



SEQ Elevate

Skills for
the Future

WP2

General Transnational Report

Version 3, 03/2026

Responsible partner: University of Macedonia

Step up. Stand Out.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Deliverable information	
WP & Title of deliverable	WP2 General Transnational Report
Version	3
Due date	March 2026
Dissemination level (public, restricted, confidential)	public
Responsible partner	University of Macedonia
Quality Reviewer(s)	All partners

List of abbreviations	
EU	European Union
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SEQ	Social and Emotional Skills
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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Executive Summary

This General Transnational Report presents the consolidated results of the WP2 research activities of the SEQ Elevate project. The objective of WP2 was to identify, analyse and benchmark the social and emotional skills needs of NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youth, together with labour market expectations and policy directions, in order to inform the construction of an effective, evidence-based SEQ Learning Model and Validation Framework. The research was conceived with the intention of providing a scientific basis for the practical model design decisions, with the aim of ensuring that the future training and validation system will respond directly to the real learner needs and employer requirements.

The research encompassed four partner countries — Greece, Cyprus, Belgium, and Germany — and incorporated NEET youth surveys, labour market stakeholder surveys, focus groups, and an EU-level policy review. Utilising completed responses as the primary analytic base, the dataset encompasses 69 NEET youth respondents, 36 stakeholder respondents, and 16 focus group participants, thereby providing a balanced and triangulated evidence base across youth, employers, and practitioners. In addition to the national focus groups, a transnational expert focus group session was organised, bringing together nine experts from various European countries and EU-level networks representing the social economy, adult education, vocational training, and youth inclusion sectors. The multi-source structure of the study increases reliability and allows for cross-validation of patterns across respondent types and national contexts.

Across countries, several core cross-country patterns emerge. NEET youth encounter a multifaceted set of obstacles, including a paucity of work experience, diminished self-assurance, and heightened stress and anxiety in professional environments, compounded by a dearth of guidance and a limited support network. Research consistently indicates that stakeholders assign a higher rating to social and emotional skills gaps than to technical skill gaps at entry level. The findings of this study indicate a clear preference among young people and stakeholders for learning formats that are short, practical and scenario-based, as opposed to those that are theory-heavy.

Furthermore, there is a strong acceptance of micro-credentials and skill badges when these are linked to demonstrated competence. Focus groups have been shown to reinforce the notion that confidence and behavioural readiness gaps are often more decisive than knowledge gaps.

The top five skill gaps that were identified across the datasets are professional communication, teamwork in structured settings, reliability and responsibility behaviours, adaptability and stress management, and initiative/self-confidence. These competences have repeatedly been identified as being associated with hiring decisions, workplace integration, and retention, particularly in social economy and service-oriented roles. The evidence further demonstrates that long-term disengaged NEETs necessitate confidence-first activation pathways, while migrants and early school leavers require adapted delivery formats.

Key validation and micro-credential recommendations include the issuance of badges per skill cluster, the utilisation of observable performance criteria and micro-evidence tasks, and the implementation of a self-validation layer through SEQ Comp Cards. It is imperative that credentials adhere to stackable logic and employ employer-readable descriptions, thereby ensuring that competence signals are transparent and can be effectively utilised in recruitment contexts. The findings of the present study lend support to a modular, practice-based, validated learning model that is aligned with EU micro-credential, lifelong learning, and non-formal validation policy directions.

Methodology & Data Sources

This transnational analysis is based on a structured mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative evidence collected across four partner countries: The countries under discussion are Greece, Cyprus, Belgium (including experts from various European countries) and Germany. The objective of the present study was to develop a reliable and practice-oriented understanding of the social and emotional skills needs of NEET youth and the expectations of labour market actors, in order to inform the design of the SEQ Learning Model and Validation Framework.

The primary data sources comprised four complementary sources. Firstly, national questionnaires addressed to NEET youth gathered self-reported data on participants' background characteristics, duration of disengagement from employment or education, perceived barriers to labour market entry, self-assessment of social and emotional skills, learning preferences, and motivation factors. The surveys in question yielded comparable quantitative indicators across countries, whilst also incorporating open-ended questions that provided short qualitative insights into personal experiences and perceived needs.

Secondly, a series of questionnaires were disseminated to relevant stakeholders within the labour market, including employers, VET and training providers, NGOs, social economy actors, and public authorities. The instruments utilised in this study concentrated on perceived skills gaps among NEET youth, the relative importance of social and emotional skills in comparison to technical skills, recruitment and assessment practices, validation preferences, and openness to micro-credentials. This dataset facilitated cross-comparison between youth self-perception and employer/practitioner expectations.

Thirdly, each country conducted at least one focus group with representatives from the social economy and youth support ecosystem. Focus groups were convened to explore a range of themes, including work-readiness challenges, priority social and emotional competences, preferred

training formats, validation and recognition mechanisms, and practical co-design ideas. The ensuing discourse yielded qualitative evidence that enriches the survey findings with depth, explanation and contextual nuances, thereby facilitating the interpretation of patterns that remain opaque in the context of closed questions. In addition, a transnational expert focus group session brought together nine specialists from different European countries and EU-level networks representing the social economy, adult learning organisations, and vocational training providers. The discussion highlighted recurring barriers faced by NEET youth across Europe, such as low self-confidence, limited professional networks, and difficulties navigating complex labour market environments. Experts also emphasised the importance of mentoring-based support, practical experiential learning, and flexible modular training structures, which informed the methodological design of the SEQ Learning Model and its scenario-based learning approach.

A fourth aspect of the review involved an examination of the EU's policy framework and strategic documents with regard to the inclusion of NEET individuals, youth employability, micro-credentials, the validation of non-formal learning, and the utilisation of digital and gamified educational approaches. The present review provides the policy benchmark layer of the analysis, allowing empirical findings to be interpreted against current European priorities and standards.

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-method approach. Quantitative survey data were utilised to identify trends, distributions, and recurring patterns across countries and respondent groups. Subsequently, the qualitative inputs derived from open survey responses and focus group discussions were utilised for the following purposes: interpretive enrichment, clarification of root causes, and identification of practical design implications. The integration of responses from the young NEETs, stakeholder perspectives, and the analysis of moderated group discussions enhances the robustness and usability of the conclusions, ensuring that the resulting recommendations are both evidence-based and operationally relevant.

Participation Overview

The data collection process was executed across four partner countries: Greece, Cyprus, Belgium, and Germany. Utilising a uniform research framework and harmonised tools ensured the consistency of the data collection process across all four countries. Participation encompassed three respondent groups in each country: NEET youth, labour market stakeholders, and focus group participants from the social economy and youth support ecosystem. For survey-based instruments, the present analysis uses completed responses as the primary analytic base, while also noting total submissions where relevant in order to preserve transparency regarding response patterns. In addition, a transnational focus group brought together nine experts from different European countries and EU-level organisations active in the social economy and adult learning sectors, providing complementary insights into NEET inclusion challenges and training needs across diverse European contexts.

Table 1. Participants by Country

Country	NEET respondents	Stakeholders - respondents	Focus Group participants
Greece	21	16	5
Cyprus	22	10	5
Belgium	-	-	9
Germany	26	10	6

The resulting dataset constitutes a balanced multi-country evidence base, combining youth self-assessment data with employer and practitioner perspectives. This structure facilitates robust estimation of parameters across diverse groups of respondents, including NEET youth, labour market actors, and field practitioners, thereby enabling cross-validation of patterns and identification of any discrepancies. Furthermore, the focus groups furnish substantial qualitative

corroboration for the survey findings, thereby contributing contextual interpretation and practical insight that serves to enhance the reliability and usability of the conclusions for the SEQ Learning Model design.

Cross-Country Benchmarking — NEET Youth Results

The cross-country benchmarking of NEET youth responses from Greece, Cyprus, and Germany reveals a consistent pattern of combined structural and personal barriers to labour market integration. While the intensity and distribution of specific factors vary by country, the overall profile is remarkably aligned: NEET youth encounter a combination of opportunity constraints and social-emotional readiness challenges. The convergence of findings across three distinct national datasets serves to increase confidence that the observed trends are not merely local anomalies but rather shared characteristics of the target group.

Labour Market Exclusion Duration

Across all three countries, respondents to the NEET are distributed across short-, medium-, and long-term disengagement categories, rather than being concentrated in a single duration group. Each national dataset includes a group that has been outside employment or education for less than one year, often representing recent school leavers or those with interrupted early work attempts. A second segment falls into the one to two-year range, and typically shows signs of repeated unsuccessful transitions. A third, clearly visible cluster reports a duration of disengagement in excess of two years, indicating a more entrenched state of exclusion.

The cross-country pattern is therefore mixed but not random: short-term and medium-term NEETs coexist with a stable long-term subgroup in all three cases. This distribution has direct design implications. The argument is made against a single linear training pathway, proposing instead a modular entry structure. In this structure, learners are able to enter at different levels of readiness and progress through staged, stackable units. This is in opposition to the more rigid programme sequence of a single, linear training pathway.

Main Barriers to Employment

A comparison of reported barriers across Greece, Cyprus, and Germany reveals the presence of several factors that appear with consistent and high frequency. The most common obstacle to entry is a paucity of work experience, a circumstance often characterised as a 'circular trap' in the literature: the existence of a job is predicated on experience, which in turn is conditional on the existence of a job. Concurrently, NEET youth frequently report diminished confidence and reduced motivation, particularly following repeated rejection or unstable work episodes. As is well documented, communication difficulties are frequently cited, especially in professional or interview settings. Similarly, stress and anxiety linked to evaluation and performance pressure are also commonly reported. Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents highlighted constrained access to comprehensive guidance and reliable information concerning pathways and opportunities. Language barriers manifest in all datasets, yet they are more pronounced in Germany and Cyprus among respondents with a migrant background.

The findings, when considered as a whole, demonstrate the simultaneous operation of structural and psychological barriers. The existence of opportunity gaps, skills gaps and emotional readiness gaps is well-documented, and the interaction between these factors has been demonstrated to be a reinforcing phenomenon. Consequently, training responses that focus exclusively on technical or emotional aspects are unlikely to be adequate. Programmes must deliberately address both competence development and emotional preparedness for labour market participation.

Self-Assessed SEL Skills

A comparative analysis of self-assessment of social and emotional learning (SEL) competences reveals a consistent ranking structure across the three countries. It has been demonstrated that skills such as teamwork, empathy and general collaboration tend to be evaluated at a medium to relatively higher level by the subjects themselves. These competencies are frequently associated

with routine social interaction and informal group settings. Conversely, lower ratings are concentrated in areas such as leadership and initiative, stress management, professional communication, and personal confidence/autonomy. These competencies are more closely associated with formal responsibility, decision-making, and performance under pressure.

A noteworthy nuance emerges in the German dataset: NEET respondents frequently assign a moderate rating to their SEL competences, yet assign a lower relative importance to these skills in comparison to the manner in which stakeholders do so. This discrepancy may be indicative of an awareness gap, rather than a deliberate dismissal of the challenges faced, but rather an underestimation of the relevance of the labour market. From a learning design perspective, this suggests that the model should not only cultivate SEL competencies but also make their value visible and explicit to learners through reflection, feedback, and employer-linked validation signals.

Cross-Country Benchmarking — Stakeholder Results

The stakeholder datasets from Greece, Cyprus, and Germany demonstrate a high level of consistency in the perception of employability barriers among NEET youth by labour market actors. Despite the presence of discrepancies in sectoral composition and organisational size across countries, a notable alignment is observed in the direction of responses. There is a broad consensus among stakeholders that social and emotional competences are not peripheral but central to successful labour market participation. Furthermore, there is a general consensus that current gaps in these areas materially affect hiring decisions, workplace integration, and retention.

Perceived Gap

Across all three partner countries, stakeholders have identified a significant discrepancy in the development of SEL. The majority of responses are concentrated in the upper range of the rating scales utilised in the surveys, indicating a pronounced gap in this domain. It is evident from the analysis of national datasets that there is an absence of any indication of a generally low perceived gap. This pattern has been observed across various employer groups, training providers, NGOs, and public-sector actors, suggesting that the perception is not confined to a specific sector but rather pervasive within the system as a whole. In qualitative comments and focus group discussions, stakeholders frequently describe SEL deficits as more limiting than technical skill shortages at entry level.

Furthermore, there is also strong cross-country overlap in the skills most often identified as lacking. The same cluster of competencies is observed to recur: communication, teamwork, reliability, adaptability, stress management, and initiative. These competencies are associated with day-to-day professional conduct, collaborative efforts, and the ability to manage demanding circumstances, rather than formal credentials. The recurrence of these needs across three national

contexts suggests the presence of a stable benchmark profile of priority SEL needs for the target group.

A consistent pattern emerges when comparing stakeholder and youth datasets: employer and practitioner assessments of the SEL gap are typically more severe than youth self-assessments. This divergence indicates that part of the observed discrepancy may be attributable to perceptual differences and self-awareness. Consequently, the design of training should incorporate structured reflective and diagnostic elements, thereby enabling learners to compare self-perception with observed performance and external feedback, as opposed to relying on self-rating alone.

Recruitment & Validation Practices

Stakeholder responses across the three partner countries indicate an increasing consideration of social and emotional skills during the recruitment process. However, assessment practices remain inconsistent. It is evident that a number of organisations employ structured interviews or scenario-based questions in their assessment procedures. However, a significant proportion of organisations continue to rely on informal judgement, conversational impressions, or trial-period observation. This engenders variability in the evaluation of SEL competencies, thereby signifying an absence of standardised, reliable assessment instruments in contemporary hiring procedures.

Concurrently, there is a robust and persistent endorsement for the implementation of more structured validation mechanisms. Across all three countries, stakeholders have expressed positive attitudes towards micro-credentials, skill badges and other forms of compact recognition, provided that they are grounded in demonstrated performance. The optimal characteristics of validation are transparent and consistent: it should be straightforward to comprehend, pragmatic in its approach, and capable of being substantiated through observable evidence. Stakeholders have indicated a preference for concise, competence-based signals that can be readily applied in the workplace, as opposed to abstract or overly academic certification. This consensus provides a solid foundation

for designing the SEQ Validation Framework around transparent criteria, task-based assessment, and employer-readable credential descriptions.

Focus Group Cross-Country Analysis

The focus groups conducted in Greece, Cyprus, Belgium and Germany contribute to the survey findings through their qualitative depth, thereby facilitating a more nuanced understanding of how skills gaps are experienced and interpreted in real-world settings. Despite the fact that each group reflected its own national labour market context, the discussions demonstrated strong thematic convergence. Participants repeatedly returned to practical readiness, confidence, and behavioural competences as decisive factors for NEET youth integration into work, often more decisive than formal knowledge alone.

In addition to the national focus groups, the research phase also benefited from a transnational expert focus group that brought together nine specialists from different European countries and EU-level networks active in the social economy, adult learning, and vocational education sectors. It provided a broader European perspective on NEET inclusion challenges, training approaches, and validation mechanisms.

Across all focus groups, participants highlighted that the predominant barrier is not a lack of information or technical expertise, but rather an absence of confidence and self-assurance. It is frequently observed that young people can be described as exhibiting signs of hesitancy, as a result of repeated experiences of rejection, and as lacking clarity on how to present themselves in professional contexts. This pattern has been observed to recur in the remarks of stakeholders and practitioners, as well as in youth-focused organisations. The implication is that learning models must actively rebuild confidence through structured success experiences, rather than simply transmitting content.

The experts who participated in the focus group with people from various European countries highlighted that young people in Europe who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) often operate within highly complex and uncertain environments. These environments are characterised by limited networks, fragile social contexts and low confidence, which significantly

restrict their ability to engage with training or employment opportunities. They emphasised that many young people underestimate their informal experience and struggle to recognise their transferable skills, which reduces their ability to present themselves effectively in the labour market.

Participants in the focus groups repeatedly highlighted behaviours that are indicative of everyday work-readiness, including punctuality, reliability, communication style and response to feedback, as being decisive for both hiring and retention. These behaviours were characterised as observable and trainable, yet frequently underdeveloped among disengaged youth. The emphasis was not on achieving perfection, but rather on demonstrating predictable and responsible participation in team settings. This underscores the necessity for training units that are explicitly designed to cultivate behavioural competencies and workplace routines, as opposed to the assumption that these qualities will inherently manifest.

There was a consensus that learning formats based on simulations are more effective for this target group than those that rely heavily on theoretical instruction. Participants from all the focus groups have reported that abstract teaching on communication or teamwork has limited efficacy unless it is paired with realistic scenarios. The utilisation of simulated scenarios facilitates the concretisation of expectations and enables the execution of safe experimentation. Consequently, practice-oriented formats were regarded not as a mere adjunct, but as the primary instructional modality for the cultivation of social and emotional competencies.

Employers and social economy actors highlighted that they place greater value on demonstrated behaviour than on declared competence. Candidates who can demonstrate their aptitude in realistic situations are favoured over those who merely list their academic achievements. This preference is directly linked to the concept of validation design, which asserts that assessment should be based on performance tasks, scenarios, and observed interaction. It is widely accepted that practical evidence, even when presented in concise and structured exercises, is considered more credible than purely descriptive certification.

Across all the focus groups, several practical methods received repeated support:

- Role play exercises
- Job shadowing experiences
- Mock interviews
- Scenario-based tasks

Participants noted that these formats allow learners to rehearse difficult situations, receive feedback, and gradually reduce anxiety. Furthermore, they serve to establish a connection between the training received and the expectations that are prevalent within the workplace. It is important to note that such methods were regarded as advantageous not only in terms of skill acquisition but also in fostering motivation and engagement, particularly among learners who had previously experienced setbacks in their school education.

While the core themes were found to be shared, it was also evident that each country focus group added a distinct emphasis. In Germany, participants more frequently highlighted the role of financial incentives and tangible rewards in motivating participation and completion, suggesting that engagement mechanisms may need a stronger economic signal. In Cyprus, there was a more explicit focus on migrant integration, language barriers, and recognition of prior skills, reflecting local demographic realities. In the Greek context, discussions highlighted confidence, stress, and emotional pressure as predominant themes, with participants articulating discouragement and anxiety as significant impediments to activation.

EU Policy Alignment

The cross-country evidence derived from questionnaires and focus groups is in alignment with key EU policy directives pertaining to NEET inclusion, skills development, and contemporary learning pathways. In addition to the national research activities, the project incorporated an EU-level focus group organised and facilitated by DIESIS Network, bringing together nine experts from European social economy organisations, adult learning networks, and training providers to discuss structural barriers affecting NEET youth and the types of learning interventions that can effectively support their inclusion. The discussion provided a policy-oriented perspective on the research findings and helped connect field evidence with existing European policy frameworks on skills, inclusion, and lifelong learning.

Firstly, the robust stakeholder demand for straightforward, credible recognition mechanisms, and the favourable youth attitude towards certificates and badges, directly correspond to the EU micro-credentials approach. This approach promotes concise, transparent, and quality-assured learning units that can be accumulated over time. In practice, this approach endorses the design choice of modular micro-units linked to clear learning outcomes and assessment criteria, as opposed to long, single-track programmes. During the EU-level focus group, participants similarly emphasised the importance of recognition tools that make learning visible and portable, particularly for young people whose educational or professional pathways are fragmented and often not formally recognised.

Secondly, the repeated emphasis on short, accessible training formats and the need for re-engagement pathways is connected to the broader lifelong learning strategy and the logic of the European Union's Youth Guarantee interventions. The extant evidence suggests that a significant proportion of NEETs require flexible entry points, confidence-building steps, and support to progress gradually. This mirrors EU priorities around activation, inclusion, and progression into employment, education, or training through tailored pathways. The EU-level expert discussion also highlighted that many NEET youth operate within complex and uncertain environments

characterised by fragile social contexts, limited networks, and low confidence, reinforcing the need for progressive learning pathways that combine mentoring, coaching, and practical skill development.

Thirdly, the preference for practical learning, role-play, simulations, and evidence of competence is strongly consistent with the EU policy emphasis on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. It is noteworthy that stakeholders have repeatedly signalled that "proof" is of greater significance than theoretical statements of ability. This aligns with EU approaches that encourage recognition of competence acquired outside traditional classroom settings. This lends further support to the notion of performance-based assessment and the utilisation of tools such as SEQ Comp Cards, which facilitate self-validation and the systematic collection of evidence. Experts participating in the EU-level focus group similarly stressed that employers increasingly value demonstrated behaviour and real-life problem-solving capacity rather than formal credentials alone, particularly within the social economy sector where collaboration, adaptability, and communication are essential.

Finally, the interest in digital tools as complementary learning supports, alongside the preference for interactive experiences, is consistent with the EU's direction on digital and innovative pedagogy, including gamified learning. Whilst face-to-face delivery remains important across countries, the evidence supports a blended model where digital and gamified elements enhance engagement, provide repetition and feedback, and improve accessibility for learners with mobility, time, or language constraints. Participants in the EU-level focus group further highlighted the potential of interactive digital tools, gamified learning activities, and scenario-based exercises to increase engagement among NEET learners and to support the development of social and emotional competences in safe, practice-oriented environments.

This mapping demonstrates a high level of policy consistency: field evidence points towards practical, modular, validated learning, while EU policy frameworks promote exactly those mechanisms for inclusion and employability.

Design Recommendations — SEQ Learning Model

The combined evidence from questionnaires and focus groups across Greece, Cyprus, and Germany points towards a consistent set of practical design rules for the SEQ Learning Model. Participants from multiple countries identified a consensus on the necessity for concise, structured, practice-oriented learning that fosters both social-emotional competencies and observable employability behaviours. In addition to the national findings, these design considerations are reinforced by the insights generated during the EU-level expert focus group organised by DIESIS Network, where practitioners from European social economy organisations and adult learning networks emphasised the importance of experiential learning, mentoring support, and visible skill recognition for NEET inclusion pathways. The following recommendations are derived from the analysis of cross-country benchmarking results, which are then translated into operational design directions. The present analysis is intentionally concise, with detailed specifications to be developed in the methodological framework of the SEQ Learning Model.

Learning Architecture

The pedagogical structure should be organised around micro-units focused on clearly defined skills, rather than broad thematic courses. Cross-country findings indicate that NEET learners demonstrate a higher level of engagement with contained, goal-oriented modules that result in quantifiable progress. It is recommended that instructional units are designed with a time frame of 1–2 hours in mind, with the objective of facilitating flexibility and mitigating the potential for cognitive and emotional overload. Activities should be scenario-based, utilising realistic workplace and social-economy situations, since focus group participants consistently rated simulations and applied exercises as more effective than theoretical instruction. The European-level focus group further confirmed that practice-oriented learning environments—where young people can experiment, make mistakes, and receive structured feedback—are particularly effective in helping NEET youth build confidence and recognise their own abilities. The architecture should

also support progressive difficulty, enabling learners to start with confidence-building basics and move gradually toward more demanding interaction and decision-making tasks. It is imperative that each unit integrates SEL competencies with concrete employability behaviours.

Delivery Format

Delivery of the Social and Emotional Skills (SEQ) Learning model should follow a blended format, combining in-person interaction with digital and gamified elements, but not relying on app-based learning alone. Evidence from all partner countries indicates a clear preference for human-supported learning environments, particularly in terms of confidence and communication development. The instructional approach should be characterised by a substantial emphasis on experiential learning, with role-play, simulations, and task-based exercises constituting the fundamental learning mechanisms. It is recommended that mentoring be integrated as a recurring support function, rather than an optional add-on. This mentoring should be overseen by either trainers or trained facilitators. Experts participating in the European focus group similarly highlighted that mentoring relationships and peer support structures help young people navigate uncertainty, strengthen self-belief, and remain engaged in learning pathways that might otherwise feel intimidating. Furthermore, the incorporation of peer group work should be systematically implemented, as participants have indicated that collaborative tasks contribute to the development of teamwork skills and the alleviation of anxiety through the sharing of experiences.

Engagement Layer

It is imperative that an explicit engagement layer should accompany the learning design. Cross-country evidence from focus groups suggests that motivation is increased when learning is visibly connected to opportunity and reward. In the German discourse, in particular, financial or tangible incentive mechanisms were identified as effective participation drivers, suggesting that the

provision of stipends, vouchers, or achievement-linked benefits may enhance persistence in cases where implementation is feasible. At the European focus group level, participants also stressed that recognition and visibility of progress—through mechanisms such as badges, testimonials, or portfolio evidence—can play an important motivational role, especially for young people who have experienced repeated educational or employment setbacks. In general, stakeholders expressed support for employer co-presence in selected activities, such as mock interviews or scenario assessments, with a view to increasing realism and credibility. Finally, it is imperative to incorporate real-world simulations and employer-informed scenarios throughout the model. This ensures that learning tasks accurately reflect actual workplace expectations and serves to strengthen the connection between training and employment pathways.

General Recommendations for the Project's Target Group

The cross-country evidence from questionnaires and focus groups demonstrates that NEET youth are not a homogeneous population and should not be treated as such in the learning design. While common patterns do exist, especially around confidence gaps, SEL deficits, and a preference for practical learning, the intensity and type of support required differs by subgroup. The subsequent segment-oriented recommendations translate the shared findings into targeted design adjustments for the SEQ Learning Model, ensuring that pathways remain flexible while still grounded in a common competence framework.

Early school leavers

For early school leavers, the data indicates a strong need for structure, predictability, and guided progression. A significant proportion of the group in question have reported a tendency towards weak learning habits, low academic confidence, and difficulty sustaining engagement in long or abstract training formats. Consequently, the pedagogy of learning design should prioritise the utilisation of concise modules, accompanied by explicit objectives and quantifiable outcomes. This pedagogical approach enables learners to discern their progress in a timely manner. Regular coaching check-ins and facilitator feedback are of particular importance in the stabilisation of participation and the reduction of the risk of drop-out.

It is imperative that training for this segment incorporates behavioural routines associated with work-readiness. Such routines encompass, but are not limited to, punctuality, task completion, communication etiquette, and fundamental teamwork norms. It is imperative that these elements are practised explicitly through repeated exercises and scenarios, rather than being assumed as prior knowledge. A structured rhythm of activity, feedback, and reinforcement has been demonstrated to be more effective for this group than open-ended or self-directed formats.

Migrants

For participants with migrant backgrounds, cross-country findings underscore the significance of language-sensitive and culturally aware delivery. It is imperative that learning modules encompass language-supported instruction, employing simplified wording and glossaries of key terms. Furthermore, facilitator clarification should be provided when required. Visual and demonstration-based teaching methods, such as diagrams, icons and step-by-step task modelling, have been shown to enhance comprehension and reduce reliance on advanced language proficiency.

The incorporation of intercultural scenarios and workplace diversity contexts within scenario design is conducive to developing learners' communication and problem-solving skills in mixed environments. Focus group insights further suggest that recognition of prior informal skills and experiences is a motivating factor for this group; therefore, validation tools should allow for flexible evidence types. It is evident that, in general, factors such as accessibility, clarity, and contextual relevance are of greater importance than the sheer volume of content.

Long-term NEET

For long-term NEET participants, the predominant barrier pattern is of an emotional nature rather than an informational one. The preponderance of evidence indicates that the factors under scrutiny are discouragement, low self-belief, and fear of failure following protracted disengagement. For this segment, the recommended entry route is a confidence-first pathway. Initial modules prioritise safe participation, supportive feedback, and achievable challenges before progressing to more demanding performance tasks.

The incorporation of micro-success loops, defined as small tasks, rapid feedback and visible achievement markers, within learning design is conducive to the gradual restoration of motivation. It is imperative to regard mentoring as a priority support mechanism rather than an optional add-on, thereby ensuring continuity and relational stability. In order to ensure that group environments

remain supportive and non-judgemental, it is vital that they are carefully facilitated. In this particular segment, it is imperative to maintain a high degree of flexibility in terms of progression speed. This enables learners to solidify their gains before progressing to the next stage.