporting contact, engagement and service delivery               | Offering engaging, fun activities at least three days per week, including evenings and weekends, to attract different types of young people into open youth work activities; the other days of the week, a youth-designated space made available as a meeting place.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Quality principles of open youth work                                                      |
| Data collection, reporting, regular exchange and coordination                                | Regularly exchanging data and information about NEETs with relevant partners (within the youth work team e.g. weekly, with social workers, schools, public employment services, others e.g. on a monthly basis).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Quality principles of open youth work                                                      |
| Non-formal learning activities                                                               | Facilitating and monitoring the non-formal learning progress of NEETs: monthly progress reports detailing activities and individual/group participation, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. the number of NEETs participating in individual and group activities (ranging from leisure education to motivational sessions, mentoring and guidance, workshops, etc.);</li><li>2. progress in non-formal learning (anonymous) against the CMS framework for NEETs to inform learning support and provide PES with an idea of NEETs' readiness to register.</li></ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Quality principles of open youth work<br><br>CMS framework and tools for outreach to NEETs |

| Service component                                                                      | Minimum quantity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Quality standards                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Support for PES registration with Youth Guarantee and accompaniment (referrals to PES) | Delivering monthly progress reports (as above) that also include, when relevant, the number of NEETs supported to register with PES for the Youth Guarantee based on the readiness of young people; the number and type of activities designed to support and accompany young people through the registration process. | Quality principles of open youth work; guided with consent; coordination with PES/others documented |
| Follow-up with youth after PES registration with Youth Guarantee                       | Reaching young people registered with PES at least once every two weeks to check on them, based on the level and kind of support needed (like a buddy approach, e.g. simply texting a message to check in and stay in touch).                                                                                          | Quality principles of open youth work, CMS                                                          |

### In the words of young people...

'We need some support in figuring out what we want to do, how to plan the path forward, and then how to access the information needed to progress.'

'We need someone we can talk to freely, with questions like "why I didn't get that job?" or "why did I fail the interview?", for example.'

'There are times when we see people achieving so much and we say "okay, but me, I haven't been anywhere or done anything", and that can affect us.'

*(Participants, focus groups in Kosovo, April 2025)*

## 2.2 Guidelines for supporting non-formal learning in outreach

Support for non-formal learning during outreach is facilitated by **supporting young people in experiential learning** in the context of open youth work. Experience is transformed into knowledge and ultimately into competences that help guide behaviour. This facilitates personal development and leads to empowerment, independence and agency.

### 2.2.1 Supporting young people in experiential learning

The central task here is to facilitate CMS learning. For the CMS framework, see [Chapter 2.3](#) of Part II and the [annex](#).

#### Step-by-step guide for outreach workers dealing with NEETs

As we discovered in [Part I](#), experiential learning helps young people understand themselves better, build life skills and gain confidence; it is especially effective in supporting **personal development and social-emotional learning**.



### Step 1: Create awareness of learning opportunities

**Goal:** to help young people understand *what* they could learn by paying more attention to their experiences and *why* it matters. Also, to help young people actively and consciously live experiences and help them be attentive and aware of what they are experiencing in different situations.

#### What to do

- **Option A** – Acting upon a real situation: you see a young person struggle through a youth-oriented activity, for example the earlier scenario of the young singer afraid of performing in front of others. Strike up a personal conversation about this experience. Actively talking about the issue and better understanding why she feels shy or embarrassed helps her begin to overcome such feelings and deal with them constructively.
- **Option B** – Creating awareness of learning areas in the absence of real lived experiences: if, in contrast to Option A, no situation arises during the course of the youth activities that might prompt such a conversation, introduce the **CMS framework** (see [annex](#)) in alternative ways that remain easy to understand. This helps direct attention to areas for personal development and life skills relevant for young people.

Choose the method that best fits your situation and the young person:

- organise a short workshop or group activity;
- share it visually on posters, handouts or through digital platforms;
- highlight 2–3 key learning outcomes in informal conversations (e.g. ‘asking for help’, ‘knowing your strengths’, etc.);
- use informal chats to talk about what learning could look like in their everyday life.

When working with young people, ‘**exploration assignments**’ may also be encouraged, like motivating the young woman to intentionally sing in front of close friends to explore how it feels, or to ask a young man to intentionally experience how he behaves in a conflict with his father the next time such a conflict arises.

#### Why it matters

This helps young people understand what kinds of skills and learning are important, and it prepares them to focus their attention on key learning areas for personal development that are possible and meaningful for them.

## Step 2 “experiencing”: Support engagement in concrete experiences

**Goal:** to support young people in *noticing* and *being aware of* key everyday life experiences, especially those that challenge them or show their strengths.

For instance, a young person reacts to conflict with their parents, friends or others, with self-destructive behaviour in the form of alcohol consumption and aggressive behaviour, with the added risk of drawing police attention. Helping young person in this position pay active attention to what happens to them in that moment, listening to them ask themselves ‘why do I react in this way?’ or ‘why did I learn to adopt this kind of behaviour and not another?’, opens the door to deep experiential learning. Such learning is deep learning. Most people do want to overcome challenging experiences and behaviour, so it is highly likely that young people will accept support and invest in their personal development.

### What to do

Encourage the young person to become aware of how they act and react in real-life situations:

- if the experience is still very recent and an appropriate learning opportunity, it is useful to ask questions that draw their attention to themselves, such as ‘when you look at yourself from a bird’s-eye view, what happened just now, inside of you, when you argued with your friend/parent?’, ‘what made you run away and kick off a car’s wing mirror instead of sharing how you feel about the unfair criticism of your friend/mother/...?’, ‘Why did you harm yourself with an object instead of expressing your feelings?’ ‘What did you notice about yourself when you managed this large group successfully?’;
- focus on everyday experiences like dealing with conflict, managing emotions, making decisions, expressing needs, experiencing success, etc.;
- When a conversation about a past experience comes up, encourage the young person to pay active attention the next time they have a similar experience; to go into it ‘prepared’ and consciously, actively, live it to see what happens.

### Why it matters

Learning starts when people become conscious of their own behaviour. This awareness helps young people realise where they are struggling or succeeding, and it motivates them to change or grow.

### Step 2.1: Capture the experience (immediately or soon after)

**Goal:** to help young people *record and remember* their experiences clearly, with emotion.

### What to do

Ask the young person to capture the experience in a simple way, while the feelings are still fresh:

- they can write in a small notebook/diary or send themselves a voice message;
- if they prefer drawing or using emojis, that’s okay too;
- prompt them with guiding sentences like ‘just now, I experienced myself doing... when others are criticising me, or they see me sing...’ or, ‘usually, I run away when people criticise me/when I am supposed to sing/speak in front of others, but today I didn’t and I noticed that...’.

### Example

A young person who gets into a fight might write:

‘I became aggressive with my friend/parents again. I felt like it wasn’t fair. I didn’t know how else to deal with it.’

### Why it matters

Recording experiences helps young people become more self-aware. It turns raw moments into **conscious experiences**, which are easier to reflect on and learn from later. It’s the first step in changing behaviour and learning new ways to deal with challenges.

### Step 3 “reflecting”: Facilitate reflection

**Goal:** to help young people think deeply about their experiences and understand *why* they behaved in certain ways.

#### What to do

- Create a safe space that is informal, relaxed and non-judgemental.
- Use one-to-one conversations or small group discussions.
- Ask open, thought-provoking questions that trigger reflection on an experience, like taking a step back and looking at the experience from a different point of view. Examples might include, ‘why did you behave like that?’, ‘would you like to react differently than you did, like not running away/not hitting the car/not giving up?’, ‘what other forms of behaviour can you think of?’, ‘how could the situation have played out differently?’, ‘what personal strengths can you identify when looking back on this experience?’
- Connect behaviour to outcomes: “How did your reaction affect the situation?” “Did it help or make things worse?” “If you could go back, what would you change?”

#### Why it matters

This step transforms everyday events into learning opportunities. It teaches young people to **look at situations from different angles** and helps develop critical thinking and emotional insight.

### Step 4 “thinking”: Support insight and new understanding

**Goal:** to help young people turn insights from reflection into **new knowledge or principles** that they can use in everyday life to help them in making decisions and managing reactions and behaviour.

#### What it means:

This step is about supporting the integration of new knowledge, which was gained through reflection, into existing knowledge about oneself and the social world.

**Example:** before, my view of the social world was, ‘everyone rejects me, no one sees my strengths or value; I was a bad student and no employer wants to hire me’, but now I have gained the insight that I am really good at interpersonal relationships, highly creative, and skilled in managing groups and the different needs of individuals’. This improved self-image also helps see the world differently, as a space that can be changed and influenced by oneself and by freeing oneself from a restrictive label.

This process is called abstract conceptualisation. This step leads young people to develop new knowledge, which guides their future choices and behaviour. It supports young people to “re-author” their personal narratives, and this also supports them in regaining their position as a social actor and a motivated agent. The job is to help young people build this new knowledge that guides their behaviour in a more mature way.

#### What to do

- Help young people connect new knowledge and insights from reflection with existing knowledge and theories of how the world works by helping them draw a **‘knowledge map’** to explicitly set out what the new knowledge connects to, or conflicts with, in order to enable integration.
- Help young people connect their insights about themselves and/or the social world to their own self-image and their image of the social world, by exposing their inner sense-making and conclusions to the social world through questions posed either in a face-to-face or group setting. An example might be, ‘now that you know what you are good at, do you see yourself differently overall?’, or ‘what changes do you feel in your self-perception based on this new knowledge about yourself?’. Alternatively, ‘what can this insight about yourself tell you about relationships in general?’, or ‘does the world look differently today now that you know this about yourself?’

- Use visualisation (cartoon-style solutions, for example – see Chapter 3.1) to help young people work on their changed self-image or view of the social world.
- Encourage young people to see that they have the power to *change their approach* based on what they've learned. *They* are the agent!

### Why it matters

Everyone has their own ideas or theories about themselves and how the world works: what helps, what doesn't; how people behave and how to solve problems. These ideas guide our decisions and actions. Once young people begin to create or reshape these internal theories', they can then use these to guide future decisions and behaviour, laying the foundations for behavioural change; once they have integrated new knowledge about themselves and the social world, they can:

- understand their own patterns (e.g. 'I always avoid conflict', 'I'm not interested in learning');
- see where those patterns help or do not help them;
- add new knowledge or better strategies to their personal toolbox.

### Step 5 “acting”: Encourage trying out new behaviours (active experimentation)

**Goal:** to help young people apply what they've learned in real life and actively pay attention to new experiences in order to restart the learning spiral.

#### What to do:

- Ask the young person, 'what's something small you could try differently next time?', or 'what would be a good way to test what you've learned?'
- Support them in:
  - expressing their needs in relation to experimentation calmly in conversation;
  - asking for help when stressed;
  - saying no;
  - making a simple action plan comprising one or two next steps, ideally in writing;
- follow up afterwards and guide the young person, once again, through the learning cycle for this new experience.

### Why it matters

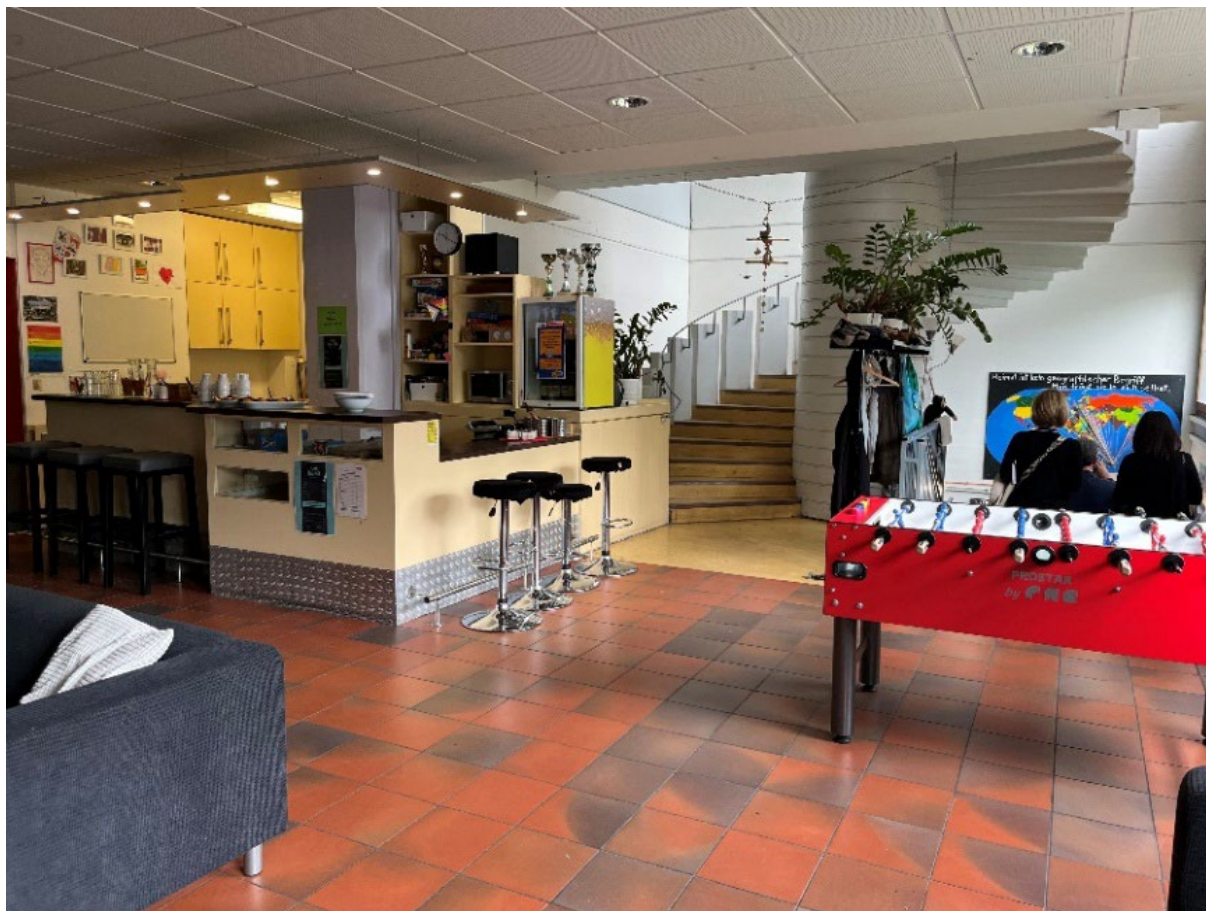
This step turns learning into action. By trying out new behaviour, young people gain confidence, develop new skills and enter a new cycle of experiential learning.

### Final thoughts for outreach workers

- Keep it simple and personal: avoid jargon and use real-life examples
- Let the young person lead: you're there to guide, not direct
- Normalise setbacks: every step, even mistakes, are part of the learning journey
- Be flexible: adapt the steps to the young person's pace and readiness
- Make learning visible: point out small wins and celebrate progress

## 2.2.2 Specific learning approaches for specific learning outcomes

Experiential learning should be complemented by the additional learning approaches below, which provide targeted methods to engage young people at different stages of readiness and development.



Source: ETF, common hang-out area of Jugendtreff Donaustadt, a youth facility of the Vienna Youth Centres, Austria

### Possible non-formal learning activities in the initial stages of outreach

**Engaging, fun activities like sports, music or game nights** offer opportunities for young people to learn about cooperating with others, expressing their wishes and needs, planning activities, boosting their self-esteem through the feeling of being good at something or learning how to lose or fail, before standing up and trying again, etc.; to experience success, failure and social interaction in a supportive environment. However, such learning remains often unconscious. Therefore, it is important that such in-formal learning is addressed by youth workers in [informal exchanges that make such learning visible and conscious](#) – both by highlighting learning opportunities before activities so young people enter activities with these opportunities in mind; and afterwards, e.g. to make young people aware of visible, existing competences, they may have not had on their radar before. This can be a starting point for moving through the experiential learning spiral.

**Co-designing their own activities, for example organising a sports tournament or a jam session**, is a way for young people to create their own activities and manage the design, planning and implementation phases, with support available only when desired. This [strengthens autonomy, agency and a sense of ownership](#). Here too, it is important that such [in-formal learning is addressed by youth workers in informal exchanges that make such learning visible and conscious](#) – both by highlighting learning opportunities before activities and to make young people aware of visible, existing competences.

**Individual conversations** make it possible to go deeper and personalise non-formal learning support and provide guidance and advice. Personal conversations should **take place regularly** in a comfortable, safe environment. Trust-building is essential and conversations should be youth-led, voluntary and non-judgemental.

**Workshops** bring peers together and can be a tool to **address joint concerns and create a feeling of belonging and not being alone** in a certain situation. Workshops create spaces for shared learning, peer validation and collective problem-solving. They can be a starting point from which to increase motivation and engagement in solving the challenges young people face together.



Source: Jaana Kettunen, courtyard of the Streetwork Wieden office, Vienna, Austria

**Possible non-formal learning activities supporting more advanced transversal competences (critical thinking, problem solving, communication and negotiation skills, analytical skills, creativity, intercultural skills, agency, self-efficacy etc.)<sup>1</sup>**

**NB All such activities should follow the experiential learning spiral**

**Service learning** teaches young people to turn ideas into action to meet real-world needs in their local community. First, they engage with their community to identify needs, then they explore how to create value for the community or a special target group, such as youth, and take action to add value. This might consist in improving the appearance of a bare wall with graffiti, for example. When agreed upon ahead of time with the relevant authorities, such an activity promotes civic responsibility and provides

<sup>1</sup> See ETF Scaffold cards that support non-formal learning: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/scaffold-card-game-revolutionise-teaching>.

participants with a sense of contribution. The young people involved are invited to reflect on feedback from the community and ultimately on what they have learned from the initiative.

**Project-based learning** helps young people to develop knowledge and skills through projects based on real-world challenges and problems that matter to them, giving their learning more purpose and stimulating their autonomy. First they identify a problem or challenge to address, which might be anything from organising a small event like a band night to something larger like improving youth spaces in the public realm, then they take steps to plan activities and implement solutions. This boosts initiative, planning skills and resilience through real-world engagement.

**Learner-led learning** encourages young people to actively contribute to making learning relevant, purposeful and meaningful to their individual needs, interests and aspirations. They identify topics or challenges to explore and their preferred learning and assessment methods; they set their personal development/learning goals, choose how to select, apply and evaluate their competences in specific learning areas and receive support to apply those competences in diverse contexts for a variety of purposes. This reflects the principle of self-determined learning and mirrors the later phases of the experiential learning cycle. It marks the developmental level at which learners can already move through the cycle themselves.

**Value creation pedagogy** is a process whereby young people learn by applying their competences (future or existing) to create something of value for at least one stakeholder outside their own group, class or school. The value created may be economic, social or cultural. First, they reflect on who could benefit from their learning, then they identify opportunities to create value for others; this cultivates empathy, responsibility and a sense of societal impact. They decide how they will create value and take action, then they use feedback from the intended beneficiaries to refine their work and reflect on their learning experience.

**Cooperative learning** creates an environment in which young people learn with and from each other, considering diverse perspectives, needs and learning preferences, motivating and supporting each other to advance their learning. First, learners work in groups to define individual and group goals, then they work together to co-create solutions and define success criteria and shared expectations, finally, they ‘teach’ each other.

**Seriously playful learning** encourages young people to take a creative, explorative, active and immersive attitude to learning, to stimulate their intrinsic motivation and achieve a flow state for learning. This promotes joy, curiosity and a healthy relationship with failure, which they are supported in learning from in a safe space. Their emotional engagement in playful activities, whose learning purpose they understand, teaches them to frame future problems in a novel and constructive way as learning opportunities. For instance, organising a sporting event while being conscious of the learning curve involved and consciously experiencing it. Problems in the activity have to be approached as positive learning opportunities.

**Laboratory learning** enables young people to learn through hands-on experience gained from trial-and-error experimentation with objects, materials and phenomena, whereby they can observe, practice and test solutions. This fosters a maker mindset, resilience and experiential problem-solving. They experiment using available resources, learn by making, learn from failure and setbacks, document their laboratory practice and reflect on their learning experience.

**Theatre of the oppressed** most commonly takes the form of forum theatre. This involves participants acting out a local problem in their community, on stage, showcasing the problem; for example there are no spaces for young people to hang out and they feel sidelined by fellow citizens and the police; then spectators of this first scene replace the actors on stage, stepping into their roles and showing a solution to the problem. This technique empowers youth to explore alternative realities and take collective ownership of social issues; individuals express awareness of problems in the community, from their perspective, and different solutions are identified. This can create a starting point for many of the above learning activities, such as service- or project-based learning.

**Role play** is an exercise whereby participants live their experiences through talking and acting. This method serves to activate participants, illustrate a problem or real-world situation, depict conflicts,

prepare for decision-making processes or practice new forms of behaviour. This method supports emotional intelligence, empathy and conflict resolution. Role play is suitable for promoting a diverse range of competences, such as self-confidence and reflection, taking different perspectives, self-control, the ability to take responsibility for one's own actions, empathy, communication and conflict resolution skills and the ability to act appropriately with regard to a given situation. When engaging in role play techniques, it is particularly important that the situation should be precisely described and the roles of each player clearly defined; it must be made clear to participants that they are to assume a role. At the end of the role play, the participants relinquish their roles and reflect on the outcome of the activity from their own perspective and from the perspective of an external observer, according to clear criteria.

**Work experience as a positive side effect of activating learning methods.** Service learning, project-based learning and similar provide an opportunity for young people to gain relevant work experience. This is highly pertinent for employers and the lack of such opportunities was cited in focus groups as a key hindrance to labour market integration for young people. Hence, the approach proposed in this outreach manual is a win-win situation.

### In the words of young people...

'I did some volunteer work, but they never gave me a real chance to learn anything. I was basically treated like a courier, just running around delivering documents. Whenever I asked to be shown something practical, they either didn't have time or claimed there were more important things to do. So, in the end, I spent almost a whole year there doing nothing but errands.'

*(Female participant, focus group in Sarajevo, May 2025)*

## 2.3 A progress monitoring tool for outreach service providers

*The effectiveness of outreach interventions can be monitored based on the progress in learning and personal development demonstrated by young NEETs. This holds true for NEETs who are ready to re-engage but lack information or awareness about the support available, as well as those who face multiple challenges, are hard to reach and are not yet ready to participate in formal offers of learning and/or work.*

*A learning outcomes framework (see [annex](#)) establishes a guideline for monitoring outreach effectiveness and progress. In contrast to a school setting, not all learning outcomes have to be achieved by everyone. Once young people participate actively in open youth work, they are supported in identifying their own learning needs, setting their own priorities and following the experiential learning spiral (empowerment); it is a personalised approach.*

### 2.3.1 Practical approaches for monitoring and assessing learning progress and achievement

*The following guidelines likely need to be contextualised and adapted to each specific young person and their needs and situation, but the measures that they implement are recognised to be effective. The focus is on **identifying behavioural change as a manifestation of learning**, through approaches that are aligned with the non-formal, voluntary nature of outreach, and prioritising trust, reflection and participation versus rigid measurement. The guidelines support youth-centred developmental monitoring and provide outreach workers with flexible tools for recognising learning progress.*

*There is an emphasis on formative self-assessment and formative external assessment, in order to identify ways to improve support for learning and enhance the learning itself without providing an assessment grade as would be the case in school settings.*

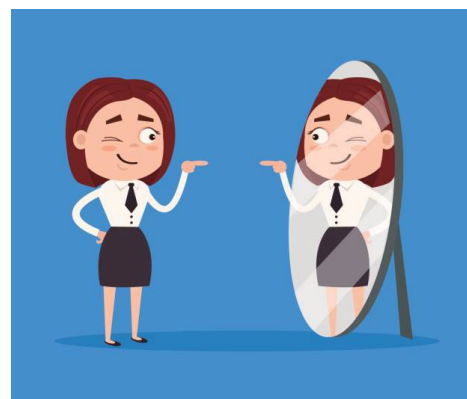
**Self-assessment** does not mean a questionnaire to hand over for young people to fill in. Rather, outreach workers should conduct **informal conversations to collect information about the young person's self-assessment in respect of certain learning outcomes**. This manifests itself through e.g. enquiring about learning, prompting young people to exchange, exploring their thinking and approach to learning. This information should be recorded in regular case management notes and then fed into the reporting cycle, as outlined in the minimum service package for outreach partners explained above.

*Outreach workers should not take notes during this kind of conversation: the atmosphere must be kept relaxed and informal. Outreach workers must be transparent in their intention to understand where the young person sees themselves in relation to certain learning outcomes. It is key to understand that self-assessment is most powerful when it emerges naturally through dialogue, storytelling or casual reflection. Trust is a prerequisite.*

**External assessment** consists in outreach workers reporting their **observations of behavioural change** in and among young people, at such time as changes are recognised, which might be daily, weekly or monthly. These observations are assessed against the learning outcomes in the CMS framework and form a basis for developing and managing a case file, as well as fulfilling reporting obligations, as outlined in the minimum service package for outreach partners' above.

The observation notes should highlight concrete behaviour or turning points, such as renewed enthusiasm or participation, increased communication or visible confidence. Small, observable signs of agency are key indicators of learning. For example, an initially insecure young person who lacks belief in their ability to do anything right may, over time, grow to feel secure and competent in a social context in which they can demonstrate the ability to do something well, like winning scavenger hunts, playing an instrument or working with others.

**Visualisation (cartoon-style solutions)** in the form of brochures and questionnaires are particularly effective with young NEETs and reduce the need for written text. Comic figures representing 'courage', 'fearlessness', 'self-esteem' or 'flexibility' tend to go over quite well. They are used in conversations to support self-assessments.



Sources of pictures: [left](#), [middle](#), [right](#).

**Written formative self-assessments** can also be used when the young person is ready to engage with more structured support. These may be complemented with **triangulation methods** if desired, i.e. allowing parents, peers or outreach workers to add their external assessment to the young person's self-assessment. This builds a solid feedback loop that helps enhance learning. Written self-assessments should be introduced gradually and only when the young people feel ownership over their journey. They must be framed as empowering, not evaluative.

### Example: a self-assessment tool for young people against the CMS learning outcomes

Please respond on a scale from 1-4, with 4 as the highest and 1 as the lowest rate.

|   | Specific competences                                                                                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A.1.3. I am able to deal with feelings of helplessness, worthlessness and fear of failure, including by seeking help                    |   |   |   |   |
| 2 | A.1.4. I am aware that my personal beliefs and attitudes affect my decisions                                                            |   |   |   |   |
| 3 | A.1.5. I am able to take responsibility for my decisions                                                                                |   |   |   |   |
| 4 | A.1.6. I am able to be persistent in following plans/ideas/activities, including the ability to review/adapt/revise/abandon/renew plans |   |   |   |   |

**Generating learning assessment evidence** is an alternative to using questionnaires for self- and third-party assessment, whereby young people simply collect evidence of learning achievements: in a chat with the outreach worker, for example, or via a digital portfolio. This content can be used later for structured (self-)assessment approaches. [Voice notes, videos, photos and text messages can all serve as evidence of learning, as they 'tell a story'](#). These youth-friendly formats can help make invisible growth visible.

**Peer learning groups** can be introduced when the young person reaches a state of readiness at which they are more inclined to engage in more structured support. Peer learning workshops may be organised to conduct formative self-assessments. The peer group can jointly reflect on the self-assessments made to build a group dynamic of [supportive networks](#) to help advance with learning. Concrete takeaways from such peer learning groups might include [letters to self](#), identifying three actions to take after the workshop, for instance; or even more structured [career development plans](#) or [learning plans](#). *Peer learning creates accountability, reduces isolation and strengthens motivation.* It also introduces youth to collective problem solving and shared reflection. These are key career management skills in and of themselves.

**Peer feedback** consists in young people giving and receiving [feedback on and from their peers](#) regarding where they are in their learning journey and the steps that could be taken next in order to progress. This helps to [make learning visible](#). An appropriate space will need to be created for such peer exchange, as well as a culture of peer feedback. When conducted in a respectful, structured setting, peer feedback increases insight and creates a sense of shared learning.

**Portfolio-based assessment** builds naturally on formative self-assessment and external assessment by offering young people a structured but flexible way to collect evidence of their learning, reflect on their progress and plan future development. Portfolios offer a personalised approach to capturing transversal competences in a youth-friendly and empowering way. They may be [physical](#) (e.g. folders, notebooks etc.) or [digital](#) (simple mobile-based portfolios, shared online folders, etc.), according to what is most accessible and comfortable for a given young person.

Portfolios should [document the experiences, competences and personal achievements](#) of the young people [over time](#). They might include evidence of participation in activities, creative outputs, feedback from outreach workers or peers and other artefacts that demonstrate growth in areas such as communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, digital skills and social and emotional skills. Portfolios should be co-developed, not imposed. They should reflect their owner's voice and ownership. They can eventually support CV building, self-presentation or transitions to formal pathways.

[Reflection is an essential element](#): young people are encouraged to self-reflect, describing not only what they have done, but what they have learned from their experiences, the challenges they have faced and the growth they have made, in line with the experiential learning spiral.

Portfolios are introduced once a trusting relationship with the young person has been established and the young person is ready to engage more systematically with their own development. The outreach worker supports the young person in organising and maintaining the portfolio, but **ownership of the content remains fully with the young person**, as per the open youth work principle of anonymity.

Portfolio reviews are conducted periodically, ideally in informal conversations that allow the young person to look back at their achievements and set new goals. In addition, portfolios can serve as a valuable tool to support transitions towards more structured learning, employment, or civic engagement activities, by providing tangible evidence of the young person's competences and progress. In this way, portfolio-based assessment complements and deepens the ongoing formative assessment process in outreach work.

### Assessment of prior learning

Understanding the point from which each individual starts is key to the personalisation of learning. Additionally, many of the aforementioned tools can be used for initial assessment of prior learning in the CMS framework areas.

#### In the words of young people...

'I have three friends who work as dispatchers for trucks, and they earn over €1 000 doing so. Even though they have the potential for a job that requires specialised knowledge, they still chose to be dispatchers because the starting salary is over €1 000. They say things like, "why should I be a doctor? Why should I study when I won't even earn half of that as a starting salary? I don't know what the salary of doctors is, but I think they're very undervalued for such an important profession." And it's an automatic decision based on the principle of least resistance. Why struggle for 10 years when one can quickly earn €1 000 and later start one's own business or buy one's own trucks?'

*(Participant, focus group in North Macedonia, April 2025)*

# ANNEX – MONITORING FRAMEWORK: THE CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS FRAMEWORK FOR YOUNG NEETS

*The following framework of learning outcomes builds on the work done in 2024 and 2025:*

1. a desk review of international CMS frameworks to ensure learning outcomes are in line with international standards; and
2. focus groups set up across all six Western Balkan economies to empirically ground the competence framework and contextualise it through exchanges with representatives of young NEETs, youth representatives, practitioners working with young people, and especially NEETs themselves, and stakeholders from ministries and public agencies responsible for measures related to young NEETs.

*The learning outcomes framework builds a **guideline for monitoring outreach effectiveness and progress**.*

*The CMS framework explicitly acknowledges the unique characteristics of non-formal learning processes with inactive, disengaged and most disadvantaged youth. It is designed to be developmental, flexible and rooted in personalised engagement, rather than a standardised checklist of competences. Therefore, the learning outcomes at the phases of first contact – through open youth work, its digital equivalent, youth work in the streets, or in youth centres – follow a concrete sequence or hierarchy to create the conditions for further cooperation with young people. This sequence supports trust building, emotional safety, and basic relational engagement as essential preconditions for learning. The overall objective at the beginning of contact is to build a trusting relationship.*

*Such a hierarchy is not followed after a certain phase, which acknowledges that CMS learning, as understood here, is a personalised process. This means that not all learning outcomes have to be achieved by everyone, as in the classroom logic, once young people participate actively in open youth work. Rather, young people are supported in identifying their own learning needs, reflecting on their lived experience and in setting their own priorities (empowerment). In that respect, other learning outcomes, not listed here, might also be of relevance while the ones listed are the core outcomes. The CMS framework guides outreach workers in goal-oriented, non-formal learning support. It provides a shared, adaptable reference point to identify progress, adjust support strategies and document development in a meaningful way.*

*Outreach phases:*

**Identification.** Identifying NEETs through diverse strategies (data, local knowledge of partners, presence in youth environments).

**Contact and engagement.** Building relationships of trust, creating low-threshold entry points for young people through the use of engaging, fun activities that appeal to youth in order to kick off informal and non-formal learning.

**Programme delivery.** Supporting non-formal learning.

**Monitoring and adjustment.** Tracking the learning progress and adapting support mechanisms.

**Support after registration.** Remaining in close contact to prevent dropout and sustain engagement.

*Each phase supports the progressive development of CMS. Early phases focus on relationship building and social and emotional learning; later stages enable deeper life skills learning and personal development, but also practical career learning, such as goal setting, planning and informed decision making.*

# 1. Learning outcomes for the identification phase and the contact and engagement phase

The learning outcomes below are expressly organised in a sequential logic so that they build on each other to create a foundation, facilitating further and closer cooperation with young people. A shift from informal to non-formal personalised CMS learning is supported here. Based on the fundamental principle of personalised learning, young people are supported in identifying their learning needs and the process of following their own priorities. Thus, not everyone has to achieve all learning outcomes. In that respect, while what is listed below comprises a core baseline, other learning outcomes (not listed here) may also be relevant.

The learning of learning outcomes is supported not just by outreach workers, but all related services that cooperate in the support of young NEETs: outreach workers, social workers, psychologists, health workers, public employment services staff, training providers, etc.

| Area               | General area of competence                                                    | Specific competence elements relevant to young NEETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Self in context | A 1. Attitudes                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A.1.1. Accepts adult outreach workers within the youth scene</li> <li>A.1.2. Is ready to engage in repeated interactions with adult outreach workers</li> <li>A.1.3. Accepts assistance from outreach workers in meeting basic emotional and health-related (physical and mental) needs, including referrals to other services</li> <li>A.1.4. Is ready to regularly participate in engaging, fun activities at the youth centre or within open youth work, in other settings for kick-starting non-formal learning support</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                    | A 2. Basic life management skills and social and emotional skills             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A.2.1. Displays basic skills for navigating everyday life (e.g. capacities in terms of resting/sleeping, hygiene, nutrition, using transport, managing daily purchases/money, following a daily routine, etc.)</li> <li>A.2.2. Arrives punctually at appointments/events</li> <li>A.2.3. Adheres to agreements</li> <li>A.2.4. Accepts rules laid out by outreach workers, including legal rules</li> <li>A.2.5. Is able to set short-term goals</li> <li>A.2.5. Is able to communicate needs</li> <li>A.2.6. Is able to ask for help</li> <li>A.2.7. Displays initial signs of developing a relationship of trust with outreach workers</li> <li>A.2.8. Displays a sense of security in the open youth work context (especially relevant for females and disadvantaged groups)</li> <li>A.2.9. Displays a sense of security in social activities</li> <li>A.2.10. Displays an increase in self-esteem/self-efficacy</li> <li>A.2.11. Seeks, accepts and makes use of feedback from others</li> <li>A.2.12. Displays initial openness to engage/access support services offered by public institutions</li> <li>A.2.13. Demonstrates an initial awareness of personal skills, strengths and achievements, and what she/he learned</li> </ul> |
|                    | A 3. Knowledge and critical understanding of self in context (Self-awareness) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A.3.1. Adopts elements of a sustainable lifestyle that foster physical and mental well-being</li> <li>A.3.2. Demonstrates an awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics and social and environmental factors influence health and well-being</li> <li>A.3.3. Displays understanding of the importance of positive relationships in personal lives</li> <li>A.3.4. Demonstrates an awareness of how life changes can affect personal well-being, mental and physical health and decisions about life, learning and work</li> <li>A.3.5. Is able to explore external influences on feelings, behaviour and attitudes</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

| Area                        | General area of competence                                     | Specific competence elements relevant to young NEETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                             |                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A.3.6. Is able to reflect on social values, norms and expectations (e.g. related to gender, age, work, performance, career, life, stereotypes/prejudice, etc.)</li> <li>A.3.7. Can articulate dreams in life/a vision about life, potentially including for a career</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                             | A 4. Community and social networking skills                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A.4.1. Cooperates with others to achieve a goal through engaging, fun activities/non-formal learning activities</li> <li>A.4.2. Displays clear signs of trust in adults (outreach workers)</li> <li>A.4.3. Is able to recognise and understand another person's emotions, experiences and values, and to proactively adopt their perspective (empathy)</li> <li>A.4.4. Displays understanding of how to deal with challenges of peer pressure, conflict and emotions in relationships</li> <li>A.4.5. Participates actively in a range of activities and tasks focused on enhancing social, emotional, and/or physical development</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| B. Education and learning   | B. Learning skills                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B.1. Displays the ability to learn experientially under the guidance of outreach workers</li> <li>B.2. Displays an initial ability to develop interests in life related to private life, education, and work</li> <li>B.4. Displays the ability to solve problems faced in their life with support from outreach workers</li> <li>B.5. Displays willingness to engage in more structured, non-formal learning activities</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| C. Work, career, livelihood | C 1. Knowledge and critical understanding of the labour market | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C.1.1. Demonstrates an awareness that career <i>challenges</i> are not their own fault but strongly depend on contextual factors that are out of the sphere of influence of individuals, thereby freeing themselves of blame and low self-esteem, as factors like rising unemployment, accessibility to support services (e.g. active labour market measures, career guidance, social services), the quality of the education and training offer, labour market conditions, trends at national, regional and local level such as aging/demographic shifts, digitalisation, globalisation, offshoring and climate change, and finally cultural aspects as those relating to gender, age and ethnicity must be tackled by governments.</li> <li>C.1.2. Demonstrates an awareness that blaming the system does not change one's own life situation but taking initiative will</li> </ul> |
|                             | C 2. Practical skills                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C.2.1. Displays basic digital skills</li> <li>C.2.2. Displays literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## 2. Learning outcomes for the programme delivery phase and the support after registration phase

*Not all learning outcomes have to be achieved by everyone, as in the classroom logic, as long as young people participate actively in outreach activities. Hence, young people are supported in identifying their learning needs and in following their priorities while receiving support for non-formal CMS learning as a personalised learning process. In that respect, other learning outcomes, not listed here, might also be relevant, while those listed are the common core learning outcomes that enable readiness.*

*The learning of learning outcomes is supported not just by outreach workers, but all related services that cooperate in the support of young NEETs: outreach workers, social workers, psychologists, health workers, public employment services staff, training providers, etc.*

| Area               | General competence area         | Specific competence elements relevant for young NEETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Self in context | A 1 Social and emotional skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.1.1 Displays self-confidence/self-efficacy, having overcome a warped impression of their own shortcomings, including initial reflections like 'I know nothing', 'I can't do anything right', being shy in new contexts, etc.</li> <li>▪ A.1.2 Is able to constructively deal with setbacks; maintain intrinsic motivation despite setbacks; stand up and try again following setbacks; maintain a belief in themselves and their competences despite setbacks</li> <li>▪ A.1.3 Is able to deal with feelings of helplessness, worthlessness and a fear of failure, namely by seeking help</li> <li>▪ A.1.4 Demonstrates an awareness that one's personal beliefs and attitudes affect their decisions</li> <li>▪ A.1.5 Is able to take responsibility for one's decisions</li> <li>▪ A.1.6 Is able to remain persistent in following plans/ideas/activities, and is able to review/adapt/revise/abandon/renew plans</li> <li>▪ A.1.7 Is able to be proactive in career development and take initiative</li> <li>▪ A.1.8 Is able to stand up for own life and career dreams and wishes, despite external influences</li> <li>▪ A.1.9 Is able to express their opinion</li> <li>▪ A.1.10 Is able to cope with change and transition including by asking for support when required               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.1.10.1 Is able to adapt flexibly to real-life situations</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ A.1.11 Is able to paint a positive version of one's future in life and work despite challenging realities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.1.11.1 Is able to outline a future goal/vision that guides actions, decisions and behaviour to overcome pessimism</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ A.1.12 Demonstrates communication skills, including non-verbal communication               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.1.12.1 Is able to understand non-verbal communication</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ A.1.13 Demonstrates a decent level of tolerance with regard to frustration</li> <li>▪ A.1.14 Is able to deal with prejudice and discrimination in a constructive manner               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.1.14.1. Displays an ability to overcome stereotypes in relation to themselves and others</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ A.1.15 Is able to receive and provide constructive feedback</li> <li>▪ A.1.16 Is able to manage interpersonal relationships, including team working skills, establishing boundaries between personal and professional relationships, conflict management skills</li> <li>▪ A.1.17 Is able to take responsibility for their career development and actions (without need for external push)</li> <li>▪ A.1.18 Is able to hold themselves accountable for achieving results related to career development, work performance, work relationships, work behaviour, etc. (self-discipline)</li> </ul> |

| Area | General competence area                                      | Specific competence elements relevant for young NEETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      |                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.1.19. Is able to show an understanding of another person's emotions, experiences and values, and to provide appropriate responses (empathy)</li> <li>▪ A.1.20. Is able to critically reflect on themselves and their life context, including on past negative experiences with formal education, how this hinders participation now, how to overcome this by choosing new forms of learning, like work-based learning, how peers support or hinder reengagement, etc.</li> <li>▪ A.1.21. Is able to recognise and identify their own emotions and how they affect their thoughts, values and behaviours</li> <li>▪ A.1.22. Is able to understand and regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviour, including stress and anger responses (self-regulation)</li> <li>▪ A.1.23. Understands the importance of mental health and is able to identify when and how to seek help</li> <li>▪ A.1.24. Is able to set goals for personal and professional development and persist in achieving them</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|      | A 2. Attitudes                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.2.1. Demonstrates an awareness of their own attitudes to life, including learning and work</li> <li>▪ A.2.2. Demonstrates an openness to psychosocial support like support to enhance self-confidence and efficacy, and an awareness and understanding of the value of support</li> <li>▪ A.2.3. Displays acceptance of the reality to possess strengths and abilities next to shortcomings</li> <li>▪ A.2.4. Demonstrates an openness to information and advice about personal development, learning and work</li> <li>▪ A.2.5. Demonstrates an openness to new experiences and new life and career pathway opportunities</li> <li>▪ A.2.6. Demonstrates an awareness that learning is a lifelong process that requires openness, curiosity, determination and specific attitudes and behaviours that contribute to successful learning</li> <li>▪ A.2.7. Demonstrates an openness to see the value in re-engaging in learning and/or work, as may be the case for young women with care responsibilities, for example, or people with disabilities</li> <li>▪ A.2.8. Demonstrates an openness to re-engage in formal learning over a longer period to enhance their own employability</li> <li>▪ A.2.9. Is able to persistently follow through with education goals despite a cultural context where social contacts can outplay qualifications</li> <li>▪ A.2.10. Demonstrates an openness to all work-life opportunities, including non-academic professions, especially in the phase of interest development, as social expectations can portray potentially suitable options in a wrong light (the impression of "dirty jobs", for example, or "hard physical work")</li> <li>▪ A.2.11. Demonstrates an openness to mobility for learning and work, including to relocation</li> <li>▪ A.2.12. Displays realistic life expectations in contrast to depictions of life as broadcasted on social media</li> <li>▪ A.2.13. Demonstrates an awareness that change and growth/learning are a part of life, and understands the value of challenging oneself (e.g. doing things differently)</li> <li>▪ A.2.14. Displays trust in public institutions that offer support</li> </ul> |
|      | A 3. Knowledge and critical understanding of self in context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.3.1. Demonstrates an awareness that life, learning and work roles can change over one's lifetime</li> <li>▪ A.3.2. Demonstrates an awareness that stereotypes, bias and discrimination can limit one's opportunities in life</li> <li>▪ A.3.3. Demonstrates an awareness of social norms and expectations, related to gender roles and how they impact oneself, for example</li> <li>▪ A.3.4. Demonstrates an awareness of options for an effective life-work balance</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

| Area                      | General competence area                                                          | Specific competence elements relevant for young NEETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           |                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.3.5. Displays an understanding of their own civic rights, and where to find the support they are entitled to as a citizen, including public employment services, youth and social services, and how they can access services and which conditions must be met</li> <li>▪ A.3.6. Is able to explore non-traditional life and work scenarios and can consider them as a possibility for themselves</li> <li>▪ A.3.7. Knows about “social networks” as key to employability, as well as employment in a cultural context where social contacts can outplay qualifications</li> <li>▪ A.3.8. Demonstrates an awareness of risks related to substance use, as well as opportunities to engage in harm reduction or prevention strategies</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | A 4. Community & social networking skills                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A.4.1. Is able to actively plan, deliver and evaluate engaging, fun non-formal learning activities</li> <li>▪ A.4.2. Is able to establish and maintain relationships, including in new contexts, and demonstrate tolerance with regard to different opinions and collaborate with others</li> <li>▪ A.4.3. Is able to use social networks/connections to learn about decent work opportunities, including self-employment/entrepreneurship,</li> <li>▪ A.4.3.1. Is able to maintain a work relationship by engaging work colleagues</li> <li>▪ A.4.4. Is able to handle social norms and expectations, for example in cases related to gender roles, in the sense of not letting themselves be limited or defined by these</li> <li>▪ A.4.5. Is able to actively seek professional support through accessing psychosocial/social/youth services, career guidance services, start-up support, support for transportation, care for children/family members, financial support, etc., including during work experience periods or learning (when acquiring a driving license, for example)</li> <li>▪ A.4.6. Is able to connect with peers in similar situations and support others in career development</li> <li>▪ A.4.7. Is able to connect with others to solve problems, such as how to combine care responsibilities with work, or how to enter education or training in the absence of public care offers or the financial means to use private care service offers</li> <li>▪ A.4.8. Is able to support others in their personal and career development</li> <li>▪ A.4.9. Is able to align actions and behaviour with personal values – in life, education or employment – without being dominated by external expectations or social pressure</li> </ul> |
| B. Education and learning | B 1. Knowledge and critical understanding of the world of education and learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ B.1.1. Knows about different types of learning, e.g. formal, non-formal and informal learning, online and blended learning, mentoring, coaching, job shadowing, work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships, etc.</li> <li>▪ B.1.2. Demonstrates an awareness of the different approaches to learning in non-formal environments (online, in the workplace, or learning offered by non-formal providers) and how this is different to past experiences in formal environments</li> <li>▪ B.1.3. Knows about second-chance learning offers and how to access them to finish primary/secondary education</li> <li>▪ B.1.4. Understands the value of acquiring additional non-formal training to boost one’s employability (from ICT and language skills to project management certifications or certificates of participation in skills competitions – be they maths competitions, vocational competitions or otherwise)</li> <li>▪ B.1.5. Knows which learning approaches are most suitable for themselves</li> <li>▪ B.1.6. Critically understands why learning is relevant for them to overcome life challenges</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

| Area                        | General competence area                                        | Specific competence elements relevant for young NEETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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|                             |                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ B.1.7. Knows about support available to (re-)engage in learning and how to access it</li> <li>▪ B.1.8. Demonstrates an awareness of, and confidence in, their own ability to learn</li> <li>▪ B.1.9. Displays the ability to assess own prior learning/ to self-evaluate</li> <li>▪ B.1.10. Displays the ability to set their own learning goals</li> <li>▪ B.1.11. Knows about the importance of finishing work experience opportunities, like internships, for the sake of building up a CV, even in the case of subpar conditions (e.g. only being used for menial tasks such as photocopying or moving documents)</li> <li>▪ B.1.12. Recognises the importance and possibilities of lifelong learning and career development as a whole-of-life process</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                             | B 2. Learning Skills                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ B.2.1. Is able to explore how their life experience has affected their attitude to learning</li> <li>▪ B.2.2. Is able to learn experientially without support</li> <li>▪ B.2.3. Displays the adoption of a personal learning strategy to manage their own learning, including the ability to concentrate on a task/activity without getting distracted</li> <li>▪ B.2.4. Is able to learn from any work experience opportunity, like an internship, including by advocating for exposure to real learning experiences if the placement involves only menial tasks such as photocopying or moving documents</li> <li>▪ B.2.5. Demonstrates good time management</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| C. Work, career, livelihood | C 1. Knowledge and critical understanding of the labour market | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ C.1.1. Knows about the wide range of careers beyond the traditional professions, including new opportunities offered by the digital and green transitions, the Western Balkans and EU integration</li> <li>▪ C.1.2. Knows about workers' rights, labour law and working conditions, including different contract types, especially for people with special needs (persons with disabilities, persons with care responsibilities, persons with language barriers, etc.)</li> <li>▪ C.1.3. Demonstrates an awareness of the value of practical work experience for employability, including through volunteering, practice firms, project-based learning, community-based learning, etc.</li> <li>▪ C.1.4. Demonstrates an awareness of the need for investing in skills development to prepare for labour market integration</li> <li>▪ C.1.5. Knows where to find information about the world of work, including online</li> <li>▪ C.1.6. knowledgeable about how to access (a) public support services or public employment services, public social and youth work services, and other public institutions' services; and (b) services offered by private and civil society providers</li> <li>▪ C.1.6.1. Recognises public providers as partners</li> <li>▪ C.1.7. Demonstrates an awareness that career challenges, setbacks and rejections are not personal, as well as an ability to maintain intrinsic motivation, believing in themselves, their competences, and the need to try again</li> <li>▪ C.1.8. Demonstrates an awareness of expected behaviour in the workplace, and skills needed to successfully hold down a job, including punctuality, communication, responsibility, etc.</li> <li>▪ C.1.9. Demonstrates an awareness that quick financial independence from parents, at any cost, might hinder the achievement of better career outcomes in the mid- to long-term</li> <li>▪ C.1.9.1. Displays an ability to weigh immediate financial necessities against the benefits of skills acquisition and long-term planning, in order to optimise their career trajectories</li> <li>▪ C.1.10. Demonstrates an awareness of the relevance of a driving licence for employability</li> <li>▪ C.1.11. Demonstrates an awareness of realistic expectations for career development</li> </ul> |

| Area | General competence area | Specific competence elements relevant for young NEETS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      |                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ C.1.11.1. Demonstrates an awareness of realistic expectations related to salary, especially in entry-level jobs, that match labour market realities</li> <li>▪ C.1.12. Demonstrates an awareness of own life values and what kind of work and employment one values respectively</li> <li>▪ C.1.13. Demonstrates an awareness of self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities (e.g. how to transform a hobby into a paid activity)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|      | C 2. Practical skills   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ C.2.1. Is able to complete basic administrative tasks (e.g. applying for an ID card, social benefits, health insurance, housing support, etc.)</li> <li>▪ C.2.2. Is able to access career information, including online, and make sense of it for their career development</li> <li>▪ C.2.2.1. Is able to access information about skills needs and professions that are in demand on the labour market</li> <li>▪ C.2.3. Possesses digital skills, personal data protection skills, and an ability to use them for learning and career advancement</li> <li>▪ C.2.4. Has media literacy to critically evaluate and understand messages conveyed through various media, including digital media</li> <li>▪ C.2.5. Is able to put together a high-quality job application, including a CV and cover letter relevant to calls for application</li> <li>▪ C.2.6. Is able to present themselves to an employer (interview skills)</li> <li>▪ C.2.7. Displays organisational skills, including time management</li> <li>▪ C.2.8. Possesses financial and money management skills</li> <li>▪ C.2.9. Is able to prioritise and organise tasks to manage different obligations related to work, learning or personal life</li> <li>▪ C.2.10. Is able to communicate in foreign language(s), especially English</li> <li>▪ C.2.11. Is able to apply key reading, writing and mathematics skills relevant to a chosen career/learning path</li> <li>▪ C.2.12. Is able to reflect on advantages and disadvantages of various work alternatives (e.g. voluntary work, full-time/part-time employment or self-employment options, or indeed work-life balance)</li> <li>▪ C.2.13. Is able to develop a career plan using appropriate and accurate career-related information</li> <li>▪ C.2.14. Possesses decision-making skills</li> </ul> |

Readiness to register with PES and engage in formal offers of learning and/or work is built on achievement of the above learning outcomes. **Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia** have broader career management skills frameworks that cover not just initial competence levels for NEETs but learning outcomes from a lifelong perspective.

This CMS framework for NEETs is thus a complementary and integral part of those generic CMS frameworks. They are, of course, related and interconnected, and learning outcomes acquired by NEETs can be followed up with further career learning in the framework of PES work and other providers' work, which contribute to lifelong career learning.

# ACRONYMS

|           |                                                                                             |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AEYC      | Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres                                                  |
| bOJA      | Bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit (nationwide network for open youth work, Austria) |
| CC BY 4.0 | Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence                                      |
| Cedefop   | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training                                  |
| CEO       | Chief executive officer                                                                     |
| CMS       | Career management skills                                                                    |
| CSO       | Civil society organisation                                                                  |
| CV        | Curriculum Vitae                                                                            |
| ELGPN     | European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network                                                   |
| ERYICA    | European Youth Information and Counselling Agency                                           |
| ETF       | European Training Foundation                                                                |
| EU        | European Union                                                                              |
| GPT-5     | Generative pre-trained transformer, version 5                                               |
| ICT       | Information and communication technology                                                    |
| ID        | Identification                                                                              |
| ILO       | International Labour Organization                                                           |
| ISI       | Initiativen für soziale Integration (initiatives for social integration)                    |
| KEKS      | Kvalitet och kompetens i samverkan (quality and competence through cooperation)             |
| LLL       | Lifelong learning                                                                           |
| NEET      | Not in employment, education or training                                                    |

|        |                                                                  |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NGO    | Non-governmental organization                                    |
| OECD   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development           |
| PES    | Public Employment Service                                        |
| QR     | Quick response                                                   |
| RCC    | Regional Cooperation Council                                     |
| TV     | Television                                                       |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nation Children's Fund                                    |
| YG     | Youth Guarantee                                                  |

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