

Back on Track - Support for young NEETs in rural areas

Fostering the (re)integration of NEETs in rural areas into education, training, and the labour market by increasing their basic skills, resilience, and digital inclusion.

Date of creation

2024

Description

In 2023, 10.4% of young people in the EU aged 15 to 29 were not in employment, education, or training (NEET), which was particularly problematic in rural regions. This situation negatively impacts the well-being of NEETs and threatens the social and economic sustainability of rural areas. The EU has set a goal to reduce the NEET rate to below 9% by 2030 and to revitalise rural regions.

The Back on Track project was developed to address these challenges. It aims to reach, motivate, and integrate inactive young people. Sustainable methods will be established to integrate rural NEETs, provide individual support, and improve their basic and social skills as well as their educational attainment. A special focus is placed on digital inclusion to provide virtual access to the advantages of urban living and thereby enhance the attractiveness of rural areas.

Beneficiaries

 **Discouraged and disengaged young people**

NEETs living in remote areas

Countries

 Austria	 Bosnia and Herzegovina	 Bulgaria	 Czechia
		 Germany	 Hungary
 Romania	 Serbia	 Slovakia	 Slovenia

Education level and sector

 **Lower secondary general education**

Adult learning, non-formal adult education.

Level of implementation / Scope

 **Provider level**  **Local level**

Back on Track collaborates with stakeholders dedicated to the inclusion of NEETs at both regional and national levels, focusing on organisations such as NGOs, VET centres, youth centres, and educational institutions.

Aims of policy/initiative

The project plans to establish a transnational stakeholder network, develop an outreach strategy, implement a mentoring programme and create a digital training model.

Project objectives:

- Improving effective access to NEETs in rural areas;
- Promoting the integration of NEETs in rural areas into general and vocational education or the labour market;
- Empowering NEETs in rural areas to develop core competences and resilience necessary for their personal and professional development.

Features and types of activities implemented

The Back on Track project supports rural NEETs by providing tailored outreach, mentorship, and digital training:

1. Effective Outreach and Engagement with NEETs

The project focuses on reaching and engaging NEETs by creating the Back on Track Strategy. This strategy is built on insights gathered from extensive surveys and focus groups involving NEETs, trainers, and industry experts. The goal is to understand NEETs' specific challenges, aspirations, and barriers to education or employment, ensuring that the support offered is relevant and impactful. The Back on Track Strategy will outline best practices and methods to engage NEETs effectively and address their unique needs, providing a foundation for meaningful engagement and support.

2. Mentoring Programme for Integration into Education, Training, or Employment

A key focus is helping rural NEETs integrate into education, training programmes, or the job market. This involves a dedicated mentoring programme where mentors are specially trained to provide personalised guidance and counselling to NEETs. The mentorship focuses on building relationships of trust, offering career advice, and navigating the challenges NEETs face. By developing a strong support system, this programme enhances NEETs' chances of successfully transitioning to educational or professional pathways.

3. Digital Education for Core Skills and Resilience

To help rural NEETs gain central skills, the project offers an online training course designed to cover core competences essential for personal and professional growth. This course is tailored to NEETs' needs, with modules on topics like digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, and resilience. By focusing on these areas, the project aims to build NEETs' confidence and adaptability, equipping them with skills that will help them thrive in an evolving job market and face future challenges with resilience.

Resources

The Back on Track Project is funded by the EU Interreg Danube Region Programme with a total project budget of EUR 2.473.610, including Interreg funds of EUR 1.978.888.

Project coordinator:

ÖJAB (Austria)

Project partner:

ipcenter (Austria), YESForum (Germany), DEX IC (Czech Republic), PRIZMA (Slovenia), ADEL (Slovakia), NERDA & MPTK (Bosnia-Herzegovina), CCIS & Philanthropy (Serbia), SZ Reda (Bulgaria), ADR Sud Muntenia (Romania) und Pannon Novum & HICS (Hungary).

Evaluation of the measure

Not available yet.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

Not available yet.

Success factors

Back on Track operates on multiple interconnected levels, each reinforcing the other to ensure the project's success and sustainability:

Collaborating with Key Stakeholders

The project partners with a diverse range of stakeholders who work directly with NEETs, such as mentors, NGOs, VET centres, and youth organisations. These stakeholders serve as multipliers, amplifying the project's impact during its implementation and sustaining its outcomes long after its conclusion.

Fostering Holistic Development

The project addresses the multifaceted needs of NEETs by promoting emotional well-being, social inclusion, and skills development. This is achieved through the creation of a comprehensive mentoring programme, innovative training modules, and a tailored curriculum designed to equip NEETs with practical skills and build their confidence.

Peer-Led, Needs-Based Design

The project closely collaborates with current and former NEETs to ensure that all project outputs are responsive to their actual needs and lived experiences. This peer-led approach enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the mentoring and training resources.

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Related intervention approaches



Outreach



Skills development



**NEETs living in remote areas
- Bridging the geographic
divide**



**Preparing NEETs to access
green jobs**

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