

**Qualitative survey on the topic:
CURRENT POLICIES, PRACTICES
AND CHALLENGES IN SUPPORT AND
EMPOWERMENT TO VULNERABLE YOUTH**



Funded by
the European Union



EU for Civil
Resilience



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Skopje, December 2023

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ABBREVIATIONS

AE	Adult education
AEC	Adult Education Centre
ASK	Macedonian Association of counsellors of career development
ESA	Employment Service Agency
CARE	Competence Assessment for Reintegration and Empowerment
GCDF	Global Career Development Facilitator
LLC	Adult education association Lifelong Learning Center - Skopje
ILO	International Labor Organization
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MCOG	Model of Face-to-Face Early Career Guidance
NEET	Not in Employment, Education nor Training
NQF	National Qualification Framework
SSO	State Statistical Office
SMR	Alliance for Youth Work
SEI	State Educational Inspectorate
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
YG	Youth Guarantee

I. DESK RESEARCH AND QUALITATIVE SURVEY: SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This report has been developed within the project “CARE – Competence Assessment for Reintegration and Empowerment” implemented by Adult education association Lifelong Learning Center – Skopje (LLC). It was supported by the EU Civil Resilience Mechanism (CRM) within the framework of the EU funded project “Technical Assistance for improving the enabling environment for Civil Society Organisations in the Republic of North Macedonia”.

The aim of project “CARE – Competence Assessment for Reintegration and Empowerment” is to support the improvement of societal well-being, inclusion, and employment by building the capacities of civil organizations and the others involved in the implementation of innovative methods of work with the youth from the NEET category (Not in Employment, Education nor Training), as well as improving inter-sectoral exchange, building synergies, and transfer of knowledge.

The challenges that young people face (aged 15-29) and especially those who are NEET is in special focus of this report, especially since the social exclusion deriving from this inactivity has very strong negative impact on the basic needs of the young people. The report provides analysis of NEET based on available data and interviews with actors/relevant stakeholders. These young people are considered ‘at risk’ as they are jobless and/or inactive and lack access to learning opportunities. They also risk disengagement from the labor market and often from society in general. (ETF E. t., 2014). In the Republic of North Macedonia, in 2021, the NEET rate was 24.2 % (ILO, 2022) (almost a quarter of the total youth population), nearly twice the average NEET rate recorded in the EU (13.7%). The highest NEET rates are present in region Northeast (39.7%), region Polog (30.7%), region Southwest (29.2%) and region Skopje (23.8%). 3 out of 4 of these regions have been as well defined “as the regions with lowest economic development” in the country (AVRSM, 2022).

The unemployment among youth is one of the key issues of interest of almost all countries, especially those with lower levels of development. To reduce it, diverse measures and policies are undertaken, from support to education and lifelong learning, to counselling and easing access to labour markets. In the Republic of North Macedonia, these efforts are much needed since the unemployment rates among Macedonian young people are still much higher compared to their European peers.

Career guidance and counselling have been an integral part of the national strategic framework for education, employment, and social inclusion of North Macedonia in the context of combating unemployment and improving social inclusion. In the work with vulnerable groups, both education and employment practice by various actors and stakeholders (state institutions in charge, CSO etc.) show that, in general, there is a lack of systemic, sustainable and functional guidance and counselling structures, and especially those which focus on and/or are based on the needs of the various vulnerable groups including young NEETs. The existing ones largely depend on the use of approaches and instruments leading solely to labour market (re)integration. Little attention has especially been put to development/implementation of tools for assessment of competences gained in a lifelong learning context (knowledge and skills acquired not only by formal education but also in non-formal education programs and informally – in and through everyday life). Within these processes, the counsellors anticipate that the counselee has certain level of self-confidence, concrete educational background, or status (i.e. registered unemployed person, migrant, asylum seeker etc), thus leaving big target groups, like NEETs out of counselling pathways.

The definition of relevant form of support in raising awareness of the need and access to different educational lifelong learning opportunities, as well as to tailor-made counselling services, aiming in building capacities and competences of young NEETs, will increase the level of their competences and increase the accessibility to labor market. As well, it will contribute to overall self-confidence and life perspectives of these young people, which is as well part of the goals of this project.

In recent years, as part of its' international project cooperation, the Adult education association Lifelong Learning Center – Skopje has been actively working on development and adjustment of ProfilPASS - a competence assessment methodology, for various target groups – among which young NEETs. The professional focus on this tool for competence assessment and the experience and expertise gained along the way, opened the need to examine the state of art in utilization of tools in support and empowerment of young NEETs on national level. This report is the initial attempt to do so and to get a closer look on how young NEETs are approached through the various mechanisms and measures for support offered to this target group. Therefore, the ProfilPASS – its' concept and benefits will be highlighted more in detail.

With this report, we give an overview on the existing counselling tools and overall approaches in working with NEETs in their road to lifelong learning and employment, explored in 4 (out of 8) statistical regions in the Republic of North Macedonia: North-Eastern, Polog, South-Western and Skopje. These regions have been selected on the basis of highest NEET rates in the country (see Figure 2).

From methodological point of view, following approaches were implemented for the purposes of the development of this report:

- a. Desk research on the existing up-to-date data on definition and scope of the vulnerability of young people with focus on NEETs, the existing policy documents and related strategies as well as on the institutional set-up of the reference institutions and social partners.
- b. In the second phase, with the aim to examine how these theoretical concepts are being transposed into the reality among practitioners, we conducted 24 interviews with representatives of carefully selected state institutions, NGOs and other social partners.
- c. In the third, final stage, suitable recommendations, solutions and guidelines for a comprehensive and more effective approach in the counselling and guidance work through utilization of suitable tools for empowerment of NEET – youth were developed and presented.

For LLC as implementer of this survey, the findings and outcomes will serve as a starting point on planning of future further strategic steps in promoting good practice examples, enabling transfer of knowledge and know-how on efficient and effective practices. This will be an effort to respond to the challenges of the measures of support to young NEETs as a vulnerable group and to contribute to improvement of these practices in North Macedonia in general.

1. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The report provides compiled, compared and analysed data of the desk-research and the qualitative survey. The focus was put on examining the implementation of the policies in practice, cooperation of the relevant social partners, good practice examples and recommendations for improvement of the state of play to all connected parties. The findings identified concrete drawbacks into the existing policies, their implementation on field, good practice examples of concrete tools and provided final recommendations for innovative methods of work with the youth NEET, as well as for improving inter-sectoral exchange, building synergies, and transfer of knowledge.

The outline of the survey was based on:

- Definition of vulnerability of youth/NEET definition and demographic data related to the targeted group
- Relevant institutions and connected policies/strategic documents at national/local level
- Factors that increase the chance of becoming NEET
- Access to information for NEET-adults
- Barriers faced on the path to integration
- Existing projects, programmes and best practice examples

- Employment or internship programmes facilitated by institutions, companies, or organizations
- Overall approaches and general understanding of support and empowerment of vulnerable youth
- Career guidance and counselling
- Available resources, such as educational materials, online platforms etc.
- Competence assessment or validation of knowledge, skills and competences for young NEET adults
- Examples of good practices related to competence assessment for young NEET.

Desk research was done to explore the following:

- current institutions, national policies, priorities and practices in the implementation of the policies related to support and empowerment of NEET – youth / youth
- practices and approaches in the field work with marginalized youth, with emphasis on tools for career guidance and counselling

During this phase, the focus was put on mapping relevant institutions/practitioners, identifying relevant on-line sources/platforms and databases in order to provide relevant statistical data. The focus will be put on the data available at national level, as well as, when possible and dependent on the availability, on the data from the 4 selected plan regions.

Field work:

The survey examined:

1. The state of play of **policy implementation and the institutions in charge** and therefore, one of the two main target groups were institutions on regional level from the sectors education/social policy/employment as well as the units of local self-government. Interviewees were representatives of these institutions.
2. The **practices and approaches in the field work** in offering support and empowerment to the vulnerable youth. Therefore, the second target group were various profiles of organizations present on regional level (NGOs, education providers, youth centers etc.) and the practitioners directly involved in the work with the target group.

Sample:

24 interviews were conducted in total, or more concretely, 6 interviews were done per selected region. The List of interviews / Calendar of qualitative survey is enclosed to this report.

In the initial phase, detailed mapping of reference institutions was conducted in order to provide presence of relevant contact persons.

The interviews took place on-line or with physical presence, based on the availability of the interviewees, conducted in a non-formal manner, based on 2 different questionnaires, developed to serve as a guiding idea during the discussion.

Instruments (questionnaires):

For a systematic and structured approach in the conduction of the interviews with relevant institutions/organizations, two types of questionnaires were used in order to generate a constructive and informative discussion and exchanges on questions and topics of relevance. The questionnaires are adopted to the profile and capacities of the 2 selected target groups of interviewees (representatives of institutions and practitioners). They are enclosed to this report.

2. NEET DEFINITION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA RELATED TO THE TARGETED GROUPS

One of the key steps into the process of addressing the issues of vulnerable youth and young NEETs is determining the scope and representation of these categories, and as well, the factors that influence their existence and occurrence.

Factors

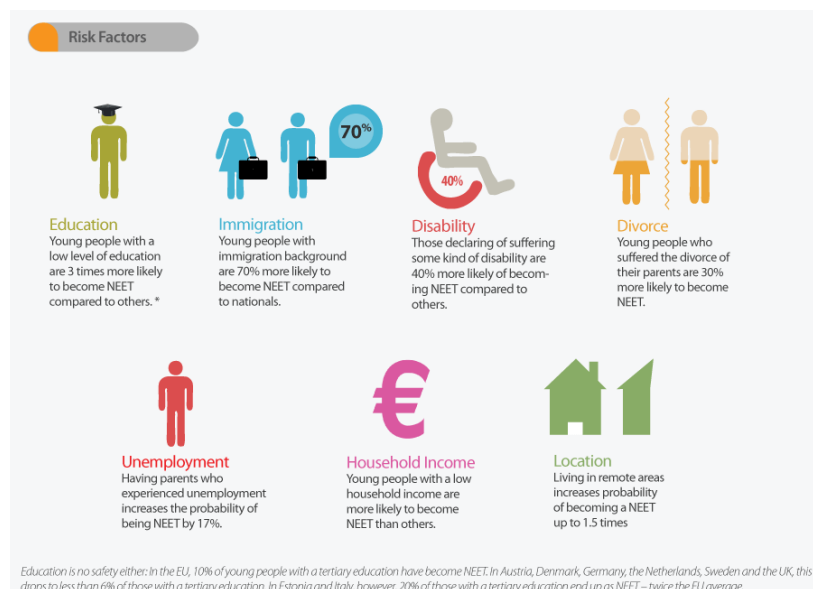
Social exclusion, inadequate education and training, as well unemployment are serious and persisting challenges that are continuously faced by the young people in North Macedonia. The unemployment is a problem faced by almost all groups of unemployed persons (young, long-term unemployed, beneficiaries of social assistance, persons with low education, etc.).

There is a range of social, economic and personal factors that increase the chances of an individual becoming a NEET. Results of a carried-out survey “2008 European Values Survey” show that the following factors have an impact on the probability of becoming NEET:

- disability: those having some kind of disability are 40% more likely to become NEET compared to others,
- immigration background: those having an immigration background are 70% more likely to become NEET compared to nationals,
- low education level: those with a low education level are three times more likely to become NEET compared to those with tertiary education,
- living in remote areas: living in remote areas increases the probability of becoming NEET up to 1,5 times,
- low household income: young people with a low household income are more likely to become NEET than those with average income,
- parents who experienced unemployment: having parents who experienced unemployment increases the probability of becoming NEETs by 17%,
- parents with a low level of education: having parents with a low level of education doubles the probability of becoming NEETs,
- parents who divorced: young people whose parents divorced are 30% more likely to become NEETs (Eurofound, 2012).

The above risk factors which have an impact on the probability of becoming NEET are illustrated in Figure 1 (Eurofound, 2012).

Figure 1 Risk factors which have an impact on the probability of becoming NEET



The young adults (15-29 years) are considered vulnerable group on the labor market for many reasons:

- school to work transition (average time for first employment is 2.5 years)
- no practical work in real working conditions, disproportion between the educational experience gained in the formal system of education and the real needs of the labour market
- acceptance of undeclared work i.e. “black” work
- the insufficient number of jobs offered by the private sector
- inadequate job offerings according to the acquired youth qualifications in the educational process. (SEGA, 2018)

The NEET population is not a homogenous group: it comprises young people with different characteristics, needs, and experiences, which require careful mapping to devise adequate policy responses.

Main subgroups of NEETs are: conventionally unemployed (main group), long-term and short-term unemployed, excluded (do not search for job, and are not prevented from other obligations); opportunities tracker (active searchers, but wait for the right possibility); NEETs by choice (travel or play music, art and self-education) (Eurofound, NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe, 2012).

Representation

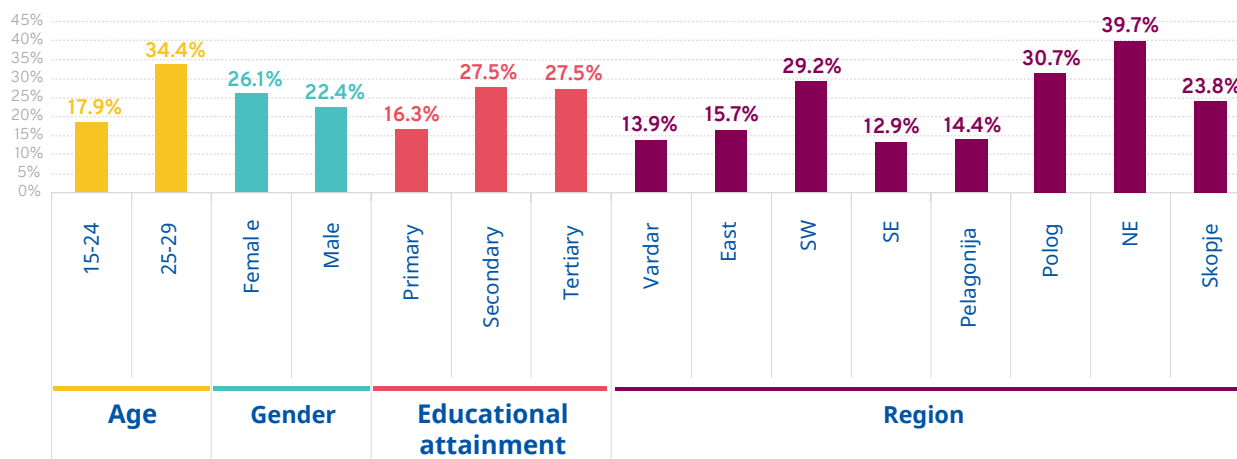
In the Republic of North Macedonia, in 2021, the NEET rate was 24.2 % (ILO, 2022) (almost a quarter of the total youth population), nearly twice the average NEET rate recorded in the EU (13.7%). The highest NEET rates are present in region Northeast (39.7%), region Polog (30.7%), region Southwest (29.2%) and region Skopje (23.8%). 3 out of 4 of these regions have been as well defined “as the regions with lowest economic development” in the country (AVRSM, 2022).

The NEET rate is highest in the Northeast region (40.7%), followed by the Polog region (37.6%) and the Southwest (34.7%) (SEGA, 2018). The young NEET adults are slightly denser located in rural than urban areas (34,2% and 30,1%, respectively). (H. Mojsoska-Blaževski i Džrjavlen zavod za statistika na Makedonija, 2016)

The risk of becoming a NEET rises dramatically with **age**, so there is a far higher probability that young people aged 25-29 will be NEET than younger groups (43.1% in North Macedonia). Women are also more likely to be categorized as NEET. This is due to several factors, including socio-cultural norms, unfriendly working environments, and family duties.

As shown in Figure 2, the NEET rates in 2021 were higher for women than for men (26.1% and 22.4%, respectively), for young people in the 25–29 age group than for the younger cohort (34.4% and 17.8% respectively), for young people living in the Northeast region (39.7%) and for young people with secondary educational attainment (27.5%).

Figure 2 NEET rates by age, gender, region and educational attainment, 2021 (%)



Source: (ILO, 2022)

In addition, **education** plays an important role in reducing the NEET rate: while still subject to exclusion, highly educated youth are significantly less likely to become NEET than those with lower educational achievement.

The figures on educational attainment show that most young NEETs have a secondary education (64.1%), the share of university graduates who were NEET in 2021 is relatively high (16.3%) and comparable with the proportion of those who had attained only a primary education (19.6%) (ILO, 2022).

In all regions, the highest share of NEETs completed secondary education. The Southwest region notes the lowest share of young people who completed secondary education and are unemployed (47,1%) as well with the highest share of young people with completed higher education (34%) within the NEET population. Vardar region has the lowest share of unemployed NEETs without work experience (43.6%), while the highest share of unemployed persons is noted in the Polog region (91.1%) (ILO, 2022).

The most predominant NEET subgroup is early school leavers. Combined with other variables that might enhance their vulnerability (e.g. gender), the risk of these young people being NEET is increased.

According to the SSO of North Macedonia, in 2019, 7,1% of Macedonian youth (18-24 years old) were registered as early school leavers. According to the last data from [Eurostat](#), percentage of early leavers in 2020 was 5,7%. There is significant improvement regarding previous years (in 2006 there were 22,2% early school leavers), and according to MLSP this situation is primarily a result of the introduction of compulsory secondary education. According to the [European Commission report for North Macedonia in 2023](#), the rates of early school leavers have shown a noteworthy decline over the years, reflecting a positive trend in educational outcomes. In 2010, the rate was 15.5%, which significantly decreased to 8.5% in 2017. The subsequent years witnessed a consistent improvement, with rates of 7.1 in both 2018 and 2019, followed by a further decrease to 5.7% in 2020. The most recent data for 2021 indicates a continuation of this positive trajectory, with a notably reduced rate of 4.6%. A number of children (mainly Roma) are not reflected in these statistics as they are not registered in any official system (have no Identification card (ID)), thus, the actual enrolment rate for the appropriate age cohort is less (MoESNM, Education Strategy for 2018-2025 and Action Plan).

The reasons behind drop-out may vary a lot – from an individual's story to family reasons, to the community environment and the school context. About 60% of the total number of students are enrolled in the first year. The dropout ratio of the school is 3.4% out of which only 0.3% of the students drop out for unknown reasons. Most of the dropouts occur among pupils in the 1st year of study and in this regard the main reason is a change of school. This trend in most cases occurs in the first year of study in which year the students usually have questions about where to continue their education (MoESNM). Another reason is for dropping out from the secondary VET schools is an inappropriate choice of occupation. Children from poor families are more likely not to attend or drop out for a variety of reasons. These include "financial and opportunity costs, insufficient information about the benefits of education, substandard housing conditions that impede learning and studying, and children's health status", which particularly affects children from Roma families (Pecakovska and Lazarevska, 2008).

However, a large number of Roma pupils are still outside the education system. A large rate of drop out is also obvious and low degree of literacy of children with Roma ethnical background. The following are stated as the most frequent reasons for this state: insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language, low degree of education of parents, poor socio-economic status (MoESNM), lack of finances, frequent trips abroad and lack of necessary documentation (ETF, 2008).

In addition, children that up to the age of 10 did not enrol primary education, have no right to enrol regular primary education after the age of 10 due to the limitations in the Law on primary education. On the other hand, the inclusion in the adult education processes is allowed from 15 years and above, creating a gap of almost 5 years, leaving many persons outside of the education system for a long period, after which they never return to school.

Some of the supporting measures introduced in the formal education such as free books and transport, penalties for parents not sending their children in schools, in-school counselling with pupils who are at risk of dropping-out and their parents as well as mentoring of the students with lower levels of attainment have resulted in less dropouts.

In 2021, in the Republic of North Macedonia, out of the total number of young people (approximately 390k persons), around 130k (or 33.4%) were employed, and 50k young people were unemployed (12.9%). The activity rate of young people aged 15 to 29 is 32.3%, while the unemployment rate is 31.2% (Димова, 2022). In the same year, almost 40% of all young people searched for job longer than 1 year. The NEET rate was 24.2%, almost double than in the average NEET rate in EU (13.7%) (ILO, 2022).

In 2021, young unemployed NEETs represented approximately 52.1% of all young NEETs (aged 15-29), or in total 50000 young people (out of which 26000 women). The biggest share of young unemployed people was noted into Skopje region (29.1%) and in the Northeast region (20.5%). In all regions analysed within this report, young men in both age groups are highly likely to be unemployed compared to young women, with the exception for the Polog region for the older target group.

Inactive NEETs include a substantial proportion of young people who are detached from the labor market due to care and family responsibilities (22.1% of the total NEET population, over 20,000 people) and discouragement (16.2% or 15,200 young people). In 2021, young people inactive due to illness or disability accounted for 3.7% of the total (3,400 young people) Approximately 12.7 per cent of all young NEETs were registered with the ESA in 2021 (ILO, 2022). North Macedonia has a high percentage of inactive young people (especially from 15 to 24 years) not interested in being part of their society, and a high percentage of youth unemployment, but also a lack of efficient information channels about youth policies, opportunities for continues education and employment in order to get the young people involved in their society. Discouraged and long-term NEET are predominantly men, while family responsibilities are almost exclusively borne by young women. Unemployed and discouraged NEET are less likely to belong to poor households. Two-thirds of the young NEET-adults are unemployed non-students and one-third is inactive non-students (SSO, 2019). In 2021, inactive young people represented 47.8% of total NEET persons, and approximately 11.6% of all young people aged 15-29 (~45000 persons, 52% women). Currently, around 1/3 of them live in the Polog region and additional 29% in the Skopje region. In almost all regions there are notable shares of inactive young people due to family and care responsibilities. The “discouraged” workers prevail in the Northeast region (34.2%) (ILO, 2022).

The COVID pandemic has again brought a less light picture to this reality. NEET population was highlighted as one of the most vulnerable groups following in the aftermath of the 2008 Recession. Nowadays this population is again at the top of policy agendas since there is a big concern now is how these young people will again be affected by the economic consequences from COVID (SEGA E. p., 2021).

3. INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

The institutional setup defining the labour market related to employment of young people is comprised of several institutions: Employment service agency, Agency for youth and sports, Ministry of education and science, Ministry of labour and social policy, Special advisor of the Prime minister of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia etc.

The Ministry of labor and social policy is a central institution responsible for unemployed persons. Within the Ministry, there is a department for policies in the areas of labor law and employment policies, which is responsible for developing strategies, planning and implementation of the Law work relations and employment related – policies. Within this Department, there is a special unit for labour market, responsible for planning, following,

implementation and evaluation of the employment policy and the national action plan, analysis of the labour market trends, especially related to the groups under risk of exclusion from the labour market, as well as monitoring and assessment of the active measures of the labour market.

The Employment Service Agency is responsible for collecting and dissemination of the information related to the labour market, advice for employment and career guidance, finding job for the active jobseekers and administration of the passive and active measures of the labour market. As well, it administers a wide database of the relevant info on the employed, unemployed, and inactive jobseekers. That is why it is involved in developing strategies, action and operational plans, and is responsible for implementation of the Operational plan for active programmes and measures for employment and services on the labour market (ABPCM A. 3., 2021).

The Agency for youth and sports is the key responsible body for implementation of youth policies. It adopts the National youth strategy and is responsible for its implementation and monitoring. Additionally, the Agency is responsible for conducting analysis of the youth sector and gathering youth-related data. Budget wise, the Agency educates its activity mainly to sports and sports projects, while less than 5% of the total budget is dedicated to youth issues (for 2021, the planned budget is 526,436 milion denars, out of which 79,7% were dedicated to sport, and 3,76% for youth).

Ministry of education and science is responsible for activities related to education and instruction at all levels. Organization, financing, development and advancement of the instruction, education and science. It implements several projects to support young people into employment, combat early school leaving, adult education programs and inclusion of vulnerable groups into education. As well, it implements several programmes for mentorship of young Roma and inclusion of youth with disabilities into the mainstream educational process.

Within the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, there is an Advisor for youth and youth policies, responsible for creation of the policies, reforms and measures related to youth. With its introduction, in 2018, the Advisor on youth is entitled to participate and coordinate the implementation of activities related to youth, such as: participation, organization and coordination of events, meetings with young people, civil society organizations etc. The Advisor participates in working groups, gives opinions and prepares materials for youth related issues and policies.

The Public Institution Adult Education Centre, established in November 2008 became operational in June 2009. It has a mission to promote a functional adult learning and education system (in line with EU standards) that provides high-quality learning opportunities for acquiring qualifications, increases employment and develops entrepreneurship, meets the needs of the labor market, contributing to economic, social and personal development of individuals. At present 682 service providers are accredited, offering 857 verified non-formal education programs and are allowed to provide a nationally recognized Certificate. In accordance with the Law on adult education the definition adult (in a non-formal education and lifelong learning context) pertains for persons starting from the age 15, meaning that the young NEETs in the focus of this report are considered as young adults. Therefore, the general scope of measures of the PI Adult Education Centre is of relevance in this regard.

Municipalities have active role in local communities and especially youth and have advisory and representative role in the sphere of youth-related issues and policies, as highlighted in the recently adopted Law on youth participation. With their Statute, they shall ensure the establishment of Local Youth Councils in order to participate and give feedback on the process of the Local Youth Strategy and other policies. As well, they shall establish a Youth Office that will coordinate youth work and it shall be the primary youth access point at the local level.

Secondary schools and Higher education institutions implement formal secondary and tertiary education programs. Their role is to provide relevant educational programs and develop occupational competences of their students. High schools are obliged to register and report each dropped out pupil to SEI. Both, secondary schools and universities, regulated by Law, are obliged to establish and maintain career guidance centers and offer career guidance for their students, thus leading to reducing the gaps among the formal education and the labor market demand. Currently,

according to the data available from the [Euroguidance centre](#), there are 75 career guidance centers throughout the country, out of which 52 established within high schools (financed by USAID and implemented by YES network for support of young entrepreneurs). Within these centers, trained teachers, pedagogues, psychologists and other professionals provide counseling and career guidance, in order to help pupils to continue their education. 23 career centers are situated within (both public and private) universities. They organize practical work for students who learn how to use new technologies.

[NGOs](#) and especially youth-led grass-root organizations are maybe the first contact point with the local communities and can be seen as a first instance in NEET related activities on field. They usually have very close contact with community members and are aware of the direct needs of the individuals. As well, their overall approach is more non-formal, which reduces the “institutional” barrier to the target group. Their strength as well lies in implementation of diverse non-formal tailor-made educational activities at different levels and locations.

4. LEGISLATION AND RELEVANT POLICY FRAMEWORK

The vulnerability of youth is tackled mainly in the policies related to employment, education, social protection and welfare. For the purpose of this document, the main policies, strategies and action plans were identified and analysed, as well as the laws that are in force in the time of the writing of this report.

The employment policies in the Republic of North Macedonia are defined in: the Governmental program, the Revised Program for reforms in the employment and social policies in 2023 and as such are in line with the obligations deriving from the Global pact on jobs of the International organization, the Plan for Youth Guarantee (2023-2026), the IPA - Program for budget financing and the Law on social protection.

[National Youth Strategy \(2016-2025\)](#) lays down general directions for development of youth policies.

It also focuses on NEET and vulnerable youth. While the strategy provides solid basis for development of policies and policy solutions, it is marked by poor implementation track-record, i.e. it has not been properly implemented since 2016. Namely, the strategy was accompanied by only one action plan for its implementation, additional funds were not anticipated for strategy implementation and there is no institution designated for monitoring and evaluation of strategy implementation.

[Youth Employment Action Plan 2016 - 2020](#) features a more specific plan for youth employment based on goals defined under the National Youth Strategy. The ultimate goal of this action plan is to promote more and better jobs for youth. Specific objectives under the action plan are mainly focused in key areas that concern promotion of youth employment: better match of youth skills and market demand; promotion of job creation led by the private sector; facilitation of youth transition to employment. One of key goals is to increase the number of young people at jobs that match their qualifications, i.e. by 2020, at least 85% of young people to occupy jobs that match their qualifications compared to 64.8% in 2014. Another target concerns at least 10% of youth with completed secondary education and 5% of youth with completed primary education covered by courses for development of skills. These are just some objectives anticipated in the action plan, which also focuses on youth employment, enlisting targets such as: at least 20% of employees through government schemes to be youth aged up to 29 years.

[Roma Strategy \(2014 - 2020\)](#) anticipates specific measures aimed at improving employment of Roma through employment guidelines in specific sectors: employment, education, housing, healthcare and culture.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is indicated in the [Education Strategy 2018-2025](#) as one of the challenges, i.e. one of the measures of the Strategy is: Support in the process of establishment and operationalization

of the system of validation results of non-formal and informal learning. The Strategy also stressed that the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning in North Macedonia is in its embryonic phase, and establishment of a system for Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF) management and inclusion of stakeholders is yet another open issue. A comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges was adopted with the development of the [Roadmap for Further Development and Implementation of the MQF \(2016\)](#).

Law on Youth Engagement and Youth Policies¹ regulates youth organization and participation in policy making and adoption and serves as baseline legislation focused on youth issues and it requires greater engagement and advocacy on the part of youth and civil society organizations. Nevertheless, this is a rather specific law that focuses on youth participation in policy- and decision-making.

The Law introduces several services for support youth and its participation at national and local level and brings the institutions closer to this target group. At local level, the municipalities and the City of Skopje shall establish a Youth office to coordinate youth work and to be the primary youth access point at the local level. They are places in which programmes are designed and implemented to improve youth wellbeing, the development of the personal, social and professional life of youth, information of great interest to the youth and other aspects of youth life. As well, a “Youth Officer” shall be appointed, a person responsible for the running of the Youth Office for coordination, implementation and oversight of youth-related affairs in the scope of the competences of the institution. Youth centers as well, are places in which programs dedicated to youth are designed and implemented.

In addition, as a result of political instability, the elections and COVID-19 pandemic, many provisions are not enforced or are in initial stage of implementation, whereby their effects are still unknown. So far, only 6 municipalities (or 7% of the total number of municipalities) have established youth offices, and youth centers are established in 7 municipalities (9% of the total number of municipalities) and they are being run by youth-led organizations. 79% of all municipalities have appointed youth officers (HMCM, 2023).

Law on Labor Relations² regulates issues related to employment, rights and obligations of employers, of unemployed people, of job seekers and of the state in respect to employment and unemployment. This is the most complex piece of labor legislation that governs all rights and liabilities concerning employment and social benefits in case of unemployment. Law on Social Protection is the basic law that provides detail regulation of rights and obligations of the state and of the citizens in respect to social protection, but does not provide special regime for treatment of youth in case of unemployment, i.e. it offers general rights of citizens.

Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities³ is the basic law that addresses needs of persons with disabilities. However, the law does not anticipate special treatment of youth and offers unified approach for all.

Law on Youth Allowance⁴ is a new measure introduced in 2020 to address effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth employment. In particular, this allowance was introduced to stimulate enrolment in secondary vocational schools and incentivize employment after graduation, including the need for separate legal regulation of the measure related to allowance for youth aged up to 23 years that will be or are employed mainly in manufacturing activities.

Law on Volunteering⁵ was adopted in 2007 and does not include any age limits for engagement in and organization of volunteer work. Terms and conditions for volunteering are defined in the law and under individual contracts. Youth (Un)employment in North Macedonia.

1 Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, “Official Gazette of RNM” no. 10/2020

2 Law on Labor Relations, “Official Gazette of RM” no. 62/2005...110/2019

3 Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities, “Official Gazette of RM” , no. 44/2000...99/2018

4 Law on Youth Allowance, “Official Gazette or RM” no. 18/2020

5 Law on Volunteering, “Official Gazette of RNM” no. 85/2007...102/2021

Law on Internship⁶ was adopted in May 2019 and defines interns as persons up to the age of 34 years who are engaged for a period of up to 6 months. Terms and conditions of such work are defined under individual contracts, but it should be noted that the law stipulates an obligation for employers to assign them mentor, to set their reimbursement in compliance with the law and to issue certificate for completed internship.

The **Law on higher education**⁷ imposes an obligation to each university establish at least one career center which is expected to take care of alumni records, to organize career fairs, connect the students with the business and potential employers and assist their transition into their first work place. So far, several HEIs established their career centres: Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Faculty of Economics within the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, the University “Goce Delcev”, Stip (public universities) as well as the South-East European University, the American College, the FON University (private universities).

Law on Adult Education, is expected to sustain and support the positive and active approach towards learning of the citizens in all ages throughout the whole life. It understands increasing the opportunities for dynamic cooperation among educational institutions for adults and the needs deriving from labor and social life. The aim of adult education is to provide possibilities for completing appropriate level for everyone and all age groups and to enable them to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes in compliance with the societal and labor market requirements. The reference Law on adult education, firstly adopted in 2008, has been revised and adopted to introduce and enable VNFIL, in 2019 has been additionally amended, and currently is in the procedure of adoption within the Parliament.

5. EXISTING PROJECTS, PROGRAMMES AND BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Both the desk research and the qualitative survey have one common conclusion in this regard: there are **no specific** measures to address the needs of NEETs in the country. Even some processes for career guidance are ongoing, they serve for concrete measures to be implemented (active employment measures, training needs etc). *There is no specific unified, structured tool directed to NEET at systemic level, and the existing practices are mainly organized within (donor-funded) projects and thus, limited in scope, outreach, and are done in correlation to the concrete needs of the project.* There is no direct connection to these certain measures, initiatives or programs, and they seem to be hardly transferable to other realities. Almost all of them have preconditions that must be met in order a person to acquire the access to a certain service (i.e. to be officially registered as unemployed, or to have completed certain level of education or be a high-school student etc.). In this manner, the ProfilPASS, as a tool has significant advantage in its availability to the concrete target group, the way it could be implemented by different social partners and in different realities.

Below, the report presents the good practice examples implemented in the country in dealing with NEETs as described from the available resources. The summary below will provide how the practitioners see them, their functionality in relation to the target groups and will present their “life” into real life situations.

Education context

Related to the **primary education**, even there has been an ongoing process of revising and piloting the programmes for the (formal) primary education of adults, the supply of verified institutions providing this kind of training options is rather limited. Competition of the primary education could be achieved into the specialized school Anton

6 Law on Internship, “Official Gazette of RNM” no. 98/2019

7 Law on Higher Education “Official Gazette of RNM” no. 98/2018

Simjonovic Makarenko in Skopje, and unofficially, in several Open universities for lifelong learning in the country. It is available for persons over 18 years old, who bear all the costs by themselves.

In cooperation with MOE, AEC implements a project for shaping of **secondary education of adults** with completed only primary education, in order to enhance their easier access to labor market. The curriculum is developed in accordance with the programmes in the formal secondary education. So far, the competition of secondary education was possible in the following occupations: economical-legal, machine, electro-technical, traffic, graphic, hospitality, agricultural-veterinary, chemical-technological, and personal services. In the period of 2010-19, 2950 persons were involved in the project, and in 2020, the activities were interrupted by the COVID19 crisis (Mojcovic, 2020).

The Workers' Universities/Open Civic universities for Lifelong Learning also provide courses **for basic and vocational skills** to all interested in obtaining skills, knowledge and certificate, but they do not have specific mechanisms to identify and support the women by providing a tailor-made course for them. However, they do offer completion of primary and secondary education to drop-out adults (over 16 years) by taking few exams. In addition, the Workers Universities offer verified and non-verified by the state vocational courses⁸. In some cases, the courses are designed and offered by the Workers' Universities themselves and in other cases they apply for providers of the courses announced by the ESA.

Other AE verified providers also provide verified programmes for **non-formal education** which leads to knowledge, skills and competences, and lead to partial and/or full professional qualification. For these two types of programmes, officially recognized state certificate is issued by ESA, recognized at the labor market.

The AEC holds a Registry of all verified institutions and programmes and it is available on their web-site, which contains the **data-base of all providers of non-formal education**⁹ (regardless verified or not). It is easily accessible and provides different filters for more specific search. The only pre-condition for involvement into these verified programmes for non-formal education is for the candidate to possess valid ID and to have completed primary education.

Battery of instruments for professional development (BIPO)

BIPO is a test for career orientation of *high-school students*. The results indicate certain occupations which would be the most suitable for the candidate based on his/hers interest and they do not guarantee the success into the professional development and/or studying. However, the successful orientation by using these instruments depends on how much the candidate has responded sincerely, with no intention to make certain impression. The programmes of career guidance of high school students within the career centers are being implemented by trained career counselors, out of the regular teachers and professional collaborators (psychologists/pedagogists) in the schools. For that purpose, 180 teachers and professional collaborators were trained. List of these trained counselors is available at: <https://nasocime.innovationlab.mk/mojata-nasoka/>.

The process starts once the student enters the platforms and requests credentials. The counseling is a compilation of 3 different questionnaires, three scales of assessment. The questionnaires measure professional interest, work values of the student, and the last is a test indicator for personality. The test has been developed by professionals from the field of career guidance, from the Ministry of education and science in cooperation with the Centre for development of education from USA, within the YES network project.

8 The process of verification of non-formal adult education programs in North Macedonia is not compulsory

9 www.cov.gov.mk

Employment context

ESA provides access of *all registered unemployed persons and employers* to different employment programs, measures, and services. Being officially registered as an unemployed person is a starting point for all ESA support services, including YG presented below. The right to participate is being determined based on the requirements and criteria defined for each individual employment program, measure or service, and as a general rule, these programs, measures and services strive for equal representation of both men and women, in accordance with the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. ESA by posting public announcements of programmes and measures on their website and social networks, encourages unemployed people to register as unemployed and then participate in any of the measures offered. In general, the activities include: **Self-employment (entrepreneurship) support** - unemployed can start their own business (special focus is put on unemployed women from vulnerable groups of marginalized persons), and **On-the-job training for a known employer**- equips the unemployed persons with the skills required for performing their work tasks in line with employer's needs. Other measures involve: **vocational trainings in line with employer's requirements, (on-line) Occupations-in-demand training and driving lessons for C and D categories**. For all of these measures, trainees receive a monthly allowance in the amount of 9,000 denars for the duration of the training of up to 3 months, paid by ESA). In 2021, in total 882 persons are to be involved in different training (ESA, 2021).

Starting from 2019, ESA implements a 36-months EU funded project "**Labor Market Activation of vulnerable groups**", aiming at reducing the long-term unemployment and dependence on guaranteed minimum assistance, by effectively involving vulnerable groups, especially users of guaranteed minimum assistance, by including them in specialized skills development programs and services. This project has 2 components: (1) SIM Counselling and Motivation Programme and (2) Support Employment by Trainings. Within the second component, whose primary goal is to improve the skills and knowledge of users of guaranteed minimum assistance, by means of trainings, internships and subsidized employment, to facilitate the inclusion of these persons in the labor market consists of three measures: 1. Training for vocational occupations (required occupations in the labor market), 2. In-work trainings (training at a known employer) and 3. Cost-sharing employment (wage subsidy), with an expected reach of 400 persons (ABPCM, 2020).

ESA is one of the key players on the area of career guidance and counselling. The ESA provides career counselling as part of their measure 4 of the Operational Plan- Professional Counselling and Career Guidance. The activities range from preparation for employment to occupational orientation and career guidance, so that the unemployed persons gain skills for exploring their career opportunities, job searching skills and personal career plan. The career counselling is provided individually or in groups tailored to the needs of the participant/s by providing information about for specific occupations, self-support and self-assessment tools that guide the unemployed in making decisions about development of their career action plans. The preparation of high-quality individual plans is a very important precondition for providing appropriate and relevant services for the unemployed persons, with the ultimate goal of finding suitable employment within certain period of time. It is organized into one central and 30 local Centers for employment. The counsellors in the Employment centres perform certain competence assessment procedure based on structured questionnaire leading to individual employment plan which provides guidelines to further education and/or employment. As well, similar procedure is implemented within the YG skim. These activities are considered relevant and appropriate, but, lack psycho-social assessment and counselling as very important link which is missing in the whole process. The main target groups are mostly unemployed people, but also pupils, students and those how want to change their career paths. In 2022, in total 983 persons were users of these services, out of which 534 (54%) women and 536 (55%) young people under the age of 29. (AVRSM, 2022).

Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning

In the Republic of North Macedonia, even the initial steps to introduce VNFIL started from 2014, its implementation is still being hold back due to lack of legislative base to be adopted soon. The reference Law on adult education has been revised to introduce and enable VNFIL, in 2019 has been additionally amended, and currently is in the procedure of adoption within the Parliament.

The validation process will consist of 4 phases: identification, documentation, assessment and certification. In the first two initial phases, the trained validation counsellor offers support, relevant information, advice and guidance to the potential candidate and ensures that the knowledge, skills and competences become visible. Then, the evidence of the achievements of the learning outcomes is being collected in the form of Portfolio to be assessed. Apart of the assessors, capacitated vocational professors and school psychologist and pedagogist will take part in the assessment process. The validation process will be conducted by accredited institution and will consist of modules, which can be evaluated and validated independently and based on that an adequate certificate will be issued i.e. a certificate per module or a certificate for a competence if all modules are successfully validated. The validated competence will be equivalent to level 3 to 5a of the NQF.

The validation counsellor is trained and licenced and is part of the official registry of Validation Counsellors in AEC. In the next two phases (assessment and certification), the validation assessors evaluate the Portfolio and confirm (or not) that the candidate has achieved certain standard for qualification in compliance with the NQF. Validation assessors are trained and licenced and are part of the official registry of Validation Assessors in AEC. With the support from Erasmus+ centralized actions, in the initial phase of establishing VNFIL, qualification standard and training programme for validation counsellors was drafted. With the support of LLC, in the frames of the project financed by DVV International, a training program, a professional standard for assessors were developed and a training for validation assessors was held. Within the EU funded project: "Increasing attractiveness, inclusiveness and relevance of VET and AE," in the following period, the validation will be piloted in 5 qualifications, to be defined in near future. So far, in the frames of the [E4E@mk project](#), a validation procedure was piloted for the qualification of a waiter.

Youth Guarantee

In 2018, ESA started with implementation of "Youth Guarantee" as a pilot activity in 3 employment centers (Skopje, Strumica and Gostivar), and in 2019 it was implemented throughout the country, with special focus in three regions (Polog, Northeast and Southwest). The YG allows *young NEET people up to the age of 29* to receive a suitable job offer, to continue their education or to be involved in any of the active employment programs and measures, in a period of 4 months *after their registration as unemployed persons in ESA*. After being registered in the register of unemployed persons, they are immediately referred to their first interview with employees of the ESA, who profile their employability, using a control questionnaire and prepare Individual employment plans. These plans define the activities that enable the young unemployed person, in a period of 4 months, to be re-involved in the educational process (not in regular education) or to be involved in any of the active employment measures or services, which will enable to increase her employment opportunities or to be offered suitable employment that suits her education and skills. Activities include group and individual counselling; providing job search assistance services; motivational trainings; involvement in any of the measures for labor market integration (employment, education and training measures) (ESA, 2021). In 2020, 25487 young people were involved into the YG, out of which, 7424 got employment and 1254 were involved into some of the active employment measures, setting the success rate of YG to 34% (ABPCM, 2021). In 2021, in total, 19.298 were involved, out of which 14.428 (or 74,8%) are women.

In 2022, 20185 unemployed persons were involved into YG, out of which 7419 got employed, 1287 persons were involved in some of the active employment measures, setting the success rate to 43%. Out of all, 5083 have completed primary education, 10970 have completed secondary education and 4132 have completed higher education.

Within IPA II 2014-2020, certain budget was allocated to implementation of YG in 3 regions out of 4 regions, subject to this report: Northeast, Polog and Southwest, which are economically less developed and additionally have highest NEET rates. In these regions in 2022, 8219 young unemployed persons were involved, out of them, 2006 have completed primary education, 4604 have completed secondary education and 1608 have completed higher education. 2816 persons have been already employed; 619 persons were involved into some of the active employment measures which do not lead to direct employment but increase their employability. According to the data available, the success of YG in Resen is 41% (AVRSM, 2022).

In 2023, the YG will continue to be implemented on the whole territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, with special accent on NEET. The planned outreach is approximately 10000 young people, with expected indicator of success set to 30% of all involved to successfully get employed, re-enter the educational process or are involved into active programmes and measures for employment (ABPCM A. 3., 2023).

Euroguidance Center has been established in the frames of National Agency for European Educational programs and mobility. It is part of 34 national resource and information centres for guidance in 34 European countries. Its' main target group consists of guidance practitioners in education and employment, among them professionals who provide information and guidance on international learning mobility to end-users seeking studying and training opportunities abroad.

The National Roma Centrum implements several initiatives related to the Roma women. Within the project: "Empowering the Roma women in the Republic of North Macedonia", a detailed research was prepared related to the availability of the measures for development of competences and gaining qualifications for Roma women with low/no education and qualifications from 5 statistical regions in the municipalities of: Kumanovo, Kochani, Kichevo, Stip, Veles and Prilep. The main findings indicate that Roma women lack relevant info on the opportunities available, and, the persons involved in direct work with this target group lack relevant training and tools to motivate and offer the relevant support in the process. In that manner, a Manual was prepared to support the educators and counselors working at grassroot level in their daily activities. The Manual provides systematic overview of the education and training opportunities of Roma women with low qualifications. It was developed in a very practical manner, by using real stories and practical examples to be used by the educators in working with the target groups. It also contains list of available training providers of nationally verified learning opportunities in the respective regions (Мojсовска, 2020).

Macedonian Association of counsellors of career development

The ASK is founded by a group of enthusiasts – professionals who went through the process of a certified program training for facilitators for career development, developed by NBCC from the USA, by the name of Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF). As a result from the program, around 25 professionals from different areas (education, training centers, counselors houses etc.) granted valuable theoretical and practical knowledge in the domain of career planning and development. The members of ASK are also certified GCDF coaches, who are authorized to train and certify career facilitators by the GCDF program, in cooperation with the organization My Career.

The mission of ASK is to include career counseling in the Republic of North Macedonia and set it to the needed professional and practical level, for our users to get relevant support in the process of career planning and development, also our mission is to raise awareness for the importance of career counseling.

Professional career counseling by the certified GCDF career facilitators represents help (assistance) and professional guidance for developing the real potentials of the individuals and successes in organizations, which also influences the eternal economy growth of the whole country. A priority goal for the activities of ASK is training of the already existing or hiring new certified GCDF Career Facilitators in the Career centers of relevant institutions, where the planning and choices about the type of education and career are made.

As primary target groups for the activities of ASK are identified primary schools, high schools and universities, where the professional help for choosing a profession is very important for the pupils, students and for the whole community. Services provided by ASK are a serious support of activities which are already in use in this field in the process of education, over standardized programs for training people who work directly with the pupils and students in the field of career development. Also, ASK works with parent counselling within the educational institutions, with the purpose of including the parent as support in the choice of the right profession for the student, where he/she

can reach the peak of his/hers potential. Very important target groups for the projects of ASK are individuals that look for employment, through the ESA and its centers though out the country. The services of ASK are also available for professional individuals who are in different stages of their careers, as an example, an individual that is in the middle of a career transition or are confronting challenges in the work place.

Services

Individual career counseling

Through the individual meeting – session of career counseling the clients have the opportunity to create and explore their own vision for a career, to create career goals, to explore their own interest and values related to their workplace through taking tests and other self-reflecting tools. The result of the process is an individual career plan. The individual sessions can be related with themes such as: pleasure from the workplace, counseling through a time of career transition/changing the workplace etc.

Group session for career counseling and informing

This format of group work is mostly used for career informing, training on career related topics and similar workshops that allow the participants to strengthen their career-building abilities.

Career Planning programs for companies

In collaboration with the Human Resources sector and the company's management, a career concept for employees is being developed and introduced as a part of the talent management system. With it, the companies work in the field of talent management, building on the human capacities in organizations.

Step by Step IN CAREER GUIDANCE

The project MCOG aims to introduce innovative early career guidance methodology as a sustainable tool for the prevention of young people becoming NEET, providing an innovative face-to-face approach. The proposed model is based on the experiences of the three project partners and existing positive practices in various countries in Europe.

The Model of Face-to-Face Early Career Guidance (SEGA E. p., 2021) is an innovative model consisting of 10 main steps of career guidance. It is a scheme that allows young people to be prepared to enter their professional life at the appropriate level and so that they feel that they are doing what they like. This process is very important, especially in the NEET group. The first stage of this model involves initial contact, understanding and information exchange about NEETs. Young people can learn what the process of career guidance is about and what they can gain from it. The second step is to initiate a meeting with young people who may be in the NEET area. The sphere of the young person's attitude and his/her relationship with the counsellor are very important here. They present what a career path could look like, share their experience. A big challenge at this stage may be the lack of motivation and willingness to cooperate of the NEET. In the next stage, the counselor prepares a question form for each young person to carry out the diagnosis. Then, set goals based on talents, predispositions or skills. Among other values, beliefs, learning style, but also barriers or difficulties need to be considered. A SWOT analysis may be a helpful tool in this section. It is worth focusing here on building self-esteem, getting to know yourself and your strengths. The next step concerns the cooperation of a career counsellor with relevant school services. Psychological support for young people should be provided here, but they may feel reluctant to open to others. The job of a career counsellor is to maintain a friendly, open relationship with young people. In step number 6, you should prepare an Individual Development Plan. It is a document that collects all the most important information about a young person, from his/her knowledge and skills or weaknesses and strengths to professional goals and the path to be followed to achieve these goals. Subsequently, workshops with young people should be organized. People are more productive in a group, they support each other, help each other, learn from each other and at the same time compete and can become better and work on themselves and practice communicating in a group. Social competences are extremely important in terms of employment. In the next step, you should get to know the current situation on the labor market and compare it with your competences and expectations. On this basis,

IDP should be established, what the career counsellor and a young person do jointly in order to teach how to look for information, search for a job for a person with specific qualifications. This stage also covers the topics of training and educational programs that are currently available. Then the mentoring and support phase begins. The mentor should be the kind of person young people want to follow. He/she should supervise their current activities and encourage them to develop further. An important feature of it is active listening and empathy. At this stage, everything should be analyzed and summarized, and good actions and bad ones identified. Then the whole process can start from the beginning to overcome any negative actions that have arisen.

ProfilPASS

ProfilPASS is a developmental instrument for the documentation of competences and abilities gained in non-formal and informal settings through vocational training, voluntary work or leisure time activities. ProfilPASS is a way of empowering individuals and making them aware of their personal strengths. Its' efficacy is based on the assumption that many individuals can estimate the value of their competences through critical reflection on their own lives and evaluation of their own potential. It is a formative method based on user self-assessment and supported by professional guidance on a one-on-one basis or in groups.

Its' origins date back in 2006, when, funded by the German Federal ministry of education, the ProfilPASS System was developed by the German Institute of Adult Education, Leibniz Center for Lifelong Learning (DIE), the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF) and the Institute for developmental and structural research, IES, Hannover.

The ProfilPASS is a methodology utilized in processes of counselling and guidance (by definition, it belongs to education counselling as one segment of counselling in general) in a lifelong learning context. It serves as a tool for assessment of one individuals' competences, regardless of where they have been acquired.

ProfilPASS is a tool (a portfolio, workbook, notebook) with the help of which an individual, guided by a trained counsellor, can systematically self-reflect in order to define, summarize and self-assess the own competences, gained throughout life, through formal, non-formal and informal learning. At the end of the counselling, the counselee receives a certificate of competences.

This certificate, gives an overview of the competences of the individual, structured in line with the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning of the European Commission¹⁰.

Beside the certificate, as an important output, an essential benefit for the counselee is the fact that the guidance during the work on the portfolio contributes toward encouragement of the counselee by influencing the (re)gain and building up of self-confidence, awareness about own worth and overall empowerment.

It is very important to underline, that ProfilPASS is not just a tool by itself. Its' main concept on setting the focus on self-assessment of competences gained through all forms of learning – is an approach in line with ongoing European policies and trends on highlighting validation of prior learning. ProfilPASS as a concept is and underlining that what is valued by the labor market are individuals' competences and abilities and not the context in which they were gained and/or the respective formal education certificate.

One further, unique and valuable characteristic of ProfilPASS is its' adaptability, flexibility and openness to different target groups among which for NEETs. There is a version of the tool adapted, further developed and tailored to the needs of young NEETs, suitable for use in the daily work of a variety of practitioners (youth workers, educators, social workers, career counsellors etc.), who get in touch with this target group in order to offer them support and empowerment.

10 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018SC0014>

ProfilPASS for various target groups

As mentioned above, one of the specifics of ProfilPASS is its' adaptability, flexibility and openness to different target groups among which also for NEETs.

ProfilPASS as a methodology for competence assessment exists in eight versions, developed and tailored in line with the needs of various types of target groups. Here is an overview of the versions and their target groups:

- ProfilPASS for adults – generic version

ProfilPASS supports adult individuals in the planning of their future professional development, in the preparation for (re)entering work life, in the professional and personal (re)orientation and in the planning of the future learning.

- ProfilPASS for young people – generic version

With this version of the tool, the young people from ages 13 and up can explore their strengths and interests. In this process, they will discover their knowledge and skills, which are not assessed by school grades. All aspects of life are taken into account: the school activities are equally important as the hobbies, the time spent with family and friends.

- ProfilPASS in simple language

ProfilPASS especially puts in focus the extraordinary life situation of newly immigrated and is therefore adjusted to the language level B1. This version characterizes with shortened text volume, increased utilization of visualization, pictograms as well as with use of simple language.

- ProfilPASS for start ups

This version of ProfilPASS is dedicated to the individuals who want to create their own business. They can reflect on and document their skills and experiences upon 13 entrepreneurial competences. The transfer into life context and into the starting point for the founding of the business of the counselee is supported through biographical examples and testimonials.

- ProfilPASS without barriers in easy language

It supports individuals with cognitive impairments and learning difficulties. ProfilPASS is available in PDF – format without barriers, suitable for blind and people with visual impairments. Other special features, beside the use of easy language, are the shortened texts, the use of tables, pictures and assisting explanations for work with the content.

- ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career!

This version of ProfilPASS is suitable for young adults who are neither in education, training nor in employment. This ProfilPASS is focused on the life situation, on the experiences and the needs of the target group and supports decision on career choice and the job application processes, with the help of supporting materials.

- ProfilPASS for retirement preparation

This version of ProfilPASS is suitable for individuals in phase of transition toward retirement. Through the work on this ProfilPASS they can focus on their competences and in that process they can be supported in their personal (further) development as well as in their (re)orientation.

- ProfilPASS for women – We can do it!

This version supports the (re)integration of women in labor market. Women are more exposed to risk of poverty, for example by interrupted employment or part time work due to care for children. The counselling supports them in the reflection of their competences and the choice of professional career fields.

- ProfilPASS for young people – Kickstart your career! as a good practice example in empowering NEET – youth

The version of the ProfilPASS for young people, named ProfilPASS - kickstart your career! was created in transnational project cooperation, in the period 2019 – 2021, by the consortium led by German Adult education Institute (DIE) together with the project partners SKILLS from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ljudska Univerza Velenje from Slovenia, Laris from Serbia and Lifelong Learning Center from North Macedonia. In the frames of **CORE - Assessment of Competences for Reintegration**, an Erasmus+ funded project, they worked on the adjustment of the already existing ProfilPASS, to the needs of the young vulnerable individuals who are not in employment, education nor in training. Result of this 2-year project work was the new ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! developed along with a variety of supporting materials.

The version of ProfilPASS for young NEETS will be highlighted and elaborated more in detail in the guidelines of this report.

6. THE PRACTITIONER'S VIEWPOINT

Based on the interviews conducted with 24 representatives of various actors on local/regional level in the 4 plan regions which were subject of this survey, in this chapter, we summarize their views and responses as follows:

1. Who are young NEET - individuals and what are their main challenges at personal level?

- Young people in general, and especially NEETs are seen as less-motivated, passive, with generally low interest in overall societal flow and active citizenship, impatient, with low level of general life/occupational competences, with a general disinterest for work and employment, rigid and passive in relation to further education, with highly emphasized distrust towards local/state institutions to seek help and the possibility to achieve anything without participation in political parties. They often have employment expectations which are not in line with their own capacities (too high expectations and overrating own capacities).
- They are generally attached to mobile phones and dependent on social media, regardless of their socio-economic status. On the other hand, vast majority of them do not have PC at home and no access to and/or no stabile internet connection.
- The experts note potential differences in characteristics of challenges NEET/young people from the small communities/towns face compared to the ones of the youth from bigger regions/cities in the country (like Skopje for example). In the bigger urban environment, the young people are more open, transparent and communicative and can express and articulate better, while in small provincial cities, usually deprived from information flows, the young people have higher likelihood to be isolated, to lack relevant info and with lower self-confidence. On the other hand, they are seldom “bombed” with miss-information.
- There is as well a socio-economic gap among young people based on their economic status, that often causes bullying, peer pressure for deviant behaviours and even peer violence (noted by the experts in Polog region).
- Part of the NEETs lack personal documents, most of which are Roma.
- Difficult life standard circumstances: some NEET lack basic (of social and economic nature) conditions for education
- Complex family conditions are a common challenge (families of unemployed parents, dead parents, parents

working abroad etc.) especially emphasized among students in the Polog and Southwest region. Part of the respondents indicate that parents are as well seen as a challenge, in the sense of their influence and impact on the overall wellbeing of their children. In this context, the parents' focus on solving existential issues, leads to neglect of their children's needs, who often feel lonely and not heard.

- Lack of cultural events and generally problems on the level of local community (i.e infrastructural issues such as lack of street lighting and dysfunctional public transportation- highlighted among experts in 3 out of 4 selected regions). For instance, the majority of respondents in the regions Polog and Southwest, highlighted the lack of public transportation as a barrier to mobility of vulnerable youth. On the long term, this is one of the factors that lead to isolation of these individuals in their micro-communities (such as villages in rural areas), due to inaccessibility to larger townships, institutions, services, social and cultural gatherings etc.
- They are with high likelihood to emigrate to another country or enter into the grey economy, in which sense, remain outside of all educational and employment flows.

2. How are related policies implemented? What is the cooperation of the social partners? What are the challenges?

The findings from the desk research, in general, are being confirmed by the experts. They note that there is a **lack of systemic, continuous, sustainable and efficient support**. They all demonstrate wide variety of activities, social subsidies, support services that are being implemented, however, the majority of efforts are project driven and conducted during the lifecycle of the project. After the end of the project, the initiative or activity finishes as well. With the new approaches, tools, methodologies etc., introduced by projects, there is no ownership or sense of responsibility for sustainability of the beneficiaries. After the end of the project, there are no finances to continue with the certain action. The strategic framework and all documents produced in this sense exist only formally, on paper. There is a serious lack of long-term planning. The implementation of youth strategies has limited effect, considering that, even perfectly developed, there is no concrete budget allocated to their implementation, thus limiting their feasibility. The implementation of the Law on youth participation that was developed and adopted, doesn't go smooth. Only a little is done on municipality level. Although obliged by law to employ a youth associate in every municipality, that is not the case. A further obligation of the municipalities is to establish a youth center. Out of 80 municipalities, only 7 have such centers.

The **cooperation** between the state institutions in charge with all other stakeholders is there, it is taking place. The only challenge is on level of effectiveness and efficiency of communication and for this situation the responsibility is on all parties involved, not only the state institutions are the "slow" ones. On the other hand, interviewed experts from NGOs demonstrate well developed networks with different social partners at many levels, which could be utilized in accessing the target groups. The youth centers that were established by the municipalities and local youth NGOs were entitled to operate them, has proven to be a good practice example. Namely, the youth centres already use the visibility of the youth NGO, young people in the community easily recognize it, they have well developed cooperation with almost all social partners (in many cases even confirmed by signed Memorandums of cooperation), and have experience in/knowledge in working with the target groups (in Kumanovo and Ohrid).

A big existing challenge is the **lack of information** of young vulnerable people about institutional support measures to help them solve their problems. In this context, the responsibility is on both parties – both institutions and youth. On the one hand, there are the institutions which don't make sufficient efforts to promote their measures, to disseminate the information and reach out to the vulnerable youth as final beneficiaries of their measures. The (youth-led) NGOs have a different approach in this sense – when they have some support activities, they adjust the dissemination and reach out depending on the target group).

A general challenge is seen as well in the continuous decrease of the number of populations, due to **emigration** in the past 15-20 years. This has to do with lack of strategic planning and mid and long-term vision about the development of the municipality/region and lack of prediction parameters in order to react timely to prevent this

situation. This affects, for example, the labor market.

3. How is counselling perceived and implemented? What are the tools? What are the challenges?

From the interviews, it's quite clear that there are no unified methods directed to NEETs. This only confirmed the findings from the desk research, which identified many individual and isolated mechanisms for the counseling process organized in a segmented manner, mainly within (donor-funded) projects. In general, the career guidance is on a very basic level and is conducted mainly by some tests. New efficient tools are welcome.

As well, as confirmed in both methods of research, the counseling activities do exist, but are directed to general target groups (i.e. adults, young people, employees in certain sector, unemployed persons in ESA etc.) and, they are being implemented based on individual sessions.

The practitioners still identify **ESA** as most relevant and recognizable institution which provides counselling. Within ESA activities, once a person is registered as active job-seeker and interested to participate in the active employment measures, counsellors in the Employment centres perform certain competence assessment procedure based on structured questionnaire leading to individual employment plan which provides guidelines to further education and/or employment. As well, similar procedure is implemented within the YG skim. Namely, once a young person declares readiness to enroll, he/she is immediately referred to their first interview with employees of the ESA, who profile their employability, using a control questionnaire and prepare Individual employment plans. Almost all experts consider these activities relevant and appropriate, but, identify the psycho-social assessment and counselling as very important link which is missing in the whole process. It is not present in the state institutions, but there are some NGOs that work on this process and in that way, they manage to get a complete assessment of all competencies and skills as well as the level of intellectual development of NEETs. This, however, is hard to standardize and measure.

Another impression is that institutions have neither transparency nor staff capacity to implement it in a timely manner to avoid certain adverse consequences. In many cases, they are as well understaffed and/or lack employees with relevant skills to perform these tasks.

The experts from the **regional VET centers** confirm that certain counseling processes are being developed within their schools. The secondary schools are obliged by law to establish career centers. The continuous guidance is done by the psychological and pedagogical unit, by using BIPO method, developed by professor Beshka. All secondary vocational schools have a career counsellor and a career center. They were established through the YES project founded by USAID but not all of them are sustainable after the project. Teachers are trained for career counselling by the Bureau for development of education. The pupils are mentored throughout the educational process. The counselling is performed by giving them questionnaires to examine the interests of the pupils for the future career, to develop entrepreneurial skills and help the pupils to discover their interests. There is a list of elective training topics for teachers to choose from. It is not an obligatory and systemic obligation for each teacher to pass a training for career counselling. The core challenge for the counsellor in this process is to break the barriers of the young individual caused by their beliefs and with career counselling it is possible, but it is not an easy task. These activities are facilitated by teachers that don't have a full teaching schedule. In most of the cases, this support is individual.

The NGOs are seen as social partners which are more flexible into the approach to target groups in their full complexity of traditional, religious, family, educational, employment and other aspects. When considering NEETs, youth-led NGOs could be the ones which are entitled to closer contact with the local communities, and as well, make the contact more individual and less formal. When talking about the approach of the youth worker, there is a difference between a **youth worker** and a teacher. The youth worker is, in terms of attitude, less formal, warmer, more open. One of the goals of the youth worker is to support critical thinking of the young individuals. There is a state verified program for non-formal education of youth workers (*Rabotnik so mladi*) developed and offered by

SMR. It was developed based on the Professional standard for Youth worker. In the state verified programs there is a mandatory segment dedicated to management, individual plan etc. which is in a way a certain guidance.

4. ProfIPASS

In general, the interviewed experts can point out concrete counseling tools, which are being implemented in different realities, even though none of them is specifically dedicated to NEETs. They all agree that new tools are more than welcomed.

Related to ProfIPASS, there is limited knowledge from a big group of experts. On contrary, part of the interviewed have already recognized its' positive aspects and underwent relevant training for counsellors, defining the non-formal network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The starting point needs to be developing clear picture **who exactly NEETs in the local community are**, and what are their main needs and challenges. These groups are quite diverse and specifically related to certain region and its' socio-economic setting. These "mapping" processes need to be systemic and continuous or at least repetitive, and need to involve all social partners in the respective region: the municipality, youth NGOs, social welfare centers, youth centers, schools etc. Understanding the scope and the needs of the local NEETs could serve as a starting point in developing further strategies, and as well, as a tool for early-warning system to prevent young people becoming NEETs.

In this context, a very important role in preventing youth of becoming NEET can play the career centers in the secondary schools and in the Regional Centers for vocational education and training with continuous support through career guidance and counselling parallel to the education process. Therefore, synergies need to be built among policy makers, stakeholders and all other parties in the **joint effort for reviving of the already existing career centers** within the schools, through creation of framework conditions for their sustainable, efficient and effective functioning.

The general approach in counseling needs to be very **informal**, so that firstly the trust of the respondent is gained. During the counseling process, it has to be made very clear what are the **final benefits of the process**, what will they gain in the end and why it is very important. Offering more concrete answers on the significance of the process could be a triggering moment to "attract" more NEETs become interested to get involved.

The NEETs usually have **very low self-esteem and awareness about the self-worth** –that also make them vulnerable, beside all other factors. The survey showed a variety of practices and approaches, especially in career counseling related measures, where the target group is involved in training packages aiming at employability (C/V, motivation letter and interview) whereby the fact that these individuals are discouraged in overall, is not taken into account or overseen. In this regard, a necessary aspect and integral part of counselling and guidance support needs to be offered in raising their self-esteem and feeling of self-worth, as preconditions for increased employability. Sending positive messages and words of encouragement could be beneficial, as well as highlighting that each NEETs has certain acquired competencies and skills which of, they are not even aware.

The **counseling of NEETs in a lifelong learning context** needs to be set up, developed, strengthened and ensured. The initial step could be allocating relevant funds at local and national level to ensure and support the implementation of adopted policies. Part of the solution could be that each municipality/region identifies positive practice examples of activities/tools already developed under different (donor-funded) projects and create ownership over them,

with the commitment for further implementation (in time, money and staff). **ProfilPASS** in this sense has great advantage, considering that it:

- has already been drafted in an international environment
- tested in 4 countries, among which also in North Macedonia
- is especially adjusted for work with NEETs
- could be implemented by wide variety of actors and social partners (from representatives of institutions to youth workers, educators etc.)
- is available in Macedonian and Albanian language
- is available online as an Open Educational Resource (OER)
- is free of charge.

The NEETs **lack info**. The counseling opportunities need to be continuous, long-term available, visible and widely promoted by tailor-made campaigns at local level, involving usage of role models and concrete positive examples of successful stories. As indicated with the research, the NEETs use social media, and exactly these channels have to be more utilized in promoting relevant info and reaching out to the target group.

Involved institutions and local NGOs institutions need to develop **more structured and continuous cooperation** especially in accessing the target group. Networking with all relevant actors, organizations and intensifying the cooperation of institutions and the civil society sector can help to maximize the use of all resources. The local NGOs are seen to have great potential in reaching the target groups, especially those acting on grass-root level and involve local NEETs in their activities. Local young people trust them, and the “institutional” barrier is expected to be smaller. Representatives of this kind of institutions could be trained to be counsellors. **The practice of youth centers within municipalities being operated by local youth NGOs is a good practice example which could be replicated in other regions.**

Special attention needs to be put in selecting **the professionals, persons with relevant experience** in dealing with NEETs with fewer opportunities, preferably from local communities. As mentioned in the previous sections above, **local NGOs** are seen to have great potential in reaching the target groups, especially those which deal on grass-root level and involve local NEETs in their activities, representing one of the options to recruit the most suitable persons for this activity. Once recruited, the councilors need to be subject to continuous training and support.

There is a clear understanding that the ProfilPASS for NEETs would be very beneficial in dealing with the target groups and meeting their needs. When put into practice, it will replace all other non-formal tools implemented with relatively questionable level of quality. It will provide comparable data on the competence assessment at national level.

II. GUIDELINES ON UTILIZATION OF PROFILLPASS – KICKSTART YOUR CAREER! IN SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG NEET - INDIVIDUALS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Guidelines for improvement of services for support and empowerment of vulnerable NEET - youth are developed based on the findings of the qualitative study that examined the approaches, practice and challenges in the processes of support offered to vulnerable youth, with emphasis on the NEETs.

The idea behind this document is to highlight the importance and benefits of the utilization of instruments in the processes of fieldwork with vulnerable NEET – youth, as modus to support them in returning to education, training and/or to labour market.

The Guidelines are an essential segment of the qualitative study, having in mind one of its' key findings, that the practitioners working with NEET as a target group (or more specifically with vulnerable youth or youth in general), don't have a systemic, efficient, regular and sustainable approach in empowering youth. At the same time, in most cases when they do utilize methodologies, tools in the process of career guidance and counselling, those mainly aim at solely preparing them for the job/raising their employability.

A further essential impulse is the finding that there are not any practices detected that use assessment of competences as a method for offering support to young disadvantaged people.

The Guidelines aim at responding to, and elaborating the necessity for more comprehensive approaches in the work with NEETs, presenting good practice examples of utilization methodologies such as ProfilPASS, as well as summarizing the benefits, primarily for the NEETs as beneficiaries of the support, but also for the practitioners and their institutions who work with the target group.

The Guidelines give practical insight into the core of the tool and the modalities for its' utilization in counselling work with NEET – youth, for various profiles of institutions and organizations, getting in touch, supporting and empowering this target group on daily basis, in various contexts.

2. ABOUT THE PROFILPASS METHODOLOGY

Origins and theoretical base

ProfilPASS is a developmental instrument for the documentation of competences and abilities gained in non-formal and informal settings through vocational training, voluntary work or leisure time activities. ProfilPASS is a way of empowering individuals and making them aware of their personal strengths. Its efficacy is based on the assumption that many individuals can estimate the value of their competences through critical reflection on their own lives and evaluation of their own potential. It is a formative method based on user self-assessment and supported by professional guidance on a one-on-one basis or in groups.

Its' origins date back in 2006, when, funded by the German Federal ministry of education, the ProfilPASS System was developed by the German Institute of Adult Education, Leibniz Center for Lifelong Learning (DIE), the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF) and the Institute for developmental and structural research, IES, Hannover.

The ProfilPASS is a methodology utilized in processes of counselling and guidance (by definition, it belongs to education counselling as one segment of counselling in general) in a lifelong learning context. It serves as a tool for assessment of one individuals' competences, regardless of where they have been acquired.

There are the **theoretical starting points** of the ProfilPASS concept, which are important to be underlined, in order to gain a better understanding of the tool as such:

- People acquire competences mainly in informal environments

ProfilPASS is based on the idea that each person has developed competences in her or his life that are the basis of their acting in everyday life. Also, it is based on the fact that people learn mostly in informal environments like family and through coping with challenges of the world. The fact that all human beings have competences and that all competences are valuable regardless of where they have been acquired is an important underlying idea of the ProfilPASS.

- The term competence

A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual's knowledge of language, practical IT skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating.

- The importance of accompanying advice and underlying theories in the ProfilPASS

Most people are not very conscious about their competences. They rarely experience a reflection and exploration of their competences. For this reason, it is important to provide accompanying advice and support. In addition to the folder the second important element of the ProfilPASS is therefore the engagement with professional ProfilPASS counsellors who assist people in finding out what competences they have. The ProfilPASS counsellors are trained in a course in which they get to know the philosophy and the underlying theoretical approaches.

The **ProfilPASS system** consists of two elements:

1. The ProfilPASS folder

and

1. Professional ProfilPASS guidance supported by trained advisors.

The **ProfilPASS folder** is a portfolio (workbook, notebook) that identifies and documents an individual's competences in a biographical and systematic manner. This process is accompanied by professional and **qualified guidance**. The counselling is important, and in this case an integral part of the whole process since most people are not very conscious about their skills and competences. They rarely experience a reflection and exploration of their competences. For this reason, it is important to provide accompanying advice and support. The assumption is that individuals can widen their perceptions and identify their competences objectively only with support from experts.

At the end of the counselling process the counselee receives a *certificate of competences*.

Beside the certificate, as an important output, an essential benefit for the counselee is the fact that the guidance during the work on the portfolio contributes toward encouragement of the counselee by influencing the (re)gain and building up of self-confidence, awareness about own worth and overall empowerment.

It is very important to underline, that ProfilPASS is not just a tool by itself. Its' main concept on setting the focus on self-assessment of competences gained through all forms of learning – is an approach in line with ongoing European

policies and trends on highlighting validation of prior learning and underlining that what is valued by the labour market are individuals' competences.

A second, also essential characteristic representing the European dimension of the tool is that the identified competences are structured in accordance with the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning of the European Commission, meaning that the certificate, issued to the counselling candidate gives an overview of the key competences that this person possesses.

Features of ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career!

The ProfilPASS – kickstart your career! has following **features**:

- Adjustments of the content to comply to the life situation, experience and needs of these young adults (e.g. additional materials to support career decisions and application processes)
- Comprehensive layout interventions to make the instrument more attractive and motivating for this target group
- Linguistic simplifications and additional explanations (e.g. through a glossary) to make the instrument accessible to people with a lower educational level
- A narrator who gives instructions, explains exercises and provides useful tips
- Two recurring biographical examples motivate and support through their sample answers and sharing of experience
- Easier navigation through links and color-coding of the chapters
- The counselling process.

The process of consultation with the ProfilPASS – kickstart your career! may be different from case to case depending on the objectives that are agreed upon by the counselee and the counsellor.

At the beginning, the counselee has to be informed about the reasons behind working with the ProfilPASS – kickstart your career! and the individual steps that will be completed should be presented. Clarifying the user's objectives and their expectations regarding the counselling process is another central part. Furthermore, counsellor and counselee should jointly agree on their respective responsibilities in the course of the counselling process. Accordingly, an overall time frame and deadlines will also have to be set up. As a final part of the counselling process, the results and additional targets for the future should be discussed.

3. PROFILPASS – KICKSTART YOUR CAREER! – THE PORTFOLIO AS A MAIN INSTRUMENT AND ITS' SUPPORTING MATERIALS

3.1 Portfolio

A combination of the ProfilPASS and the ProfilPASS for young people was created with additional adjustments of the language, the content, and the layout to match the needs of the target group of NEETs. The new portfolio ProfilPASS – kickstart your career! is available as open access in all German, Bosnian, Macedonian, Serbian, Slovenian and Albanian. This new instrument is especially useful for counsellors from the Balkan region, where tools for assessing competences and vocational orientation are rare and hard to access.

It is very important to stress that the new version of ProfilPASS, was tested in the 5 respective countries, in order to gain insight into the experience of the counsellors on the one hand as well as of the 100 young individuals, on the other. The evaluation of the feedback was a starting point for interventions and further adjustments of the tool.

3.2 Toolkit

The Toolkit was developed in order to support the counsellors' work with NEETs as target group. It features a collection of already existing tools for competence assessment, vocational orientation, empowerment, and upskilling. A total of 27 tools that are suitable for NEETs and available online for free were selected and organized in a user-friendly way. Every tool is briefly presented in a fact sheet that offers a compact overview of the most important information and provides a direct link to the tool. These tools can complement the counselling process with ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! and can be utilized in order to support the counselling.

Name of the tool and author (organisation) give a first orientation.

Short description about the tool and its aim

Brief information about the target group of the tool

This part provides a more detailed description of the key features of the tool.

All mentioned tools are available online. A direct link leads to the tool.

Tools are available in different languages. This can affect the selection of a tool.

Looking for more information - the contact details of the organisation and/or web pages can help

PROFILPASS – KICKSTART YOUR CAREER!
German Institute for Adult Education (project coordinator) This is the product of an Erasmus+ project partnership.

WHAT IS IT?
(Aim of the Tool)

The ProfilPASS – kickstart your career! is the core of the CORE-Toolkit. It supports the systematic assessment and documentation of competences with the aim of developing a competence profile and thus support (further) personal and vocational development, (re-)orientation and the planning of further learning steps.

WHO IS IT FOR?
(Target Group and (pre)conditions for use of the tool)

The ProfilPASS – kickstart your career! addresses young NEET adults who are in need of orientation and counselling. To fit the special situation and needs of this target group the ProfilPASS as an Instrument for competence assessment was adapted in language, content and layout to match the situation and needs of young NEET adults.

KEY FEATURES

By evaluating different areas in (1) **My Life** (life so far, social network, description of a typical day), (2) **My Activities** (e.g. life at home/family/caring for others, hobbies/interests/free time, education, work/volunteering/internships, participation in projects/workshops/courses/trainings, extraordinary circumstances) and (3) **My Qualities**, a competence profile is developed in chapter (4) **All My Competences – a summary**. (5) **My Future** and (6) **My Applications and Documents** are focusing on next steps and how to make good use of the competence profile.

To fit the needs of vulnerable young adults (NEETs) the ProfilPASS – kickstart your career! combines and further adapts parts of the ProfilPASS and the ProfilPASS for young people. Adaptations include:

- **Linguistic simplifications and additional explanations** (e.g. through a glossary) to provide accessibility for NEETs with lower educational levels.
- **Layout adaptations** to make the tool more appealing and motivating for this target group.
- A **moderator** (narrator) who guides the counselee, explains exercises and gives useful tips.
- **NEET-Testimonials** give examples, serve as positive role models and motivation for the work with the ProfilPASS
- **New chapters** to support career decisions and the process of searching and applying for the right job ('Previous job-searching Experience', 'My Career' & 'My Goals and Next Steps', 'My CV', 'My Cover Letter', 'Professional etiquette in networking and in an interview')

TRY THE TOOL
https://core.profilpass-international.eu/index.php?article_id=143&clang=1

LANGUAGES AVAILABLE
German, English, Bosnian, Macedonian, Serbian, Slovenian

FURTHER INFORMATION
<https://core.profilpass-international.eu/>
Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung – Leibniz-Zentrum für Lebenslanges Lernen e.V.
German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning (DIE)
Servicestelle ProfilPASS
Heinemannstraße 12-14 53175 Bonn, GERMANY

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Source: Structure of the fact sheets from the Manual for counsellors', page 10

3.3 Curriculum for counsellors' training

The Curriculum was developed in order to support the professionalization of counsellors who work with ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career!. It describes in detail specific training modules for new counsellors, equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for effective and efficient counselling of young NEET – individuals. It provides guidance and suggestions for the training of counsellors, both in terms of training content and methods.

3.4 Manual for counsellors

The Manual for counsellors provides background information as well as guidelines, suggestions and recommendations on counselling work with ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! and as such it is an excellent supporting material for the counsellor.

All materials produced within the framework of ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! are available as Open Educational Resources (OER) and are downloadable free of charge on the project website.

4. PROFILPASS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

4.1 Background

Through the participation in transnational project cooperation, Lifelong Learning Center from North Macedonia gained organizational experience and expertise for overall work with ProfilPASS, and has been focused on the versions for young NEET – individuals and women with fewer opportunities since 2019.

At the very beginning, the participation in partner cooperation on this topic was a new experience for the local NGO, which over the years, through continuous capacity building, grew into a new dimension of the work and opened perspectives for promotion of ProfilPASS as a tool on national level.

In 2023, Lifelong Learning Center became a representative partner of the German Adult Education association, Leibniz Center for Lifelong Learning (DIE) from Bonn, FR Germany. With the signing of the Cooperation agreement, LLC is authorized to actively act as a promotor, multiplier and facilitator of the measures for utilization of ProfilPASS in North Macedonia.

4.2 Available resources

Lifelong Learning Center as a service point for ProfilPASS on national level, has following resources and capacities:

- Information and materials for ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! in Macedonian (the Portfolio is also available in Albanian)
- Trained counsellors for ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career!
- Certified trainers/multipliers for ProfilPASS – counsellors of young NEETs
- Information and materials for ProfilPASS for women – We can do it! in Macedonian
- Trained counsellors for ProfilPASS for women – We can do it!
- Certified trainers/multipliers for ProfilPASS for women – We can do it!

4.3 Experiences on national level

First steps in the dissemination of ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! on national level were made through the project CARE - Competence Assessment for Reintegration and Empowerment, in the frames of which these Guidelines are being developed.

Over the course of 2023, LLC worked intensively on capacity building of new counsellors for both versions of ProfilPASS – for young NEETs and for women with fewer opportunities, in the frames and for the purposes of ongoing projects of GIZ – North Macedonia. Namely, in this cooperation, LLC was assigned with preparation and delivery of counsellors' trainings for Association for youth work (SMR) and National Federation of Farmers (NFF). As a result of these capacity building activities, 17 participants, representatives of partner organizations of SMR were trained for use of ProfilPASS for young people – Kickstart your career! and 12 participants, representative of partner organizations of NFF for use of ProfilPASS for women – We can do it!.

4.4 Experience of capacity building for Association for youth work (SMR)

In this context, the positive experience in the capacity building of new counsellors for SMR represents a good practice example on the very first beginnings of dissemination of information and transfer of know-how, as a first step into introduction of ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! on national level.

Namely, the Association of youth work, as an umbrella organization, offered the counsellors' training for its' member organizations countrywide. Seventeen interested representatives – experienced youth workers from across the country, had the possibility to gain competences in counselling with ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career!.

Having in mind that all these participants are practitioners who work with young people on daily basis, the perspectives for utilization of the tool in their future work offers potential for:

- Extension of the offer of support services in the institution/organization
- Improvement of the support and empowerment offered to the young people in the daily field work of the practitioners

5. PERSPECTIVES OF EFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF THE METHODOLOGY AS A SUPPORT SERVICE FOR YOUNG NEET – INDIVIDUALS

The young adults in the category NEET show a great variety in their specific situations and needs, but they also share their needs for **guidance and support**. Many NEETs had negative experiences during education, lack formal education qualifications, struggle to find their place in the labor market and must deal with rejections.

Therefore, they all can profit from professional counselling and guidance in which their non-formally and informally acquired competences are evaluated and made aware to them. This process of guided self-reflection can foster their self-esteem and empowerment as well as help them to find the best vocation or education/training that matches their competences and personal strengths.

Guidance and counselling, and more over support and empowerment are not easy tasks. Being a practitioner in this segment is a complex and responsible role, in which the utilization of methodologically proven, systemic and comprehensive tools can be of great importance and can be helpful not only for the beneficiary but also to the counsellor as a carrier and leader in the process. Further, for the various profiles of institutions and organizations working with young NEETs as target groups through different types of measures for support, the introduction of ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! as a tool integrated into the counselling and guidance services can improve the overall improvement of the support services.

An overview of benefits of utilization of ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! for all parties:

Individual (young NEET – person)	Professional (practitioners-youth counsellor/ youth workers etc.)	Institutional (state institution/NGO and other providers of services for young vulnerable people)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Getting to know own self – Raising awareness and learning about own self – Empowerment – Encouragement – Self-awareness on own worth – Building self-confidence – Improvement of the own situation – Vision about the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvement of personal skills and competences in performing counselling and guidance to NEETs – Utilization of a methodologically and systematically proven set of tools for counselling and guidance work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tool for work with vulnerable categories of NEETs as beneficiaries-target groups – Suitable for all types of institutions – Improvement of field work – Improvement of measures for reintegration and employability of NEET youth – Improvement of (re)integration and return to education / raising participation in education and training

6. A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR INTRODUCTION OF PROFILPASS – KICKSTART YOUR CAREER! IN YOUR WORK WITH NEETS

The utilization of ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! is flexible, open and adaptable. Therefore, it can be organized and offered in different contexts, forms and modalities in line with the needs and framework conditions, by various types of institutions and organizations active in the support of NEET – youth.

If you are interested in working with ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career!, here are the necessary steps you need to make in order to prepare for successful utilization of the methodology:

Step 1: Plan

The planning involves the vision on the benefits you see in the ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! for your work as well as for your target group.

Consider to think about following topics/questions:

- What benefits do I see in the introduction of ProfilPASS for me as a professional / for my organization?
- How can the use of this tool improve the support/counselling and guidance services offered by myself / my institution-organization?
- What resources do I / my institution need?

Step 2: Get in touch with Lifelong Learning Center

A second, essential segment of the preparation and a precondition for introduction of counselling with ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career! as a new service offer, is capacity building of human resources will be required.

Therefore, get in touch with the LLC as a service point where you can arrange and receive counsellors' training.

Step 3: Disseminate/ Promote / Reach out to the target group

Third vital segment of your strategy for introduction of the methodology into your work with NEETis to develop and implement a plan on how you can disseminate the information to the young disadvantaged persons from your environment about the counselling with ProfilPASS – Kickstart your career!

For all questions, information or materials please don't hesitate to contact Lifelong Learning Center.

Additional information can be obtain on: www.profilpass.mk

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ANNEX 1 LIST OF INTERVIEWS / CALENDAR OF QUALITATIVE SURVEY

	Institution	Plan region	Name of interviewee	Position	Date and time
1	Youth and Community Center - Gostivar	Polog	Elton Jashari	Director	07.12, 09.30 – 10.30, in person
2	Employment Service Agency - Gostivar	Polog	Havsa Agai	Associate	07.12, 12.00 – 13.00, in person
3	Center for Social Work - Gostivar	Polog	Darko Mioviski	Director	07.12, 14.00 – 15.00, in person
4	Community Development Institute - Tetovo	Polog	Marijana Arizankoska	Project coordinator	12.12, 10.30 – 11.30, online
5	Municipality Gostivar	Polog	Azra Nuredini Sadiku	Youth officer	12.12, 12.00 – 13.00, online
6	Open Civic University for Lifelong Learning - Tetovo	Polog	Slagjana Josifoska	Associate	14.12, 12.30 – 13.30, online
7	Regional Center for Vocational Education and Training “Mosa Pijade” - Tetovo	Polog	Svetlana Miloshevska	Deputy director	14.12, 19.00 – 20.30, online
8	Employment Service Agency, Project: “Activation of vulnerable groups in labor market”	Skopski	Elena Mishevska	Career counsellor, mentor	14.12, response in written
9	National Agency for European Education Programs and Mobility	Skopski	Jovica Mitevski	Head / Strategic partnerships in the field youth	15.12, 11.00 – 12.00, in person
10	National Agency for European Education Programs and Mobility Euroguidance Centre	Skopski	Gjorgji Stankovski	Coordination of European network	15.12, 12.00 – 13.00 in person
11	Association of Youth Work	Skopski	Dragana Mitrovikj	Secretariat member	15.12, 17.30 – 18.30, online
12	Public Institution Adult Education Centre	Skopski	Mevlane Nexhipi Zylfiqari	Head of unit for Quality Assurance, Development and Cooperation	18.12, 11.00 – 12.00, in person
13	Office of the Prime Minister Government of Republic of North Macedonia	Skopski	Gjorgji Tasev	Associate for Youth and Youth Policy to Prime Minister	15.01.2024, 10.00 – 11.00, In person

14	Regional Center for vocational Education and Training "Vanco Pitosheski" - Ohrid	Southwest	Danica Skrcheska	Psychologist	21.12, 11.30 – 12.30 online
15	Youth Center - Ohrid	Southwest	Angela Miteska	Youth worker	21.12, 13.00 – 14.00 online
16	Association of career counsellors ASK	Southwest	Marija Kovacheska	Career counsellor	22.12, 14.00 – 15.00 online
17	Municipality of Struga	Southwest	Emina Rustemoska	Youth officer	26.12, 13.30 – 14.30 online
18	Workers' university Kuzman Shapkarev Ohrid	Southwest	Marija Oracheska	Director	27.12, 11.00 – 12.00 Online
19	Local Youth Council	Southwest	Igor Josifoski	President	10.01, 13.00 – 14.00, online
20	Center for Intercultural Dialogue - Kumanovo	Northeast	Kamelija Krstikj	Youth worker	21.12, 16.00 – 17.00, online
21	Municipality of Kriva Palanka	Northeast	Daniela Miloshevska	Youth officer	26.12, 9.00 – 10.00, online
22	Municipality of Kriva Palanka	Northeast	Antonio Davitkovski	Head of unit	26.12, 11.00, phone call
23	NGO Kreator	Northeast	Katerina Dimovska	Project coordinator	12.01, 12.00 – 13.00, online
24	Regional Center for vocational Education and Training "Kiro Burnaz" - Kumanovo	Northeast	Vesna Trajkovska	Director	11.01, 10.00 – 11.00, online

ANNEX 2 INSTRUMENTS – QUESTIONNAIRES

Instruments

For a systematic and structured approach in the conduction of the interviews with relevant institutions/ organizations, following types of questionnaires will be used in order to generate a constructive and informative discussion and exchanges on questions and topics of relevance.

Instrument 1: Interview questionnaire for state institutions on regional level

- Q1: What are the policies, strategic framework and measures implemented for support and empowerment of vulnerable youth, with focus on NEET-category?
- Q2: Are there policies, strategic documents etc. developed on regional/local level?
- Q3: Are there any protocols/models/questionnaires utilized to determine the profile of vulnerability of the young individuals – beneficiaries of the support services?
- Q4: What is the common profile/characteristics of the vulnerable youth in the municipality/plan region? What are their challenges?
- Q5: What approaches are in place in the support to the vulnerable youth?
- Q6: Is there career guidance and counselling and who is it conducted by?
- Q7: What is the goal and role of the counselling and guidance?
- Q8: Are there any tools utilized in the support in general and especially in the career guidance and counselling?
- Q9: What are the challenges in the processes of guidance and counselling of vulnerable youth?
- Q10: Are there any competence assessment tools that you know about, such as ProfilPASS?

Instrument 2: Interview questionnaire for organisations – practitioners on regional level

- Q1: What are the goals of your organization related to support of vulnerable youth, especially NEET - category? How do you involve vulnerable youth? Current ongoing projects?
- Q2: What are the challenges of the vulnerable youth in your local community/municipality/region?
- Q3: What do you think are the core challenges of the policy implementation on systemic level in the municipality/region?
- Q4: Are there other organizations in the local community/region supporting vulnerable youth/NEETs? If yes, which are they?
- Q5: Do you have cooperation with other organizations and/or state institutions?
- Q6: What approaches are in place in the support to the vulnerable youth?
- Q7: Is there career guidance and counselling, who is it conducted by and how?
- Q8: What is the goal and role of the counselling and guidance?
- Q9: Are there any tools utilized in the support in general and especially in the career guidance and counselling?
- Q10: What are the challenges in the processes of guidance and counselling of vulnerable youth?
- Q11: Are there any competence assessment tools that you know about, such as ProfilPASS?

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