



Learning, lIving, wORking for Neet-group

Adriana Branni¹, Chris Janssen²

¹CESIE, ²EURICON

¹Italy, ²The Netherlands

adriana.branni@cesie.org, chris.janssen@euricon.eu

Abstract

The issue of socially, culturally and economically disadvantaged youngsters and of early school leavers exists in all EU member states [1], both new and old. Everywhere educators, teachers and youth workers are looking for good, accessible prevention actions. Various kinds of measures offering a second chance at education have been tried out over the last 10 years, with tangible success but also with ups and downs. However, promoting social and economic inclusion of the NEET-target group is a key aim at both national and European levels.

The need for a multi-angle integrated response for disadvantaged youngsters at risk of educational and societal drop-out is growing [2]. The NEET-group (not in education, employment, or training) faces challenges bigger than a simple lack of vocational skills and therefore a holistic focus on learning, living and working is essential.

For educational institutions, enterprises and housing associations, this means a complete turnaround in thinking. No longer are separate processes and actions enough, instead there is a call for network-based activities and coalitions of service providers in order to address the needs of the NEET-group through an integrated approach.

This calls for a connection between the worlds of learning, living, working. The LION project (Learning, lIving, wORking for Neet-group) proposes a three pronged approach through the creation of regional centres of excellence that support the development of holistic approach and the upgrading of teachers', trainers' and mentors' skills together with improving the European area of lifelong learning with quality standards for tools applicable for working with the NEET-group.

This initiative is led by an educationally and geographically diverse group of organisations, each developing experimental and innovative approaches to respond to these needs.

The holistic LION approach means: 1) making the educational environment personalised and interactive, 2) focus on competence based learning with employability actions leading to apprenticeships and 3) taking care of basic life conditions.

1. Background – NEETs in Europe and existing responses

The last report about NEETs realized by Eurofound in 2012 [3] starts with the following words: "The immediate future of Europe depends upon the 94 million Europeans aged between 15 and 29".

According to the report, in 2008, the 11% of 15–24-year-olds and 17% of 25–29-year-olds were NEETs; by 2011 these rates had increased to 13% and 20% respectively [4].

In contrast with the concept of 'unemployed,' the definition of NEET includes all young people who are not in employment, education or training, "it records the share of the population of all young people currently disengaged from the labour market and education, namely unemployed and inactive young people who are not in education or training" [5].

The need to find effective responses at national and European level is of increasing relevance as there are currently 14 million young people currently not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in Europe costing an estimated at €153 billion in economic loss to society [6]. In some partner countries NEET-group numbers reach up to 14% as for example in the UK in the third quarter 2011 [7]. EU LFS microdata report that 52% of NEETs in Europe have never worked. Among NEETs aged 15–19 years, 73% have no work experience, while this decreases to 43% among those aged 20–24 years [8]. This means that the risk of long-term exclusion from the labour market and society is getting higher and higher.

Analysing the educational level of NEETs reveals that those with a lower educational level are overrepresented in the NEET group, consequently there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the improvement of the quality of adult education and second chance schools in the struggle against early school leaving and social exclusion. Moreover there was and there still is no coherent quality development and information system for the people working with this target groups. The exchange of knowledge and best practices is organised on a small scale, knowledge and experience is not well organised and not easy accessible.



The European Association of Cities, Institutions and Second Chance Schools “E2C Europe” was established in the 1990’s, and since then, all members have been active in the field of adult education in many levels: local, regional and national policy making, development of skills and competences of teachers and trainers, mobility and exchange of teachers and students and organisation of meetings and events. The development of this network and the establishment of a Centre of Excellence, thanks to two EU financed initiatives [9] [10], in 2011, collecting experiences and practices, were the predecessor to the LION project.

2. LION – Learning, lIving, wOrking for Neet-group

LION is a two-year initiative financed by LLP – Grundtvig [11] involving organisations from UK, The Netherlands, Sweden, Hungary, Italy, France and Germany [12] and will address five concrete objectives:

- To connect the worlds of learning, living, working

The need for shared experiences and practices is central to an adequate response to NEET throughout Europe. The creation of regional centres of excellence will contribute by enabling both European and local practices and professionals to provide resources plus practical and management support to services working with NEET. Also the centres of excellence connect the worlds of learning, living and working so as to realise optimum support for disadvantaged target groups. Finally this will lead to a structural improvement of quality in the field of education and training of disadvantaged target groups and the sharing of knowledge and experience thus enriching these new coalitions.

- To transform the skills of teachers/trainers and mentors

The good practices collected in LION will be the basis of the “train-the-trainer” and the “mentor-the-mentor” sessions carried out. The professionals and organisations working within LION recognize both the need and urge for tailor-made and up-to-date, digital, learning systems connected with working and living.

- To improve the European area of lifelong learning with quality standards for tools to be used in the work with the NEET-group

In LION, good practices are researched, tested and finalised in the triangle of learning, living and working. These tools will have the LION quality label that recognizes them as good practices tested by service providers. With the additional dimensions of e-portfolio, e-learning and mobilities, a broad and at the same time specific and innovative content support this improvement.

- To develop and implement a quality mark for institutions working with the NEET-group

Institutional benchmarking is developed and implemented to recognise high performance for those organisations working efficiently and effectively with the NEET-group.

- To expand the Centre of Excellence with good practices out of the triangle learning, living, working.

LION wants to expand the self-supporting centre of excellence in the field of education and training as has been developed as a shell in previous projects. The broadening and deepening of the centre of excellence is not an objective in itself, but by this integrative approach the sustainability of the centre of excellence should be improved and more and more good practices be made ready for the use on a European level. Furthermore LION will develop the triangle of learning, living and working as an innovative concept to offer a fully inclusive approach for disadvantaged target groups. The improvement of the quality of the teaching system (both teaching and teacher training), the creation of a European area of inclusion for learning, living, working for the NEET-group, and the reduction of early school leaving are held centrally within LION, its activities and its consortium in line with the Europe 2020 [9] strategy.

- To promote social and economic inclusion of the NEET-target group via empowering them and via offering tailor made practices and excellent support by teachers/trainers and mentors in the triangle learning, living, working [13], [14].

In that way the aims and objectives of LION are not project based aims and objectives but they summarize and share in fact the aims and objectives of the participating organisations and the national and European strategies to improve teaching and training, raise educational standards and levels and reduce the number of school leavers.

2.1 LION – Offering a holistic, European –wide response to NEET

LION builds on experience of previous initiatives by recognising the need of a multi-angle integrated focus on the disadvantaged youngster at risk of educational and societal drop-out. For educational institutions, enterprises and housing associations this means a complete turnaround in thinking. No



longer are separate processes and actions enough, instead there is a call for network-based activities to address the needs of the NEET-group, thus improving their competencies and skills in an integrated approach. This means it will lift the quality of the professionals and organisations working in the triangle of learning, living and working.

This calls for a connection between the worlds of learning, living, working. The LION project (Learning, lIving, wOrking for Neet-group) proposes a three pronged approach through the creation of regional centres of excellence that support the development of holistic approach and the upgrading of teachers', trainers' and mentors' skills together with improving the European area of lifelong learning with quality standards for tools applicable for working with the NEET-group.

2.2 Building on State of the Art and Promoting Innovation

During the last decade a lot of effort has been put into the improvement of the education and training of young adults at risk. The pace of this development has been very different in the EU Member States. Furthermore the exchange of best practices has taken place on a relatively small scale and the link with other aspects of life (living, working) has been weak and incidental. Still the consortium recognises that a lot needs to be done to adapt the quality of teaching and training for disadvantaged target groups in order to valorise an inclusive learning system that matches today's challenges in a globalizing Europe. Success in education for disadvantaged target groups can only be reached if accompanying and supporting measures surrounding the wellbeing of the individual taken into consideration. As some of the partnership already experimented with connecting education, work and housing with public and private partners it is now the moment to bring the experiments to higher, European, level to exploit the success or even improve the experiments. This successful approach does not only mean an integrative view on the methods used in this triangle, but also a strong need to let the relevant network partners, like housing associations, welfare institutions and enterprises, take a share in the responsibility of dealing with the target group. This means that the relevant networks need to be built on a local scale and execute the experiments of LION collectively.

2.3 Products and Activities in the Triangle Learning-Living-Working

Partners research and test good practices in the triangle of learning, living and working and cooperate with the relevant institutions on local level to upheaval local tools to European wide useable methods. Out of this research and testing in the triangle of learning, living and working, handbook and curricula will be developed. These handbooks and curricula are tested during train-the-trainer sessions and mentor-the-mentor sessions to ensure quality and actively involve the stakeholders.

Moreover, experimental mobility actions with the NEET-group are foreseen to provide stepping stones for international work exchanges of the NEET-group members.

In the world of Learning, Mobile Training Team sessions will work to upgrade skills and competencies of all professionals working with the target group all over Europe and provide support and assistance in building up a network of regional centres of excellence will be given.

In the world of Living (inclusion and integration), LION will support local and regional decision makers for the promotion of social inclusion and gender equality and will organise the cooperation with (social) housing companies in order to set up an "all inclusive" system of guidance and coaching.

In the world of Working (vocational training, labour market integration), LION will work for the improvement of skills to address, contact and keep up relations with entrepreneurs and enterprises; to strengthen the relation between and with enterprises; it will organise the exchange of experience and knowledge of apprentices and teachers between companies.

In this piloting of all inclusive guidance and coaching (in learning, living and working) an adequate system of e-portfolio is a very important tool. The partners in the consortium share a great knowledge and experience as the outcome of a number of common activities and projects in the last decade. The LION-project gives the opportunity to meet with the needs of quality development and improvement for the partners involved and the broader field of learning, living and working.

As in the interest of the European Commission, LION invests, together with the consortium partners, E2C-Europe and local authorities, in this infrastructure as part of its strategy to create a reference point for teachers and trainers working with the NEET-group. The centre of excellence will provide, experiences, methodologies and tools in the field of lifelong learning to improve, deepen and broaden the competencies (knowledge, attitudes, skills) of professionals involved in teaching, training and guidance of the NEET-group. This goes broader than the current responsibility and interest of educational partners, as social partners (especially mentioned housing associations and welfare organisations) and enterprises/SME's are involved to share knowledge, interest and responsibility.



3. Conclusion – impact

LION aims to reach directly over 1000 teachers and trainers through its holistic and integrated actions. In addition, it will work towards reaching a wider sphere of actors linked to NEET including organisations and bodies in the areas of politics, housing/living and working (enterprises).

LION's proposal of bringing individual and local actions of coalitions between actors working with NEET to a European level through the development of regional centres of excellence, linked between themselves, in addition to training and the creation of quality standards will have a strong impact at a wider and European level.

4. Disclaimer

The LION-project is "With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union" and "This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."

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