



# Evaluation report of the »PreseNeeti se« project

## PEER REVIEW

## NOSCO

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## Introduction

The project titled PreseNEETi se involved NOSCO (Norwegian Organization for Supervision and Co-Operation) as a Norwegian partner which is an NGO, a national association for supervisors and through its members oversees work in the fields of education, social welfare, employment, and health.

In the project NOSCO was involved in the following tasks:

- review and analysis of the current state-of-the-art in the field of NEET in Norway
- organising a study visit for the Slovenian colleagues in Stavanger, Norway to enhance the transfer of good practices,
- and at the end of the project, also evaluating the project.

This evaluation report (peer-review) was carried out by NOSCO, according to the description from the project documentation:

“In order to increase the likelihood of long-term implementation of the project's effects, NOSCO will - after the implementation of all operational work packages in Slovenia - carry out an evaluation of the programme based on the pre and post-test report and provide feedback on possible improvements in the future. The evaluation will also include suggestions for improvements based on Norwegian examples of good practice.”

The present evaluation was carried out and based on the following:

- I. Evaluation questionnaire for the partners;
- II. Reports and evaluation of the different elements of the project by University of Maribor;
- III. Feedback from NOSCO based on participative experiences of collaboration between partners;
- IV. Results of the Retrospective Evaluation Meeting organized by NOSCO at the end of the project.



## Evaluation questionnaire for the partners

An evaluation questionnaire was prepared for the partners and sent out at the end of the project. This first part of the peer review is based on the answers we got to the questions from the partners. First, we summarise what was the project about, what were the main aims, who were the partners, the target group, and how the plan was executed. After this comes the reflection on the results.

### **Information about the project (Summary)**

According to the approved project proposal project “PreseNEETI se” focused on empowerment and social activation of NEETs, with which the project contributes to the establishment of support services for NEETs as towards an improved education and social environment aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups. Empowerment and social activation of NEETs helps to establish a support service for NEETs (direct effect) in the following ways:

1. Development of a comprehensive program for the empowerment of NEETs based on selected educational modules, psychosocial support and motivational modules intended for NEET persons;
2. The establishment of a two-track mentoring scheme in which included both a mentor from the youth sector and a consultant from ZRSZ;
3. Strengthening the importance of career counseling (individual implementation plan of education and job search, preparation of a CV, preparation of a business plan), which includes both partners at the mezzo and macro level;
4. Integration of NEETs into the labor market through the development of an empowerment and social model activation based on four pillars (training - program; inclusion - counseling; recruitment promotion/development business ideas - mentoring; registration at the Employment Agency, involvement in volunteering - systemic aspect).

The empowerment and social activation of NEETs contributes to an improved education and a social environment that aims support of disadvantaged groups (results) in the following ways:

1. Preparation of a methodology for identifying basic characteristics and the needs of the NEET population together with researchers from UM, which will give ZRSZ a tool for early intervention;
2. Strengthening of competences professional workers at ZRSZ, who deal with the problem of NEET persons at the system level;



3. Establishment of a defense system with the help of recommendations for political decision-makers, in the design of which stakeholders at the micro, meso and macro levels will be involved;
4. Development awareness campaigns based on "peer outreach" of NEETs.

The three main goals of the project were:

1. Empowerment and social activation of at least 30 NEET individuals in the labor market;
2. Inclusion of at least 40 mentors in the established mentoring scheme;
3. Empowerment of at least 100 stakeholders at the systemic level with a new methodology for identifying the fundamental characteristics and needs of the NEET population.

### ***The partners and their responsibilities***

According to the approved project proposal all partners cooperated in all workpackages and were partners in all project tasks and deliverables. However, partners were recruited according to their expert profile and professional background.

Partners in the project and their main tasks:

1. Ljudska univerza Celje (Public institution for adult education Celje): Project management and coordination of partners; Development and implementation of the empowerment and social activation program for NEETs; Organization of a study visit to Norway; Preparation of the manual for working with NEETs, Promotion of the project;
2. Mladinski svet Slovenije (National youth Council of Slovenia): Development and implementation of the mentoring scheme; Promotion of the project; Preparation of the manual for mentors;
3. Univerza v Mariboru (University of Maribor): Review and analysis of existing materials and state of the art report concerning NEETs in Slovenia; Development of methodology for identifying the basic characteristics and needs of the NEET population;
4. Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje (Employment Service of Slovenia): Multilateral preparation and formulation of recommendations for policymakers; Development and implementation of a two-track mentoring scheme;
5. NOSCO: Review and analysis of existing materials and state of the art report concerning NEETs in Norway; Organisation of the study visit for Slovenian partners in Norway; Evaluation report of the programme; Participation in the study visit to Slovenia at the end of the project.

### ***The professional staff and the expectations of them***

Partners searched for professional staff within their organisations. The planned professional staff was distributed among the partners, with each covering their specific area of work. Collaborators at the



MSS were responsible for establishing the mentoring scheme, preparing the manual, and planning the promotion. The professional workers at LUC oversaw the development of the social implementation program for NEET individuals, and the overall project management. Representatives from the ZRSZ were tasked with preparing recommendations for decision-makers and developing a two-track mentoring scheme. The UM, or their experts, were responsible for analysing the basic characteristics and needs of the NEET population. NOSCO professional staff was in charge of analyses of NEET situation in Norway and overall supervision of the project.

### ***The target group of the project***

Throughout the project, various target groups were addressed.

The main target groups were young NEETs and mentors. NEET individuals are defined as those who are not employed, undergoing education, or training. The project aimed to include all NEET individuals aged between 15 and 29, with a particular focus on the so-called "older youth" (25–29 years old), young mothers or single mothers, and individuals with migrant backgrounds. Mentors were recruited from the ranks of youth workers (Non-formal learning) and advisors from the Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ).

**General Public:** Refers to the general population that was reached through public statements and other communication messages about the project's implementation and achievements through various communication channels.

**National Public Authority:** Includes national administrative bodies, components of the state administration, and other holders of public authority operating at the national level.

**Interest Groups, including NGOs:** Encompasses non-governmental organizations, networks of NGOs, and other interest groups primarily engaged in youth-related activities or exclusively operating in the youth sector, particularly with individuals identified as NEET.

**Higher Education and Research:** Encompasses higher education institutions, universities, and research organizations. These entities were crucial for the project due to issues related to dropouts, and research organizations play a vital role in accumulating knowledge about NEET individuals.

Local public authority like municipalities.

Regional public authority like regional development agency.

Infrastructure and (public) service provider like NAV.

**Education/Training Centre and School:** Refers to educational centers and schools (both secondary and primary), which are crucial for the project due to issues related to dropouts.



### ***The expected results***

The activities of the project were strategically planned to achieve the outlined goals of empowerment, social activation, mentorship, and systemic improvement for NEET individuals.

The main results of the project can be divided into micro, mezzo and macro levels.

*At the micro level* (level of NEET persons), the results are as follows:

Result 1: Strengthening of formal and informal competences of NEET persons for integration into the labor market;

Result 2: Reduction of the rate of unregistered NEETs and their integration into the existing networks through ZRSZ;

Result 3: Increasing the share of empowered and socially active NEETs;

*At the mezzo level* (level organizations/institutions) the expected results are as follows:

Result 4: Strengthening of skills and institutional knowledge at the level of individual professional workers in the field of management of NEET persons;

Result 5: Empowerment and social activation of NEETs (in the form volunteering, employment or job search);

Result 6: Establishing mechanisms to ensure early intervention;

Result 7: Development of an awareness campaign based on "peer outreach" of persons and evaluation of the most appropriate campaign;

*At the macro level* (system level – country), the expected results are as follows:

Result 8: Development of methodology for identification basic characteristics and needs of the NEET population, which will enable ZRSZ and SURS to prepare accurate censuses and officials enabled the formulation of public policies in the area of NEETs;

Result 9: Strengthening the knowledge of state officials in the field of persons NEET, as the project will develop an integrated model for the social activation of NEET persons.

All project outcomes were designed to enable both qualitative and quantitative measurability. Identified challenges were directly addressed by activities during the project. The use of tests before the activities measured the basic value of the indicators regarding their competence for social activation, on the basis of which a training system with mentoring was created. The aim of including all three levels was to strengthen the institutional capacities of the social environment for the inclusion of NEETs.

### ***The indicators set at the beginning of the project:***

1. Number of new or upgraded services developed and tested in the local environment: 3
  - 1.1. Two-tier mentoring scheme up and running



- 1.2. Methodology developed to identify the basic characteristics and needs of the NEET population
- 1.3. A comprehensive empowerment and social activation programme for NEETs, developed and tested
2. Number of staff trained to work with NEETs: 45
  - 2.1. Enhanced knowledge and capacity of consortium partners to work with NEETs (5)
  - 2.2. Empowering youth and other workers to work with NEETs (40)
3. Number of inclusive activities, e.g. events, workshops, training, etc.: 21
  - 3.1. Strengthening bilateral cooperation in the field of work with NEETs between Slovenia and Norway (2)
  - 3.2. Empower youth and other workers to work with NEETs (4)
  - 3.3. An inclusive set of recommendations for policy makers (14)
  - 3.4. Integrated career and psychosocial empowerment of NEETs to be included in the newly developed programme (1)
4. Number of beneficiaries of existing or improved services: 350
  - 4.1. Establishing an in-depth dialogue and seeking institutional synergies for more effective monitoring and targeting of NEETs (120)
  - 4.2. Tailored communication with relevant state and public stakeholders to empower them to work with NEETs (200)
  - 4.3. Integrated career and psychosocial empowerment of NEETs to be included in the newly developed programme (30)
5. Proportion of participating service providers demonstrating improved skills: 285 %
  - 5.1. Two-tier mentoring scheme up and running (95 %)
  - 5.2. Establishment of an in-depth dialogue and search for institutional synergies for more effective monitoring and targeting of NEETs (95 %)
  - 5.3. Inclusive set of recommendations for policy makers (95 %).





## **Description of the realized project, compared to the project plan**

(Preparatory phase, process of the realized project activities, closing + review etc.)

### ***The actual participants and the professional personnel in the project, compared to the plans:***

Actual participants and all professional personnel in the project were incorporated in the project as planned.

### ***Reflection on the recruiting process***

All recruitment was done in accordance with the plan. Young NEETs were recruited through platforms planned within the project proposal with relative success (social media channels, flyers, individual and group presentations ...). Mentors were recruited from the ranks of youth workers (social media call) and advisors from the Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ, direct invitation to counsellors working with NEETs).

The only problem was recruitment of participants from pre-test for the purpose of the post-test. Regarding this issue we stated in our post-test report:

“As it turned out, almost all participants of pre-test (with only one exception) dropped out during the project. Reasons for this dropout are:

1. Participants terminated their NEET status because of their employment,
2. Participants terminated their NEET status because of their re-enrolment into education,
3. Participants were unresponsive to the requests to take part in post-test.

### ***The applied methodology for the project activities***

Project was structured in two parts, detection (research) part and intervention part.

The research methodology was based on a three-stage approach that includes pre-test, a set of interventions and a post-test.

Pre-test was designed as an online questionnaire with 123 questions focusing on job seeking activities, unemployment avoidance, self-assessed skills, and online activities. A total of 28 NEET youth completed the questionnaire.

Post-test was conducted on the basis of the same questionnaire and was completed by N=25 NEET youth that previously participated in any of the project activities aimed at their empowerment. As it turned out, almost all participants of pre-test (with only one exception) dropped out during the project. From the methodological point of view it is important to consider the fact that post-test was conducted on a different sample than the pre-test. Equally important, however, is the fact that all the participants of the post-test also participated in at least one of the supporting activities within the project (e.g.



workshops or individual counseling). Hence, the potential differences between the pre-test and the post-test group can be at least partially attributed to the interventions in relation to the post-test group. As in the case of pre-test, we first checked the proportion of missing data. We found that in none of the variables considered does the proportion of missing values within the post-test exceed 32 %, which is why we included the variables in further analysis, though respondents with a missing value were excluded from respective analyses.

Methodology for the intervention part of the project consisted of set of workshops, lectures, presentations, counseling, and online tools.

### ***The concrete results with comparison to the planned aims/goals***

All the project results were met to a certain degree according to the timetable of the project:

1. 30 NEET individuals were enrolled in the programme
2. 40 youth and other workers completed the mentor training programme to work with NEETs
3. Two-tier mentoring scheme was established
4. Methodology was developed to identify the basic characteristics and needs of the NEET population
5. A comprehensive empowerment and social activation programme for NEETs was developed and tested
6. Consortium partners were empowered to work with NEETs (study visit to Norway, State of the art presentation)
7. Bilateral cooperation in the field of work with NEETs between Slovenia and Norway was established according to a plan (study visit to Norway, three visits from Norwegian delegation to Slovenia)
8. Integrated career and psychosocial empowerment of NEETs who participated in the programme (group and individual counselling)
9. The establishment of in-depth dialogue and seeking institutional synergies for more effective monitoring and targeting of NEETs (5 multi-stakeholder meetings)

Based specifically on qualitative results, we can conclude that all integral parts of project activities provided a positive impact:

1. Counseling is the most important aspect of the project, for it enables targeting of the roots of the problem of young NEETS.
2. Education, in particular with respect to the development of language, communication and computer skills is crucial for young NEETS.
3. Mentoring presents an important format when approaching this population, particularly when combined with counseling.



Results outlined above show that indicators were fulfilled. Some of these results were validated in group consultations with stakeholders on national, and regional level in Slovenia, representatives of governmental organizations and NGOs working with young NEETS as well as with young participants in project activities. The vast majority agreed on the positive impact of the project to the issues tied to the NEET population and on valuable contribution of the project to future programs and policies focusing on these issues.

### ***Impacts on the project from the report on Best praxis in Norway and from the Study visit to Norway***

The report from Norway was integral part of the backbone of the project. It provided the project important elements contributing to the structure and the content of project activities, analytical approach and interpretational options used in managing the results.

The Study visit was one of the most important parts of cooperation between partners from both countries. Apart from purely professional cooperation it provided first-hand experiences of how Norwegian partners are handling issues of the NEET population and above all it enabled the partners to form informal bonds with members of the Norwegian team. By becoming friends, the cooperation within project "PreseNEETI se" transformed into lasting relationships that will undoubtedly results in future cooperation between both countries.

## **Reflection on the process of the project and evaluation of project outcome**

### ***Ways/channels/ means of communication during the project***

Within the project team there were 3 main channels of communication:

1. Face-to-face communication for majority of project activities, including testing, interventional activities (workshops, counseling...) and project meetings.
2. Online communication, serving quick periodical meetings, coordination of schedules and project activities among partners (Zoom and email).
3. Telephone communication, for occasional interventions.

Although face-to face communication appeared as the most suitable and preferred communication, online platforms emerged as the most efficient. As communication occurred on a regular basis, often weekly, for joint meetings, they primarily utilized online sessions, enabling them to have quick, efficient, and regular gatherings.

Communication with participants in the program:

1. Face-to-face communication was most effective.
2. Online communication (email) was least effective. Participants were not very responsive.
3. Telephone communication was a regular means of communication.



Communication with participants in the mentoring scheme:

1. Online communication (email).
2. Telephone communication was a regular means of communication and more effective.

There is room for improvement in enhancing communication between mentors and participants.

### ***Means of supporting the participants***

During the project it was recognized that,

- 1.) counseling was the most important aspect of the project, as it enables targeting the roots of the psychological and social problems of young NEETS,
- 2.) education with classical approach (ex-cathedra), proved excellent to the development of language, communication, and computer skills as these are crucial for young NEETS, and that
- 3.) mentoring presented an important format when approaching this population, particularly when combined with counseling.

Peer-groups were also recognized as extremely important for NEETs in particular with regards to peer support in overcoming social anxieties and challenges of adaptation to new situations.

### ***Support for the management team and the professional implementation personnel***

Within the consortium, weekly meetings were regularly conducted where they exchanged current information, report on progress, and plan future work. Some of these activities were also prepared collaboratively as they sought opportunities for improvement. In addition to full team meetings, there were also individual meetings with separate partners. Throughout the year, the management team went on several meetings and conferences aimed at fostering connections. These meetings also had a work-related component, utilizing their shared time for planning and evaluating activities.

Regular meetings also took place among all partner organizations, with whom the management team held monthly, and in some cases, weekly meetings. These meetings were primarily focused on reporting progress, planning next steps, and fostering connections among participants. Due to logistical challenges, most meetings were conducted online, although there were some in-person meetings. Many of these gatherings were also used for shared lunches, contributing to team and organizational bonding.

### ***Forms of feedback from the participants and the professional staff***

Feedback from participants came in three ways:

1. During pre- and post-test feedback was systematically gathered from participants. Their evaluation of the project design and project activities was positive.



2. Through mentors who were in direct contact with them. Each participant had two mentors. MSS mentors wrote a mentoring diary throughout the process, recording changes, reactions, and participants' opinions. Mentors incorporated these opinions and suggestions into the planning of their process or future steps.
3. Through a questionnaire at the end of the programme.

Feedback from professional staff was acquired in the following ways:

1. Face-to-face meetings with teachers and counsellors in the programme and mentors in the mentoring scheme.
2. Questionnaire for mentors.

### ***The results of feedback***

Satisfaction with project among all participants and stakeholders was generally positive. Apart from already described feedback from pre- and post-test, the feedback from the multi-stakeholder consultations can be summarized in following paragraphs:

1. Project "PreseNEETI se" was among all participants widely recognized as innovative project, with unique design and approach and with important contribution through developed and tested approach (e.g. workshops, counselling, mentoring) and results (from pre- and post-test).
2. The mentors were pleased with the conceptual design but raised some concerns. They particularly struggled with establishing communication with the participants, which also made their work more challenging.
3. A single database for the NEET population was identified as necessary in all the groups where the consultation was conducted. Participants agreed that the database should include all the essential data to enable the design of an appropriate individualised reintegration programme.
4. Many participants at different levels agreed that the GDPR legislation represents a significant barrier to effective tracking and work with young NEETs. Representatives of institutions working with young NEETs endorsed the proposal to adopt the GDPR to allow for the collection and sharing of relevant information related to young NEETs (e.g., The GDPR was also identified as a problem by the representatives of the NEET population who participated in the consultations - they said that they agreed with the central collection of relevant information and the sharing of the database with the institutions working with young NEETs.
5. Participants agreed that work with NEET young people should be integrated and, in addition to addressing the issue of reintegration into education or the labour market, it should also address the personal and social problems that young people face. This implies that the young person's primary family must be involved in all relevant processes.



6. Representatives of institutions recognised and accepted that young people perceive institutions as rigid and somewhat distant, but they attributed this mainly to the overload of staff working with NEETs. In this context, they suggested relieving the burden on staff, the staff should be given more time to work (e.g. limiting the number of cases of NEET young people they work with), the institutions should be strengthened with NEET experts, the work should be more widely dispersed between institutions (e.g. several experts working on a given case) and the staff should be given additional professional reinforcement (e.g. through shorter, online workshops on topics relevant for the professional work with NEET young people).
7. Project partners are satisfied with project results.

### ***The main difficulties, unexpected problems throughout the project***

The biggest challenge was the unresponsiveness of the participants. Due to cultural, linguistic, or other barriers, they had a poorer attendance in the programme and response to youth mentors and other professional staff who were attempting to establish contact.

Within pre- and post-test the main issue was the alignment of participants (pre-test – activities – post-test). However, while some of these problems emerged from the termination of the NEET status (because of employment and re-enrollment into education), this methodological problem can also be understood as a project success, as many of the NEETs got out of the project due to getting employed.

### ***Strategies used for problem-solving***

Strategies for problem solving were based on two main platforms:

- 1.) mitigation plan developed within the consortium of partners and
- 2.) mutual help provided directly by participating partners and their social networks.

Although problems that emerged during the project were not severe, help was of utmost importance, and it came mostly in the form of informal support and intervention.

Mentors and other professional staff members mostly attempted to establish contact with NEETs through various channels. If an individual did not respond to email messages, they then tried to make contact through phone calls (Text messages and calls). They also attempted to initiate contact at different times, considering the possibility that individuals might not be available during specific periods due to other commitments. They tried reaching out via phone calls in the morning, afternoon, on weekdays, and on weekends. If, after multiple attempts, they were still unsuccessful, they sought assistance from project staff. Subsequently, they connected with a mentor from the Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ), who might have had additional information or found it easier to establish contact. By combining efforts, they aimed to support mentors in carrying out their work as effectively as possible.



### **Suggestions of the management team for a similar project in the future**

For further projects in this field, we could consider the following directions:

1. **Establishment of Sustainable Mentorship Networks:** Developing long-term mentorships and creating networks among mentors and young NEET individuals. This would involve not only the initial phase of mentorship but also ongoing support and monitoring to assist young individuals in maintaining employment or education.
2. **Digital Mentoring and Support:** Exploring the possibilities of incorporating digital tools and platforms into mentoring, especially when facing communication and responsiveness challenges. Developing applications or platforms for easier tracking and communication between mentors and young NEET individuals.
3. **Exchange of Best Practices:** Organizing international meetings and exchanges of experiences with other countries or organizations implementing similar projects. This would allow learning from best practices, recognizing different approaches, and strengthening global understanding of the issue of young NEET individuals.
4. **Expansion of Partnership Networks:** Exploring options for expanding the network of partnerships by involving new organizations, schools, and businesses. This would increase the diversity of support that mentors can provide and enable the acquisition of additional resources and knowledge.
5. **Strengthening Psychological Support:** Developing programs to enhance psychological support, especially for those young NEET individuals facing additional challenges such as mental health issues or social exclusion.

With regards to methodology tied to the testing, following elements would be altered or modified:

1. design would be modified to be more inclusive in order to accommodate participants dropping out of the testing,
2. methodological tools would be made more flexible (e.g. online questionnaire would be made simpler and shorter),
3. set of available tools for testing would be extended (e.g. adding participant observation and professional interview),
4. additional time for individual counseling for participants,
5. more face-to-face opportunities for mentors and participants.



## Feedback from NOSCO based on participative experiences of collaboration

### **Preparation phase**

Already 9 Months before this project was accepted by the Norway grants, the NGO Nosco was invited to have a role in the project as a project partner as the one partner in the application outside Slovenia. This came as a pleasant surprise to us, because from before we had a lot of friends and colleagues in the field of supervision from different countries in Europe through our common network for Supervisors ANSE (Association of National organisations for Supervision in Europe) including from Slovenia.

We had a history of participating in European projects from before – and we hosted a group of representatives from Slovenia in 2019, organizing a study visit already in 2019 to learn more about NEETs in Norway and what kind of measures we have for them.

With this background, we were motivated and enthusiastic about joining the project application – and later, to be a partner responsible for our tasks during the next two years.

### **Meetings with Slovenian partners**

Our expectations and enthusiasm continued during the project period. We had regular meetings on Zoom – and we met each other physically more often than planned. One of the reasons why our enthusiasm stayed on a high level, is that we also met enthusiasm from our colleagues from Slovenia, during our visits to each other and when we came to Slovenia – and when we came up with new ideas contributing to the project outcome, meaning extra work both for us and for our Slovenian Colleagues:

### ***Midway evaluation meeting***

We suggested visiting our Slovenian partners to get more direct insight in the project and work they did in Maribor and Celje. The 3 day meeting took place in Celje and Maribor in June 23. This meeting became very important for us because it gave us so much more input to our understanding of the project and to our evaluation, that we could never get the same outcome without it.

### ***Extra visit of a Norwegian delegation to Slovenia***

A previously not planned extra meeting was arranged in September 23 for a Norwegian delegation also to study the project as an unexpected positive outcome. The main aim was to meet, get to know each





other and to learn from our Slovenian partners to become able to bring new ideas to Norway (Hå Municipality and the Social Entrepreneur “From Victim to Warrior” visited Slovenia).

***Final conference of the project, April 2024***

Both Hå Municipality (Represented by Atle Straume) and the Social Entrepreneur Linda Øye from Norway joined us at the Final Conference 9. April 2024 in Celje. Norway was also represented by NAV Eiganes and Tasta (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare organisation) by Counsellor Liv Anita Yttrehus, and Dr Eva Nemes (Supervisor from Nosco) and Arild Stensland (Supervisor from Nosco and the Norwegian Project leader).

In a project like this with project partners from 2 different countries, it is also one of the approaches or goals to stimulate to more cooperation and learning from each other, continuing after the project is finalized. It's not so often that such effects are showing themselves already during a project. It seems to us, that it already started in this project before it finished.

We would describe the collaboration between our Slovenian partners and NOSCO as respectful, inspiring, professional, and developing. All of us felt that we had – and met - an open-minded, friendly, curious and at the same time professional approach.



## Results of the Retrospective Evaluation (RE) Meeting

### Method of the RE meeting

Straight after the Final Conference of the project we organized a retrospective Evaluation Meeting online, on Zoom. We invited the project management team and key representatives from the project partners.

The methodology was based on the G-D-D way of thinking: Good (G) – Difficult (D) – Different (D). The main goal of the meeting was to assess how the meeting participants perceive the project's effectiveness and outcome. The overall aims were to capture key learnings, identify areas for improvement. Discussing and reflecting on the successes and failures of the project could also help to create a culture of transparency and continuous improvement.

Before the meeting we asked the invited participants to reflect on the following questions:

- A. GOOD – What were the most important successes?
  - a. What worked well?
  - b. Why did it work?
  - c. How can we repeat this success in a future project?
- B. DIFFICULT – the most important issues
  - a. What didn't work well?
  - b. Why didn't it work?
  - c. How can we avoid these issues in the future?
- C. DIFFERENT – actions for future projects
  - a. How to improve the project management for a similar project?
  - b. Ideas about what could be done differently.

The participants were also asked to make notes of their answers as a preparation for the meeting. During the meeting was a relaxed, informal atmosphere where everybody could express themselves freely. Meeting personally and sharing experiences and thoughts turned out to be a good way of not only the aimed evaluation but also providing closure and strengthening bonds at the same time.

The results of the RE meeting were corresponding very well with the results of the Evaluation Questionnaire for the partners, and also highlighted what the participants felt personally most important.



## Summary of the RE meeting results

### ***Good – most important successes***

What worked well? Why did it work? How can we repeat this success in a future project?

Overall results of the project:

- Everybody is very happy about that everything worked well, all the indicators were met. The project was finished according to plan – they delivered everything what was to be delivered, even gained more than it was expected.

Management:

- The collaboration between the partners and the professionals in the project worked very well, with good cooperation and communication. They became friends, not only good colleagues – this doesn't happen automatically.
- The problem-solving management, strategies they applied were successful. There were tensions which they overcame, working together on social, psychological, emotional levels in a very positive way. Problems naturally emerged when they started to realize the program on paper/application. They recognised that the social capital of the management group is one of the most important assets they could rely on to solve these problems.

Cooperation between colleagues from Slovenia and Norway

- The Study visit to Stavanger, Norway were very beneficial.
- Key learning points from the study visit to Norway:
  - to build personal relationships based on trust,
  - don't keep big distance between the staff and the participants,
  - the participants grown-ups but with problems, so they need to approach and to help them accordingly.
- During the meetings both parties could learn a lot from each other, get to know each other's country better.
- The interim evaluation visit of colleagues from Norway to Slovenia was very helpful to understand the participants and the achievements of the project much better. This personal meeting gave much more also by enhancing the level of communication and by building stronger relationships.

Working with the participants:

- Helping young people to grow made them happy.
- The personal approach they developed based on the good practices in Norway and their experiences visiting organizations in Stavanger worked very effectively.



- They were able to empower the NEETs to overcome social anxiety and gain more confidence by
  - a personal approach based on trust,
  - organizing informal meetings which helped them to build personal relationships,
  - listening to them, taking them and their problems seriously so they could have a voice.
- They found employers and developed good personal contact with them, offering the NEETs work training and volunteering. This mediation helped the young people to go to the employers, as one of the biggest problems of the target group is being afraid of social connections.
- The most helpful/needed parts of the program were the Social skill training module and the individual counselling/therapy. According to the participants, the therapy was the most useful part.

Other target groups:

- They developed a good relationship with the ministry, gained support from them – they want to implement the Youth Register.

### ***Difficult – most important issues***

What didn't work well? Why didn't it work? How can we avoid these issues in the future?

- It was difficult to align the basic idea to the execution. In the plan they promised too much, were too enthusiastic, and “over-promised”. They delivered by the end, but it was unnecessarily very difficult.
- Timing of the project – they would need more time to find NEETs who could participate. The timing was not the best, as they had to find participants during summertime, when most of the people are on holiday.
- There was not enough time to get to know the NEETs before enrolling them to the training modules. They would need more informal meetings with them. Would be important first to get to know them better, than design the training modules according to their actual needs.
- The mentoring scheme started too late in the project. It was not much time to establish personal relationship between the mentors and mentees. As social anxiety and issues with trust is one of the main challenges for NEETs, more time is needed for the mentors to get into contact with them. Meeting them online and calling them was not successful enough to get through their barrier.
- The project documentation of the training modules and their content requirements limited their possibilities, there were no room for flexibility. It would be better to be freer and to be able to design the content of the modules based more on the individual needs of the actual participants.



- The project requirements were too detailed and strict about the indication numbers of how many NEETs must get involved in voluntary work, register in the Employment Office – it created difficulties, and were unnecessary. Integration into society and socialization, steps taken toward work should be enough.
- The outcome of the pre- and post-test showed that not all methodology can fit everybody. The questionnaire for the NEETs didn't work very well, they would need to create a different research approach and methodology.

### ***Different – suggested actions for the future***

How to improve the project management for a similar project?

- Be very careful and circumspect with the planning of the project, what to promise to do. Don't promise to do things which are difficult to execute and unnecessarily detailed. Doing more than promised is much better than overpromise and being not able to execute.
- A possible next project could be based on the learning points of this one, focusing on one level. Do not target all levels at the same time.
- Create the research methodology in a way that it is more suitable to the specifics of the target group.
- Give more time for recruiting participants and be mindful of the timing. Autumn is a better time for this than Summer.
- Organize informal meetings at the beginning to get to know the participants and their individual needs better.
- Allocate more time for the mentoring scheme. Building trust needs time and a personal approach. It would be also advised to organise personal, informal meetings between the mentors and the mentees. The personal meetings are the most important and effective to establish a good relationship.
- Formulate the training modules according to the individual needs of the actual participants.
- Handbook of the training modules – wouldn't put very detailed course design into it. It could be better instead if it contains a collection of best practices and suggests methodological approach, giving more freedom and flexibility for the trainers to design the modules to be the most suitable for the participants' needs.
- Allocate more time for individual counselling for the participants.
- The interim evaluation visit/meeting of the partners from different countries should be planned beforehand and be part of the project plan as an integral part of the project.



## CONCLUSION

Based on the Pre- and Post Test Report, the other reports made by the partners, the results of the Evaluation Questionnaire and the Retrospective Evaluation Meeting, we can state that »PreseNeeti se« project was a very ambitious, multi-level program exceptionally well organised and executed.

The structure of the consortium was very well planned. All partners had their specific area of expertise to offer which suited the different elements of the project, so the partners complemented each other perfectly.

Actual participants and all professional personnel in the project were incorporated in the project as planned. All recruitment was done in accordance with the plan.

The methodology suited the goals and aims of the project. Both detection (research) part and intervention part of the project were executed very professionally.

All the results corresponded with the goals. All goals were met, and the indicators were fulfilled.

As stated in the Post-test report – based specifically on qualitative results, they conclude that all integral parts of project activities provided a positive impact:

- Counselling was the most important aspect of the project, for it enabled targeting of the roots of the problem of young NEETS.
- Education, with respect to the development of language, communication and computer skills was crucial for young NEETS.
- Mentoring presented an important format when approaching this population, particularly when combined with counselling.
- Peer-groups were also recognized as extremely important for NEETs in particular with regards to peer support in overcoming social anxieties and challenges of adaptation to new situations.

### **Possibilities for improvement:**

The only problem was recruitment of participants from pre-test for the purpose of the post-test. Almost all participants of pre-test dropped out during the project, due to terminating their NEET status because of 1. their employment, 2. re-enrolment into education, or 3. they were unresponsive to the requests to take part in post-test. It could be helpful to make special attention to develop strategies for keeping personal contact with the participants throughout the program so they could also participate in the evaluation process at the end of the project.



The other area for possible improvement is some part of the two-tier mentoring scheme, in enhancing communication between mentors and participants. The mentors were pleased with the conceptual design but raised some concerns. They particularly struggled with establishing communication with the participants, which also made their work more challenging.

## Suggestions for similar future projects

During the evaluation process several suggestions were formulated by the management team for a similar future project with which we fully agree. The most important of these are the following, regarding the different phases/parts of the project:

The planning of a project:

- Planning should be very careful and circumspect, what to promise to do. Promise to do things which are possible to execute and not too much and/or unnecessarily detailed.
- A possible next project could be based on the learning points of this one, focusing on one level. Do not target all levels at the same time.

Research methodology:

- Create the research methodology in a way that it is more suitable to the specifics of the target group.
- The research design could be modified to be more inclusive in order to accommodate participants dropping out of the testing.
- Methodological tools could be made more flexible (e.g. online questionnaire would be made simpler and shorter).
- Set of available tools for testing could be extended (e.g. adding participant observation and professional interview).

Recruiting and keeping contact with the participants:

- Give more time for recruiting participants and be mindful of the timing. Autumn is a better time for recruiting than Summer.
- Organise informal meetings at the beginning to get to know the participants and their individual needs better.

Training modules:

- Have more time to get to know the NEETs before enrolling them to the training modules, e.g. organise more informal meetings with them.
- Formulate the training modules according to the individual needs of the actual participants.



- Handbook of the training modules – wouldn't put very detailed course design into it. It could be better instead if it contains a collection of best practices and suggests methodological approach, giving more freedom and flexibility for the trainers to design the modules to be the most suitable for the participants' needs.

#### Mentoring scheme:

- Allocate more time for the mentoring scheme, especially more time to establish personal relationship between the mentors and mentees. Building trust needs time and a personal approach.
- It would be also advised to organise more face-to-face, personal, informal meetings between the mentors and the mentees. The personal meetings are the most important and effective to establish a good relationship.
- Establishment of Sustainable Mentorship Networks: Developing long-term mentorships and creating networks among mentors and young NEET individuals. This would involve not only the initial phase of mentorship but also ongoing support and monitoring to assist young individuals in maintaining employment or education.
- Digital Mentoring and Support: Exploring the possibilities of incorporating digital tools and platforms into mentoring, especially when facing communication and responsiveness challenges. Developing applications or platforms for easier tracking and communication between mentors and young NEET individuals.

#### Strengthening Psychological Support for the participants:

- Developing programs to enhance psychological support, especially for those young NEET individuals facing additional challenges such as mental health issues or social exclusion.
- Allocate more time for individual counselling for the participants.

#### Evaluation process:

- The interim evaluation visit/meeting of the partners from different countries should be planned beforehand and be part of the project plan as an integral part of the project.

#### Other:

- Exchange of Best Practices: Organizing international meetings and exchanges of experiences with other countries or organizations implementing similar projects. This would allow learning from best practices, recognizing different approaches, and strengthening global understanding of the issue of young NEET individuals.
- Expansion of Partnership Networks: Exploring options for expanding the network of partnerships by involving new organizations, schools, and businesses. This would increase the diversity of





support that mentors can provide and enable the acquisition of additional resources and knowledge.

### **Support for the management team and the professional implementation personnel**

We found that there was established a very good communication system for the management team and the participating professionals like regular online and offline meetings, e-mail contact, etc. These meetings mainly addressed information exchange, reports on progress, planning next steps and evaluating activities. On a certain level these means of communication and exchange also helped fostering connections among the participating professionals.

Although all of these functions are absolutely necessary for the success of a complicated project like this, so these meetings were important and indispensable, but at the same time cannot fully fulfil all the need of support for the participating professionals.

#### ***Suggestion: supervision***

Based on our previous experiences on similar projects, we would suggest that next to the necessary management team meetings, *regular project team supervision meetings* should be organised for the management team and *group supervision meetings* for the mentors and consultants throughout the project.

What is supervision?

Supervision in our understanding is a form of consultancy which based on reflecting learning and experiential learning theory.

Regarding ANSE (Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe)<sup>1</sup>, “supervision aim at facilitating individual and organizational changes or at releasing tension or conflicts in daily work.

Supervision as a counselling profession focuses on the interaction of persons, professional tasks and organizations. It provides ample space and time to reflect professional functioning in complex situations.

Supervision primarily serves the development of individuals, teams and organizations. It improves the professional lives of individuals and teams with regard to their roles in an institutional context. It also focuses on ensuring and developing the quality of communication among staff members and methods of cooperation in various working contexts.

Additionally, supervision offers support in different reflection and decision-making processes and in challenging and demanding professional situations and conflicts. It supports clarification and the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.anse.eu](http://www.anse.eu)



processing of tasks, functions, and roles. It assists in the handling of processes of change, in finding innovative solutions for new challenges and measures to combat mobbing and burnout.”<sup>2</sup>

#### Team supervision for the management team

As the management team in a project this complicated have highly complex tasks and have many interdependent subtasks, regular team supervision meetings are recommended, led by an independent supervisor who is trained in the special methodology of supervision.

The team supervision process would provide a safe reflective space for the participating professionals to reflect on their work experiences. They would be able to focus and reflect on their communication, connections, relationship, feelings, actual problems regarding their special tasks in the project, conflicts, the atmosphere in the team, etc.

#### Team supervision for the mentors and consultants:

The group supervision process would be also led by an independent supervisor who is responsible for creating the safe space for the reflective process. The supervisees would be able to bring their professional interactions with their clients forward as reference case material for the supervision process. They would be able to reflect on the special connection and relationship between the professional helper and the client (mentor and mentee).

As the mentors and consultants in the project work on an individual basis with NEETs, they are alone in their job. In a team supervision process sharing experiences, getting more understanding of personal and interpersonal dynamics, working through, and letting go of emotional burdens could help the participating professionals tremendously. It could enhance their understanding of their clients and the helping relationship, and as a result improve their performance and help their clients better.

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<sup>2</sup> Judy, M & Knopf, W. (ed) (2015). ECVision. Supervision and Coaching in Europe: Concepts and Competencies. [https://anse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ECvision\\_e\\_book.pdf](https://anse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ECvision_e_book.pdf)