



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

# IMPROVING TRANSITIONS ENABLING RESULTS (ITER) PILOT STUDY

A Report on the Piloting of the ITER  
Platform with NEET-Experienced Young  
People living in the UK, Portugal,  
Hungary, Romania and Italy

iter



# Foreword



Young people who spend significant periods of time being NEET (not in education, employment or training) are often vulnerable to social exclusion. They are, for example, more likely to live in poverty; to become involved with the youth justice system; and to experience physical and mental ill-health than their peers. They are also less likely to form meaningful friendships, to vote, volunteer, or engage with civil society more broadly. Youth unemployment is bad for the economy too: high NEET rates are associated with reduced tax revenues and increased public expenditure on health, social services, and welfare benefits. Engaging NEET young people with education and work is therefore a major concern for policymakers and practitioners – although helping the most marginalized young people overcome barriers to participation can be complex and testing.

We know that one of the key challenges for mentors working with NEET young people is navigating their transition from employability training programmes into more ‘mainstream’ forms of education and training. Building a positive relationship between the mentor and the young person is vital here, and research suggests that practitioners who go the ‘extra mile’ can make a real difference to the young person – not only in getting them to access education and work, but in helping them stay there.

Building trust and confidence is crucial to the mentoring process and the ITER platform featured in this report will help mentors engage creatively and positively with NEET-experienced young people. The gamification approach it uses is flexible and accessible and can be used with individuals or groups according to the needs of participants. Central to the platform is the young person’s journey between an archipelago of four islands – Learning, Life, Leisure and Work – guided by a mentor at a pace, place and duration tailored to their specific aims, abilities and ambitions. Feedback from the pilot, conducted in five nations across Europe, suggests the platform can be a powerful tool for mentors, and the report makes important recommendations about how it might be used with young people across a range of settings. I look forward to hearing about how the platform is developed going forward.

*Robin Simmons.*

Professor Robin Simmons, University of Huddersfield

## Contents

<b>Foreword .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>About the ITER project .....</b>	<b>4</b>
The ITER Project Partnership.....	6
<b>Part one – Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Setting the context of the Pilot Study .....	7
1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Pilot Study .....	9
1.2 Planned Inputs .....	10
A note on The Government Office of Békés County, Hungary .....	10
Supporting IAG Practitioners.....	10
A Framework for Evaluation .....	11
1.2 Our Pilot Delivery Approach.....	12
Training for IAG Practitioners .....	13
Participation Evaluation .....	15
1.3 Summary of Key Findings .....	19
1.4 Key takeaways from the Pilot .....	21
Conclusions .....	21
Recommendations.....	22
<b>Part two – Pilot Results .....</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1 Creating Awareness and Recruitment.....	24
2.1.1 Creating Awareness.....	24
2.1.2 Recruitment of pilot participants .....	25
2.2 Enrolment and Support .....	26
2.2.1 Appointed IAG Practitioners .....	26
2.2.2 NEET Caseload Enrolled and Supported.....	28
Profile of Pilot Participants.....	29
Age Breakdown of Pilot Participants.....	30
Gender Breakdown of Pilot Participants .....	31
Participation Levels .....	32

2.3 Outcomes for Participants .....	35
<b>Part three- Key Findings .....</b>	<b>37</b>
3.1 The Participant experience of the Pilot .....	38
What has worked well... ..	40
What the participants (players) said about the platform... ..	41
Areas for Consideration .....	43
3.2 Practitioner Observations .....	44
3.3 Recommendations .....	49
3.4 The Role of the Mentor .....	52
Participant Case Studies .....	54
NEET Young Person – Northern Ireland, UK.....	55
NEET Young Person – Northern Ireland, UK.....	57
NEET Young Person – Hungary .....	60
NEET Young Person – Italy .....	63
NEET Young Person – Romania .....	65
NEET Young Person – Portugal.....	66
APPENDIX 1.....	70
OVERVIEW OF ITER PROGRAMME DELIVERY TEMPLATE .....	70
TEMPLATES FOR PILOT DELIVERY .....	68

# About the ITER project

NEET is an acronym for Not in Education, Employment or Training and refers to a young person aged 16-24 (in the UK) who is unemployed, not in school or vocational training. It is a pan-European challenge in that all countries across Europe face the same challenge – how best to support (and challenge) NEET Young People to help realise their full potential.

The objectives of the ITER project are directly linked to the EU Youth Strategy's (2019 - 2027) core priorities of addressing the social exclusion and poverty affecting large numbers of Young People in Europe.

NEET Young People across Europe are at serious risk of poverty and social exclusion; the ITER Project will contribute to providing the opportunities and resources necessary for NEET Young People to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life.

The ITER project has been designed to improve approaches to engage NEET Young People to identify the individual needs and barriers that exist in terms of entering mainstream vocational education. The project also hopes to empower Young People to co-design and implement their own personal action plan to address these needs and barriers across 4 'Zones': Learning, Life, Leisure and Work. The ITER approach will build in the customised assistance needed to support the transition from NEET to mainstream vocational education and training and to support participants and their 'receiving' VET organisation/college with a transitions action plan. This plan sets out their support needs and agreed plan aimed at preparing Young People for transition, supporting them during transition and offers support to their VET organisation/college.

The ITER project has developed a web-based platform and interface/dashboard using the DayPlot gamification methodology to design a Young Person-friendly interactive platform. This platform will encourage the engagement of NEET Young People in the initial assessment, action planning and transitions readiness stages of their customised assistance and support their transitions to mainstream VET, thus reducing dropout/withdrawal and increasing completion/qualifications rates for previously-NEET students/trainees.

Further information on the ITER Project is available on the project website <https://www.iter-project.info/>

## The ITER Project Partnership



GEMS Northern Ireland Limited (Co-ordinator) UK



University of Huddersfield UK



Extern, Northern Ireland UK



Time Associates UK



Antares SRL Italy



Eulab Consulting Italy



Desincoop Portugal



University Politehica of Bucharest  
Romania



Békés County Government Office  
Hungary

The ITER project partnership brings together organisations/institutions that have the shared commitment, knowledge, skills, experience and complimentary expertise that drives the project and ensures it delivers high quality results.

# Part one – Introduction

# 1. Setting the context of the Pilot Study

ITER project partners have worked in collaboration to ensure the creation of an online Young Person-friendly and exciting interactive platform whilst adapting gamification methodology that contributes to the assessment of the needs and barriers that a NEET Young Person experiences. The project addresses those barriers through targeted actions and supports improved transitions for previously NEET Young People to mainstream vocational education and training, reducing dropout/withdrawal and increasing completion and achievement rates for vocational education and training.

Key considerations in designing the ITER platform included the precise determination of how best to adapt the existing CO-MENT collaborative mentoring model, to create a clear vision of the Young Person's journey as well as reaching a clear understanding of the touchpoints they would reach along the way. We also had to consider how best to design all the assessment and reporting templates and build this into an online game format.

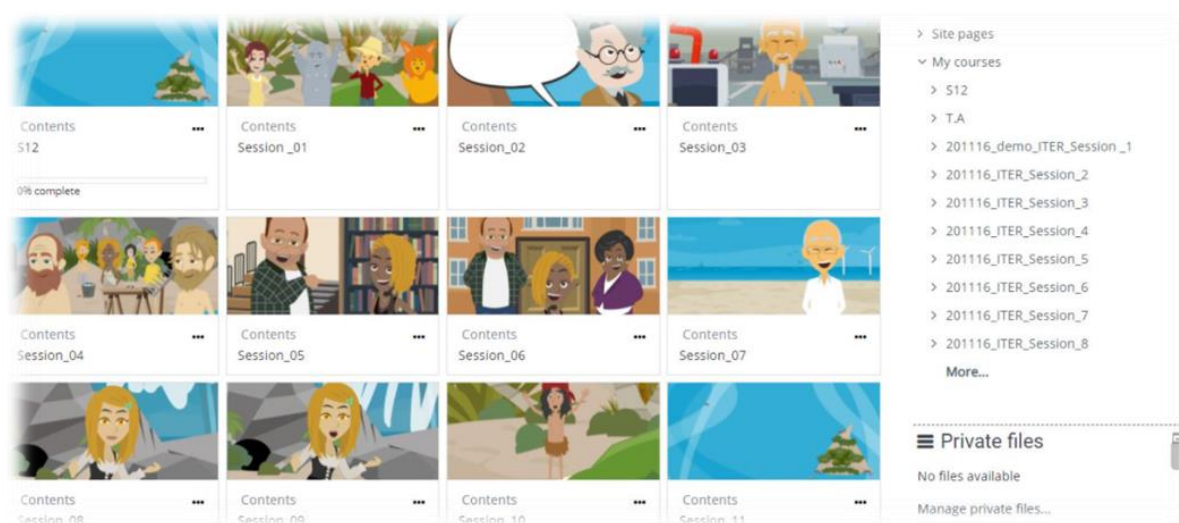
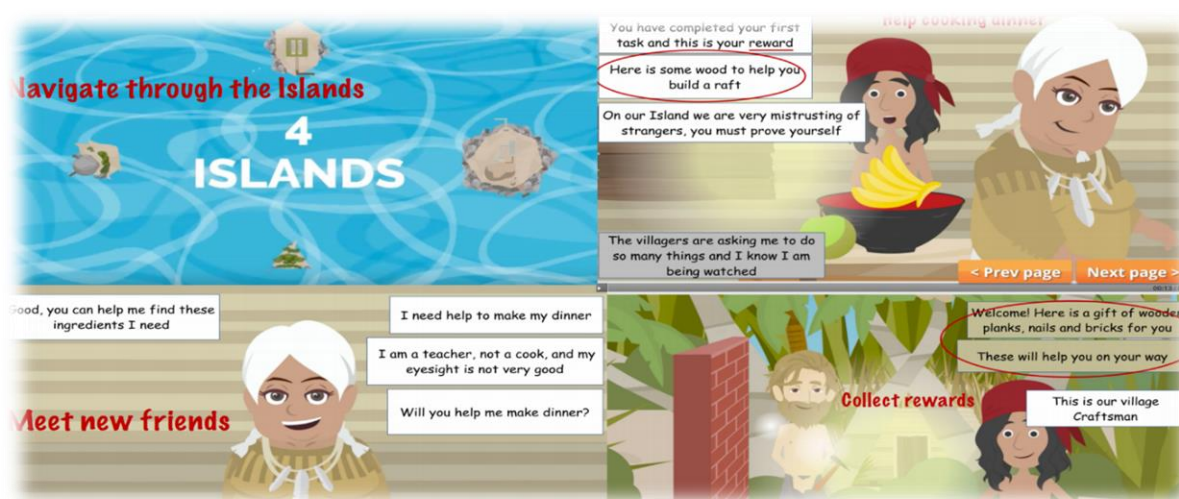
The game (the platform) design had to hold a Young Person's interest and, at the same time, support them to develop the skills they need for learning and work and, equally importantly, support their successful transition from NEET to mainstream vocational education and training/college.

The partnership worked together to 'storyboard' the game, the architecture and the integration of functions such as assessment, action planning and review, in a way that would keep things interesting for the Young Person (the player). We also had to consider how best to assist their Mentor (guide) to help them to navigate and progress.

We developed an archipelago of 5 islands - **Learning, Life, Leisure, Work and Transitions** which would see the player move between islands carrying out tasks and

earning 'rewards'. Writing the scripts (and translating these into Romanian, Italian, Portuguese and Hungarian) was aligned to the main storyline and included all the dialogue between the player and the characters they meet during the game.

The game and its storyline was designed to reflect recognisable but non-human characters – this was to ensure players could immerse themselves in the game without any possibility of the scenarios and characters reflecting a real life situation or person. This is because many Young People will bring some adverse life experiences to the mentoring process that may be triggered by scenarios that are too close to real life. See below – a snapshot of the Platform animations/islands. The ITER platform can be further viewed at <https://iter.lmsformazione.it/>



The ITER project has the potential for transfer to other European countries and the potential for adoption as a model for use by public employment services, NGOs<sup>1</sup> and VET organisations. The ITER model also has the potential to transfer to other settings, for example, youth justice provision, as the model's 4 zones are applicable to a much wider application.

## 1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Pilot Study

The overall aim of this ITER Pilot Study Report is to test the developed ITER platform, interface and tools with NEET experienced Young People, supported by an IAG Practitioner/Mentor, within a bounded and controlled environment, before the ITER platform is sanctioned for broader use.

This Pilot Evaluation Report and recommendations will inform the design of the final ITER platform, interface, tools and resources, which will be published and available in English, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Hungarian.

The key deliverable is to identify the experience of the Young Person and the IAG Practitioner/Mentor. All partners were involved in the evaluation of the ITER Pilot results - implementing questionnaires and focus groups with pilot participants and monthly 'lessons learned' meetings with all IAG practitioners/Mentors involved in pilot delivery in order to get feedback on the ITER platform and delivery model; what worked well and what didn't work well; ideas for improving the ITER platform, interface, suite of tools and transitions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Non-Governmental Organisations

## 1.2 Planned Inputs

### Minimum of 12 IAG Practitioners delivering the pilot project with at least 60 NEET Young People

Partner's agreed delivery commitments on the Pilot study were as follows -

- 🕒 UK (GEMS, Extern & TIME) – 6 IAG practitioners working with 30 NEET Young People
- 🕒 Italy (Antares) – 2 IAG practitioners working with 10 NEET Young People
- 🕒 Portugal (Desincoop) – 2 IAG practitioners working with 10 NEET Young People
- 🕒 Romania (Polytechnic University of Bucharest) – 2 IAG practitioners working with 10 NEET Young People

## A note on The Government Office of Békés County, Hungary

Whilst not in the original application proposal, as a matter of goodwill and to add even more value to the project, Békés has used their own resources to appoint 3 IAG Practitioners to deliver the ITER pilot with 10 Hungarian NEET Young People.

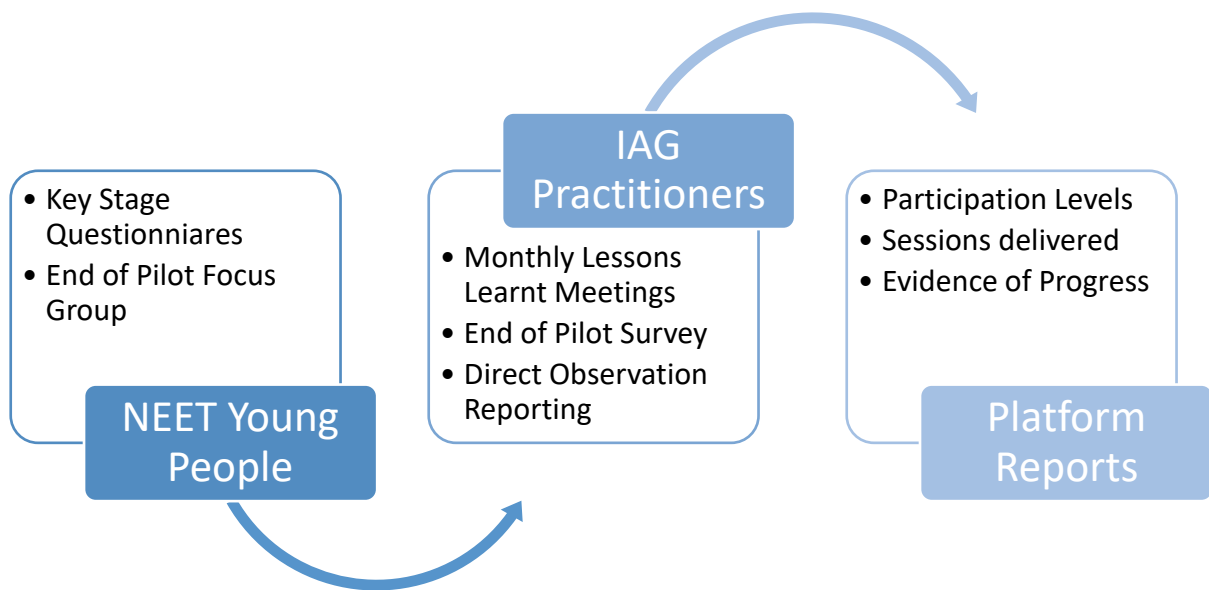
This addition has enabled the piloting of the ITER model to a fifth European county alongside those countries named above and has undoubtedly enriched the partnership's pilot study experience. The findings of the pilot study in Hungary are included in this report.

## Supporting IAG Practitioners

Our Technical Partner, Eulab Consulting and Project Lead GEMS NI worked to deliver a schedule of training and provide detailed guidelines and practical templates to provide IAG Practitioners with the necessary know-how on delivering the pilot with NEET Young People.

## A Framework for Evaluation

The methodology for pilot study evaluation was established by drawing on a combination of the following sources of information. A key consideration of this framework was the enabling of real-time evaluation with participants (players) and the IAG Practitioners using questioning and observation techniques alongside the data derived from the ITER platform reporting function.



## 1.2 Our Pilot Delivery Approach

### Pre-Pilot Testing

In early 2021, partners translated the platform content for use in Italian, Hungarian, Portuguese and Romanian languages and the platform was structured to facilitate 'login' and session delivery by partner country.

Following translation, each partner organisation undertook a pre-pilot evaluation of the platform. This involved at least three people from each organisation (20+ involved) registering on the platform as a participant (player), fully completing the 12 sessions across each of the 4 Islands (as well as Session 13, self-assessment questionnaire) and testing the platform reporting functions. Partner feedback was collated by our technical partner, EULAB, and formed the basis for making a series of platform adjustments and refinements prior to the roll-out of the main pilot project.

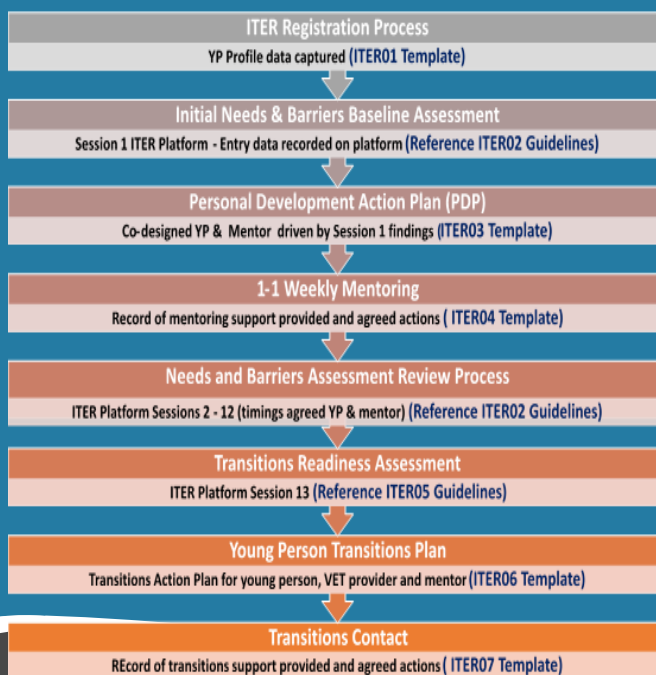
## Training for IAG Practitioners

In May 2021, a one-day training session, co-facilitated by our technical partner EULAB, Italy and UK partners GEMS NI and TIME, was delivered for all IAG Practitioners delivering the ITER pilot. The purpose of the session was to provide all Practitioners with the knowledge, understanding and skills to undertake pilot work with NEET Young People as well as guideline on the processes to be followed to evaluate and report on progress and outcomes.

Practitioners were provided with a series of standardised templates and detailed guidelines to support the pilot delivery process at all stages including enrolment, assessment of need, action planning, mentoring support, next steps plans, transitions management and after care.

### Objectives of this Session

- ▶ **Background to the ITER Project**
- ▶ **The Pilot Programme in Context - ITER Platform & The Collaborative Mentoring Model**
- ▶ **The Pilot Programme Process - Structure & Templates**
- ▶ **The ITER Platform - Practical Demonstration**
- ▶ **Evaluation and Reporting - Purpose, Methodology & Reporting**



Practitioners were provided with detailed guidelines and tutorials on platform use including enrolment, session delivery across each island and reporting functions.

## Training the Mentors – The Assessment platform

This training will provide an overview on how to use the ITER platform. It is divided into **3 Modules**:

1. ITER Gaming Platform: the concept (platform's front end).
2. ITER platform's tutorial (how to navigate the back end).
3. Navigating the platform (exercise).



An email help facility, managed by our technical partner EULAB, was also established for ongoing technical support during the pilot delivery phase.

A summary overview of the ITER programme delivery templates and guidance is included in Appendix One. Templates and guidance can be further viewed in each partner language at the links below.

ENGLISH - <https://iter.lmsformazione.it/course/view.php?id=133>

HUNGARIAN - <https://iter.lmsformazione.it/course/view.php?id=134>

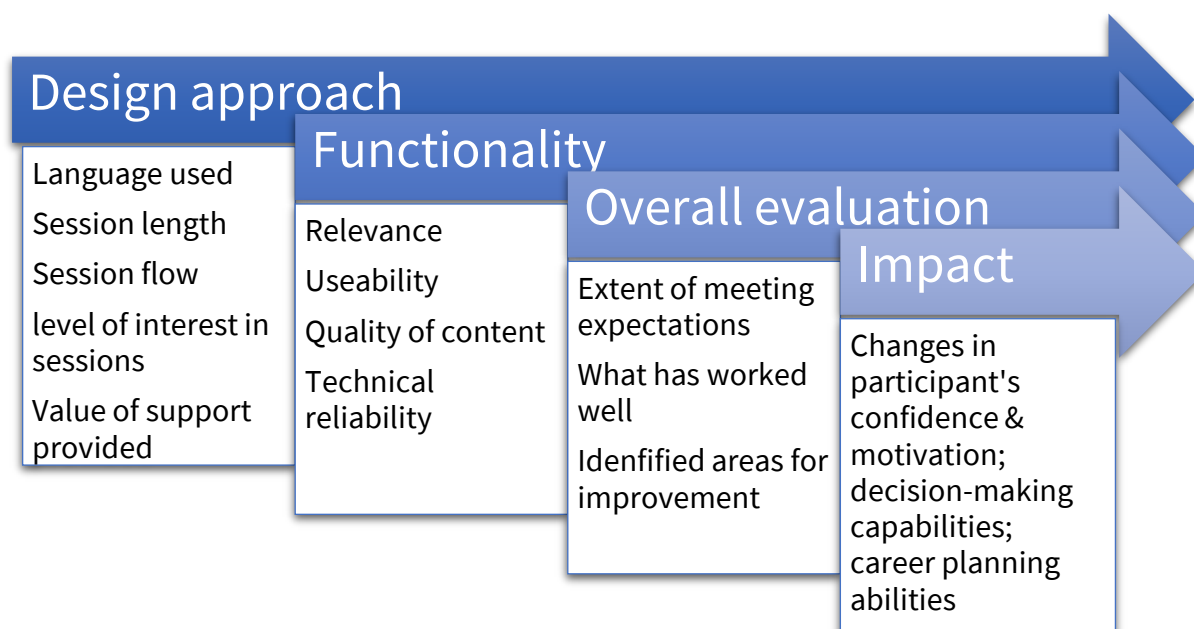
ROMANIAN - <https://iter.lmsformazione.it/course/view.php?id=135>

PORTUGUESE - <https://iter.lmsformazione.it/course/view.php?id=136>

ITALIAN - <https://iter.lmsformazione.it/course/view.php?id=137>

## Participation Evaluation

End of pilot participation questionnaires were completed by all participants (players) in order to assess feedback on their experiences of the ITER Platform, as below: -



## Practitioner Evaluation

Practitioner evaluations of the ITER platform pilot were conducted using two main methods -

**Monthly Lessons Learnt meetings** – carried out from October 2021-February 2022 via zoom with each partner country to carry out a detailed and ongoing evaluation of pilot delivery, insights and experiences - specifically what is working well, what is not working, key learning achieved, demonstrated benefits / impacts, new ideas emerging etc.

**End of Pilot interviews** – completed by each of the IAG Practitioners delivering the pilot at the end of the process specifically addressing -

- 🕒 Positive & negative observations and experiences of using the ITER platform
- 🕒 Suggestions for improving the platform for NEET participants (players) with key actions that can be undertaken to address identified improvements

## Young Person Focus Group

Each partner country hosted a short focus group, each with 6-8 current and former NEET Young People (including some of which who were involved in the pilot programme) to explore **“The role of the mentor in supporting a NEET Young Person”**.

Specific topics explored included: -



## Platform Reporting Facility

The ITER platform’s reporting function has the capacity to produce a range of real-time downloadable reports (excel) that will show platform users their specific details, enrolment status, participation activities and progress across each of the 4 islands and 13 mentoring sessions.

The reporting function is a very useful tool that enables IAG Practitioners to identify key needs as well as tracking and sharing progress with the participant (player). Visible and precise user reports will enable both the identification of priority needs and barriers across the Life, Leisure, Learning and Work islands to be addressed and provide precise information to support the development of customised action plans that will drive participant’s next steps /forward plans.

A sample of the range of reports generated by the platform are illustrated overleaf.

# Total report of responses to 4 Island questionnaires

first	last	course	stuser	stattempt	date	life zone - physical health	life zone - mental health - stress	life zone - drug or alcohol related issues	life zone - caring responsibilities	life zone - mobility - willingness to work in all areas of the community	life zone - residence	life zone - sufficient income to cover personal expenses
Massimiliano	Sassetti	Session 01 ENG	2	1	07-01-2022	1	2	1	3	4	1	1
Massimiliano	Sassetti	Session 01 IT	2	4	06-30-2022	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Massimiliano	Sassetti	Session 01 IT	2	3	05-19-2022	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cristian	Tarba	Session 01 ENG	3	1	05-17----	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

# Total report of responses to 4 Island questionnaires exportable in excel

first	last	course	stuser	stattempt	date	life zone - physical health	life zone - mental health - stress	life zone - drug or alcohol related issues	life zone - caring responsibilities	life zone - mobility - willingness to work in all areas of the community	life zone - residence	life zone - sufficient income to cover personal expenses	life zone - health dependent	life zone - conditions - clinical record history	life zone - confidence and self-esteem	life zone - appearance presentation	life zone - motivation, aspirations and setting goals to address them	life zone - reliability, attendance and punctuality	life zone - personal social skills
Massimiliano	Sassetti	Session 01 ENG	2	1	07-01-2022	1	2	1	3	4	1	1							
Massimiliano	Sassetti	Session 01 IT	2	4	06-30-2022	1	2	3	4	5	6								
Cristian	Tarba	Session 01 ENG	3	1	05-17----	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							



## Total report of responses to Transition questionnaires

The screenshot shows a web application interface for managing reports. The main content area displays a table of responses to Transition questionnaires. The table has the following columns: first, last, course, stuser, stattempt, date, self awareness understands the impact their behaviour has on others display, self awareness is aware of their strengths and limitations display, self awareness asks others for feedback on their behaviours display, self awareness is consistent in what they say and do display, self awareness behaves display, and self aw. der aw. the mo em dis.

first	last	course	stuser	stattempt	date	self awareness understands the impact their behaviour has on others display	self awareness is aware of their strengths and limitations display	self awareness asks others for feedback on their behaviours display	self awareness is consistent in what they say and do display	self awareness behaves display	self aw. der aw. the mo em dis
Cristian	Tarba	Transition_Assessment 13 RO	3	1	04-28-2022	1	2	3	4	1	
iter01	ro_pub	Transition_Assessment 13 RO	119	1	04-26-2022	3	4	5	5	4	4
Micol	Ansini	Transition_Assessment 13 IT	102	2	04-07-2022						

## Total report of responses to Transition questionnaires exportable to excel

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet titled 'report\_1656773952.xlsx'. The spreadsheet contains a large table of data, likely the same data as shown in the web application screenshot. The table has columns for user information (first, last, course, stuser, stattempt, date) and questionnaire responses (self awareness understands the impact their behaviour has on others display, self awareness is aware of their strengths and limitations display, self awareness asks others for feedback on their behaviours display, self awareness is consistent in what they say and do display, self awareness behaves display, self aw. der aw. the mo em dis).

## 1.3 Summary of Key Findings

Practitioners reported several issues experienced with platform use, from both their own experience of using the platform and their direct observation of the participant, that have been identified as areas for consideration and/or improvement for consideration:

The key findings of this pilot project are as follows -

- 🕒 The ITER platform has proved to be a key tool in supporting mentors/mentees through this pilot mentoring programme. However, it is an additional tool not a replacement to the tried and tested methods of traditional approaches to mentoring.
- 🕒 The ITER approach to mentoring has made a difference - improving engagement levels, lifting confidence and self-esteem as well as providing structure, routine and a more disciplined approach to mentoring for many of those involved. Some participants wanted to move quickly through the mentoring process - this approach created more of a discipline around self-reflection, in particular in areas like decision making, problem solving and key learning.
- 🕒 The ITER approach helped to accelerate learning for some NEET Young People. Many felt more able to express themselves, set realistic goals and build longer lasting relationships.
- 🕒 The platform, for most users, was fun and easy to use. It could be improved significantly with addition of more engaging music and graphics.
- 🕒 It is recognised that current and future users of the platform would benefit from guidelines, including demonstrations, on (1) the purpose of the platform and (2) how to use the platform to include registration, navigation and developing reports.
- 🕒 Mentors were unanimous in reiterating the importance of letting the Young Person clearly see the progress they were making and how this is linked to both

motivational and participation levels. The current data reporting process and outputs could be extended to enable 'real-time' reporting to be more visible including the use of graphics to measure and highlight the participant's journey progression.

- 🕒 The ITER approach may be more suitable if pitched at younger people aged between 13-15 years of age. This is a key period of transition for some NEET Young People in certain Partner countries – moving from Primary to Secondary education.
- 🕒 It may help mentors to achieve even more significant/improved results when working with NEET Young People possessing challenges with literacy, verbal communication, and comprehension, as well as younger people who are identified at risk of becoming NEET.
- 🕒 Our Partners in Portugal found that the ITER approach to mentoring helped NEET Young People to make behavioural changes. This is highly significant in that mentors observed changes in NEET Young People at first hand – improved attendance levels, improved comprehension of key tasks, improved interpersonal relationships etc
- 🕒 The platform, from a mentor's perspective, can add real value as an innovative mentoring resource.
- 🕒 The ITER approach helped mentors to set and agree actions with mentees as well as to better assess the ongoing, changing needs of their NEET Young People.
- 🕒 Barriers and constraints like getting access to ICT resources, travelling long distances in rural areas and funding the mentoring approach, were proved to be real and challenging issues for both Practitioners and mentees participating in this pilot project.
- 🕒 The platform would be an ideal vehicle to store resources that could be used to support Young People with specific challenges, these could include motivational videos, blogs, practical tasks, professional materials and recognised models/templates.

## 1.4 Key takeaways from the Pilot

The key conclusions and recommendations from this project are as follows -

### Conclusions

- 🕒 The key role that a mentor plays in the Practitioner/mentee relationship is crucial. This project has confirmed that, no matter what tools, techniques or new innovative approaches used, the depth of this relationship is shaped by the mentor and his/her ability to build rapport and high levels of trust with the mentee.
- 🕒 The ITER approach, without doubt, helped mentors to work at a 'deeper' level with mentees – bringing mentors and mentees closer together.
- 🕒 The ITER approach has helped to fill a void in some Partner countries. Following the pandemic, a vacuum or void exists and there is a lack of support for NEET Young People.
- 🕒 It is clear that this approach is suited ideally to those 'entering or within transition' – a younger age group of 13-15 years of age will benefit most from this type of mentoring support.
- 🕒 The ITER mentoring approach has provided interesting results from a behavioural change perspective. This is an area which should be investigated further in the future.
- 🕒 Early indications suggest that the ITER approach has both retained high levels of engagement with participants as well as keeping drop out levels to a minimum. However, there is no comparable evidence available to make a case either way at this stage.

## Recommendations

- 🕒 It is recommended that in order for the ITER approach to mentoring to reach its full potential, experienced Mentors should be involved from the onset. More experienced mentors can ‘test’ the approach with a view to coaching and mentoring others less experienced. Less experienced mentors ‘shadowing’ mentors with significantly more experience is also an option.
- 🕒 The ITER approach to mentoring should ideally be targeted at NEET Young People aged between 13-15 years of age. Targeting older NEET Young People is still viable option but will require more input from mentors.
- 🕒 NEET Young People entering or within a period of transition (e.g primary to secondary education) will particularly benefit from this approach. It is recommended that this type of target audience should be prioritised if possible.
- 🕒 NEET Young People who are struggling to express themselves, those challenged with comprehending tasks or developing interpersonal relationships could also be targeted.
- 🕒 Finally, it is recommended that where ‘accelerated learning’ is a key objective of the mentoring approach, the ITER approach should be a key consideration.

# Part two – Pilot Results

## 2.1 Creating Awareness and Recruitment

Partner organisations reported on key methods and techniques employed in order to create awareness of, and generate interest in, the ITER programme pilot. Furthermore, partners reported on their experience of recruitment for the pilot, specifically levels of interest in ITER and pilot participation.

### 2.1.1 Creating Awareness

Partners used a range of approaches to create general awareness in the ITER project and platform pilot plans. These included

- 🕒 Consultations with Partner country government departments responsible for the NEET agenda including Department for Employment and Learning and Department for communities (Northern Ireland, UK). The National Employment Agency (Romania), Municipality of Rome and Government Office of Bekes County (Hungary)
- 🕒 Sharing information through their extensive network of community and voluntary organisations and local partnerships, specifically those with a remit to support young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET
- 🕒 Information sessions with key referral organisations including secondary schools (aged 15 and above, leaving school with no/little qualification at risk of becoming NEET) and statutory agencies working directly with job seekers, VET organisations
- 🕒 Focus groups with existing and previous NEET clients
- 🕒 Dissemination through partnership projects including Erasmus + projects with a focus on NEET and VET transition.
- 🕒 Partner websites were also upgraded to include ITER project pilot information.

## 2.1.2 Recruitment of pilot participants

Overall, Partners experienced very little difficulty in recruiting participants for this pilot programme. UK partners (Extern & GEMS NI) and Bekes (Hungary) are well established in their respective countries as experts in supporting NEET young people into employment and/or VET and have access to a pool of young people who would benefit from a programme of this nature. Desincoop (Portugal) and Antares (Italy) have both long-established partnership working arrangements with local schools and for the purpose of this project focussed their recruitment on working with school leads to access those young people that, due to several complex barriers/challenges were at high risk of ‘dropping out’ of school early.

Only one Partner country, Romania, was unable to meet their target of 10 NEET Young People, the reasons for which are detailed in Section 2.2.2.

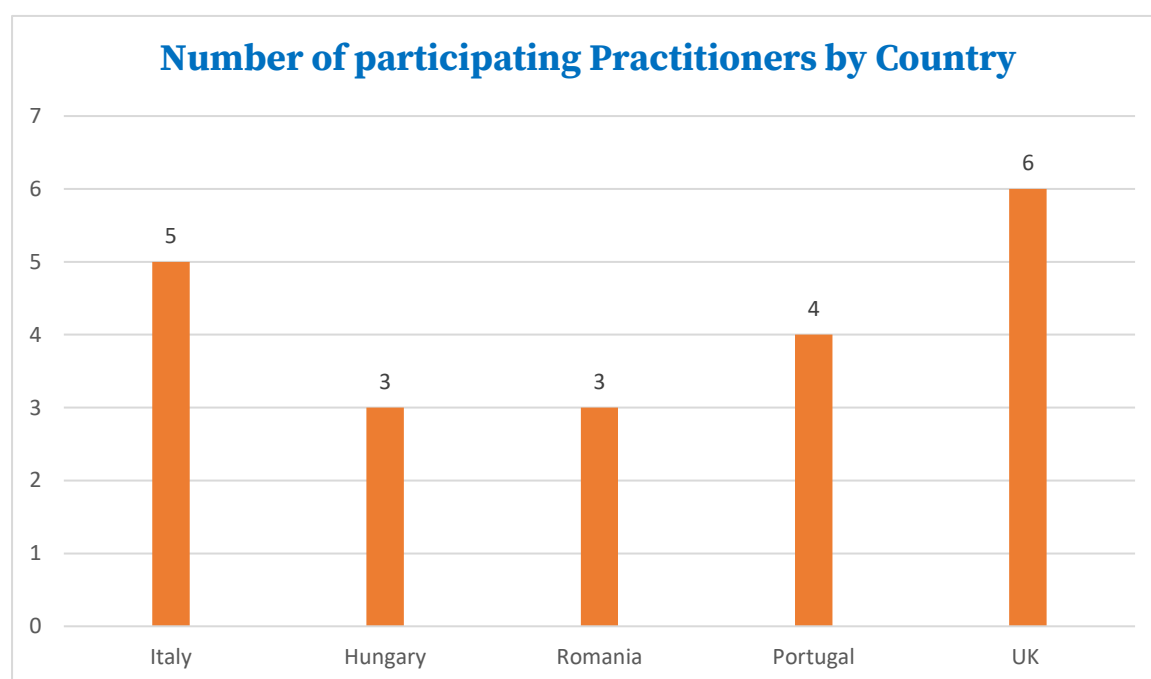
All partners engaged in an extended recruitment process where mentors were given time to get to know their learners. This often involved ‘live’ demonstrations of the platform itself. These included conversations relating to how the platform could be used to help learners to remove barriers and enhance confidence.

For some Partners, the recruitment process involved a ‘vetting’ process which identified potential Young People who may be at risk of soon becoming a NEET Young Person.

## 2.2 Enrolment and Support

### 2.2.1 Appointed IAG Practitioners

A total number of **21** IAG Practitioners across all 5 partner countries were directly involved in the delivery of the pilot with NEET Young People. The breakdown per partner country is as follows -



The actual numbers delivering the pilot (21 Practitioners) against the target numbers agreed at the onset of this project (12 Practitioners) are detailed as follows-

- 🕒 UK (GEMS, Extern & TIME) – Target - Recruit **6** Practitioners - Actual **6**
- 🕒 Italy (Antares) – Target – Recruit **2** Practitioners - Actual **5**
- 🕒 Portugal (Desincoop) – Target - Recruit **2** Practitioners - Actual **4**
- 🕒 Romania - Target - Recruit **2** Practitioners - Actual **3**
- 🕒 Hungary - Target - Recruit **0** Practitioners - Actual **3**

The increase in Practitioners delivering the pilot, compared to the original target of 12, can be attributed to the additional resources required to ensure the 110 pilot

participants (versus 60 planned pilot participants) each received dedicated, quality mentoring support.

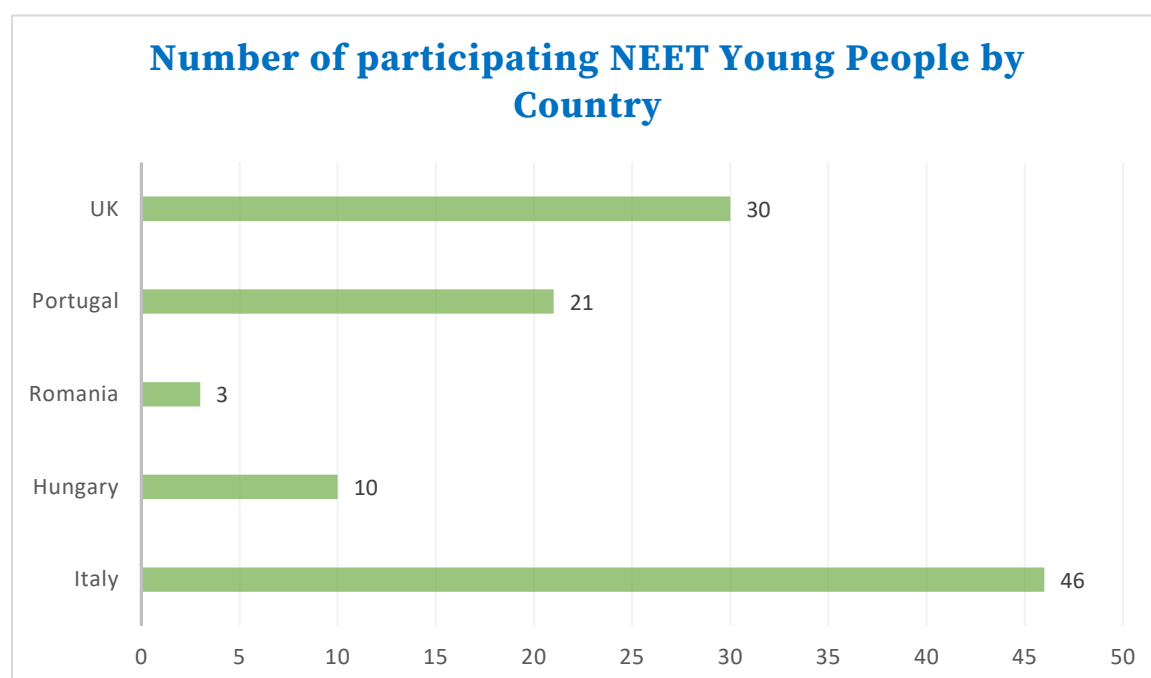
## Practitioner Profile

Practitioners working across the project pilot possess high levels of experience of working with NEET Young People who experience a range of complex needs. They also held an impressive array of qualifications and accreditations in the following:

- 🕒 Youth and Community work
- 🕒 Coaching and Mentoring
- 🕒 Advice and Guidance
- 🕒 Careers Advice
- 🕒 Teaching
- 🕒 Social Work
- 🕒 Counselling
- 🕒 Clinical Psychology
- 🕒 E Learning
- 🕒 Working with intellectual and physical disabilities

## 2.2.2 NEET Caseload Enrolled and Supported

A total number of **110** participants took part in the pilot programme. This figure is 83% higher than our original pilot recruitment target of 60 NEET Young People.



Italy provided, by far, the highest number of participants on the pilot programme. This was as a direct result of their extensive working with local schools. Portugal took a similar approach. These schools in both countries reported that the ITER approach was proving to be a hugely successful medium for engaging NEET Young People. The UK, Hungary and Romania recruited through existing projects, stakeholders and the wider local community.

Romania struggled to recruit NEET Young People. There were several reasons for this but mainly due to Covid-19 and economic constraints, issues with travel and a lack of access to IT facilities. Local competitors were also recruiting young people for vocational programmes at that time.

Based on the initial targets set and agreed prior to the pilot commencement, each country has performed very well in terms of recruitment. Romania struggled to recruit based on the issues already discussed above but Hungary provided additional

NEET Young People even though their input was not originally planned. Overall individual recruitment input was finalised as follows -

- 🕒 UK (GEMS, Extern & TIME) – Target **30** NEET Young People - Actual **30**
- 🕒 Italy (Antares) – Target **10** NEET Young People – Actual **46**
- 🕒 Portugal (Desincoop) – Target **10** NEET Young People – Actual **21**
- 🕒 Romania Target **10** NEET Young People – Actual **3**
- 🕒 Hungary Target **0** NEET Young People - Actual **10**

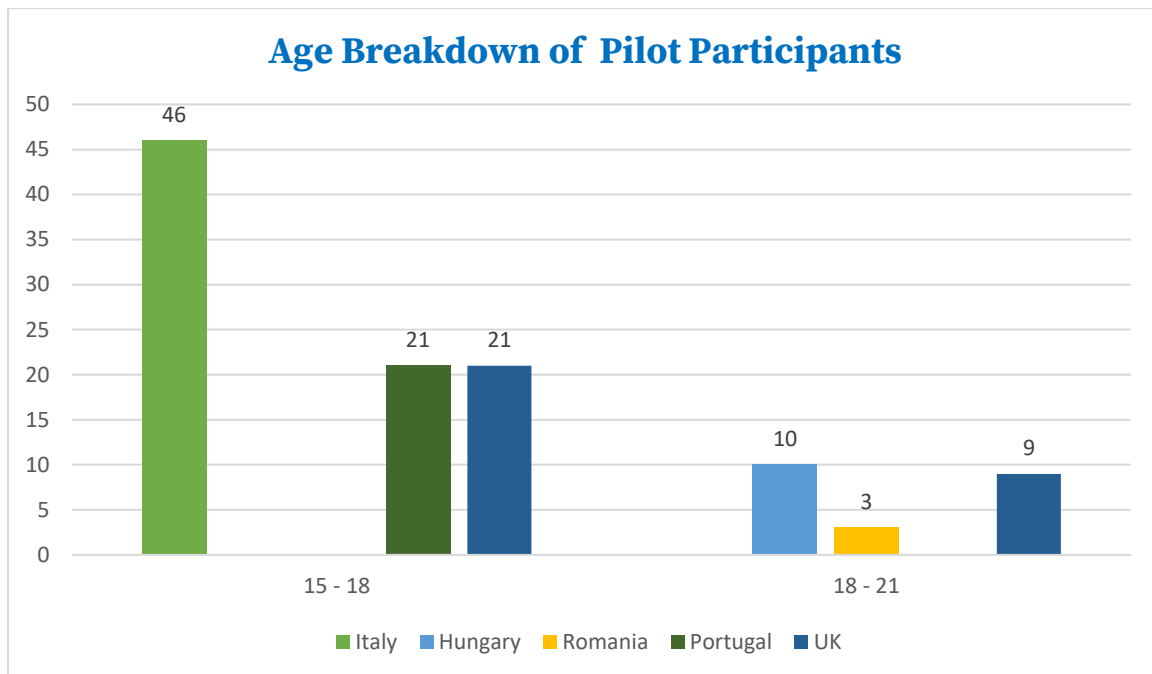
## Profile of Pilot Participants

The profile of pilot participants was diverse and wide ranging. The following groups were represented during this project –

- 🕒 Homeless people
- 🕒 Carers (dependents)
- 🕒 Ethnic minorities
- 🕒 Single parents
- 🕒 Those with convictions
- 🕒 People with disabilities
- 🕒 Those with addictions
- 🕒 Those with no qualifications
- 🕒 Those with no work experience
- 🕒 Those at risk of dropping out of school early
- 🕒 A range of age groups – as young as 15 through to 21 years of age

## Age Breakdown of Pilot Participants

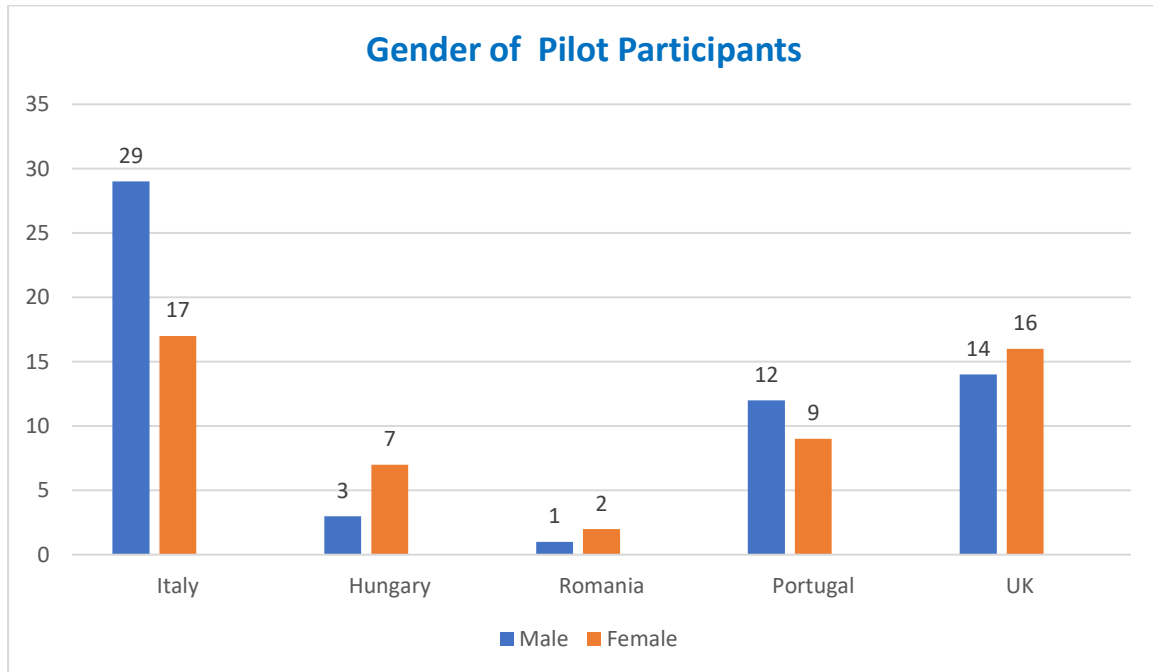
Pilot participants were aged between the age of 15 to 21, a breakdown of which is given below:



88 participants were aged 15-18 (80%) whilst the remaining 22 participants (20%) were aged between 18 and 21. The high percentage of participants under 18 can be partly attributed to the extensive participation of school leaver aged young people on the pilot. It is clear that the ITER approach has been well received by NEET young people aged 18 years or less in countries like Italy and Portugal in particular. The majority of the participants representing this age group were experiencing challenges and barriers within their school experience and IAG practitioners reported that this approach helped young people to focus on addressing their needs, make decisions and express themselves more freely.

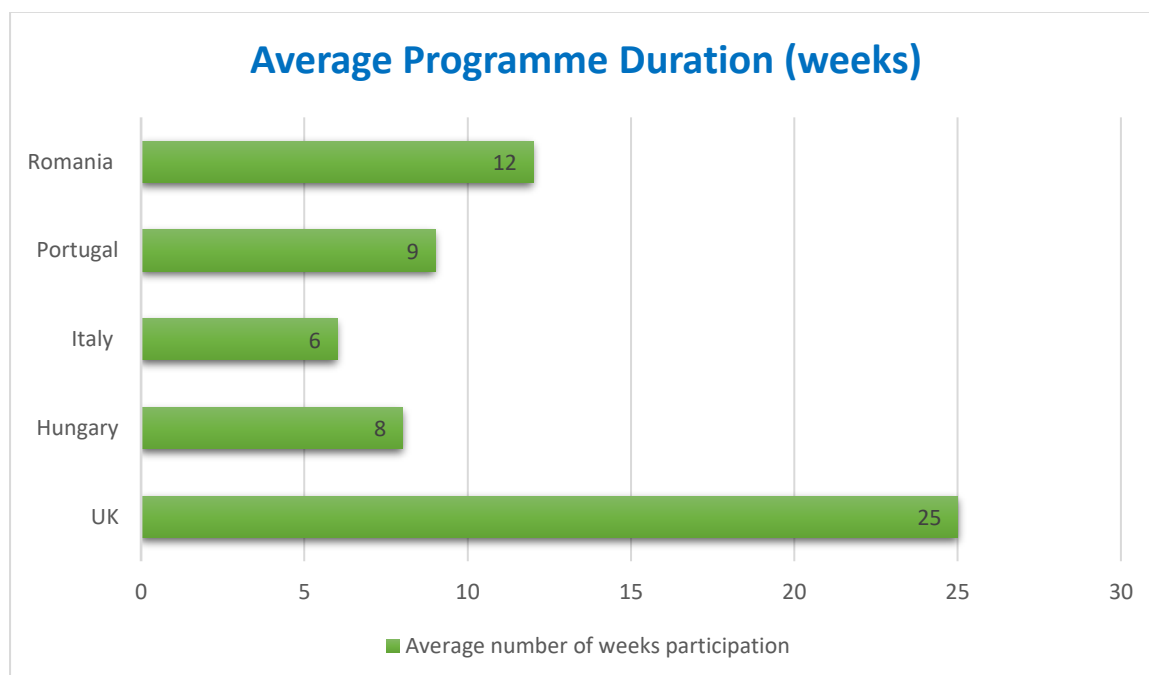
## Gender Breakdown of Pilot Participants

The gender breakdown of all participants is shown below. There is nothing of particular interest to note here except to highlight the fact that the overall gender breakdown was as follows – Male (59), Female (51), 54% and 46% respectively.



## Participation Levels

### Programme Duration



The participants' average duration on the pilot programme varied by country with UK being the longest duration (average 15 weeks) and Italy the shortest, reporting an average of six weeks. The reasons for variation in duration can be attributed to a number of factors including extend of participant need at entry point and preferred frequency, duration and pace of session delivery. The flexibility of delivery afforded by the ITER platform structure is a huge benefit of the tool enabling the programme delivery to be customised to the need of the participant.

### Method of Delivery

Participants confirmed that the number of sessions conducted met the individual needs of the participants in each country. Partners offered participants the opportunity to engage virtually or face to face with their mentors – this was very much dependent on individual circumstances. Whereas Hungary or Portugal did not carry out any virtual sessions, the remaining partners delivered sessions using a blended approach of both virtual and face to face methods. The average duration of each virtual session was 2 hours on a one-to-one basis (Practitioner and mentee).

The benefits of virtual mentoring were listed as being “**...convenient, less costly (travel), less time consuming and more fun...**”. The downside to online mentoring was reported as minimal, however, getting access to technological devices was difficult for some, in particular, Romania.

Face to face mentoring clearly worked more effectively in some countries than in others. All partner countries outside of the UK, relied heavily on this approach. Feedback suggests that the virtual arrangement still worked very well, in particular because NEET Young People are used to communicating via technological devices.

The ‘richness’ or ‘depth’ of mentor/mentee relationship was described as more meaningful when conducted face to face but for some this arrangement was more challenging, in particular, in Romania where the challenges of living in a rural environment made it very difficult for participants to travel long distances.

## Overall summary

Partner Country	Number of Participants	Total Number of Face-to-Face Sessions	Total Number of Virtual Sessions	Total Number of Sessions	Average Number of Sessions per Participant Per week (Per Partner Country)	Average Number of weeks per Participant on the Programme (Per Partner Country)
<b>UK (in total)</b>	30	840	40	880	1.1	25
<b>Hungary</b>	10	57	0	57	0.7	8
<b>Portugal</b>	21	0	378	378	2	9
<b>Romania</b>	3	3	105	108	3	12

*# Due to the nature of the work carried out in Italy (mainly within schools, mentoring needed to be conducted in group sessions to make the best use of time available. The data has been presently in a slightly different format (below) as a result.*

Partner Country	Number of Participants	Total Number of Face-to-Face Sessions Per Group	Total Number of Virtual Sessions Per Group	Total Number of Group Sessions
<b>Italy</b>	46	23	25	48

## 2.3 Outcomes for Participants

The outcomes for participants on completion of the pilot programme are shown below.

	UK	Hungary	Portugal	Italy	Romania	TOTAL	%
<b>Progressed to Employment</b>	6	10		1		<b>17</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Progressed to VET / remain in school setting</b>	20		21	37		<b>78</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Successfully completed pilot and working towards a next steps destination</b>	4				3	<b>7</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Early Drop out – did not complete the pilot</b>		2		8		<b>10</b>	<b>9%</b>

As illustrated, the outcomes for pilot participants demonstrate a high success rate with 85% of those participating either entering employment (15% or progressing to VET programmes and/or remaining within their school programme (70%). From the remaining participants who had not progressed to employment, VET or remained on their school programme, a further 7 (6%) continue to work with the partner organisations to progress actions towards securing suitable career pathways. 9% of pilot participants did not complete the full pilot commitment. The reasons given for ‘early dropout’ are identified as “*not relevant/suitable at the time*” and “*lack of own time to commit to the requirements of the pilot*”.

In addition to destination outcomes, participants also reported significant softer skills development resulting from their participation in the pilot programme as highlighted below.



# Part three- Key Findings

## 3.1 The Participant experience of the Pilot

101 (92%) of the participants engaged in the pilot provided feedback on their experience based on a questionnaire which was completed at the end of their programme. The key findings of the questionnaire, which asked participants to rank their views/experiences on a scale of 1 to 5, are detailed in the table below. The table shows the average score recorded from the 101 questionnaires against the key themes of:

- 🕒 The capability and content of the platform
- 🕒 The delivery approach adopted
- 🕒 The impact of the experience on future plans
- 🕒 How the platform experience has addressed their expectations

This feedback has been used to provide clear conclusions and recommendations for the way forward.

	Average Score Recorded across all Countries  1 (minimum) and 5 (maximum)
<b>THE ITER PLATFORM</b>	
The platform was easy to use	<b>4.13</b>
The platform content is of high quality – graphics, animations, sound etc.	<b>3.20</b>
The platform is robust – it is reliable (did not crash) and it built my confidence by doing what it was meant to do.	<b>3.66</b>
The platform content was interesting for me to work on.	<b>3.19</b>
<b>THE ITER PLATFORM APPROACH</b>	
The language used in the sessions was clear and understandable	<b>3.87</b>
I was interested and motivated to carry out the individual sessions	<b>3.46</b>
The length of the sessions was appropriate to keep my attention	<b>3.67</b>
The support from my mentor was valuable to enable me to progress through the sessions.	<b>4.51</b>
<b>AFTER USING THE PLATFORM</b>	
I am more positive about my future career	<b>3.97</b>
I am better able to plan and do things to improve my skills and abilities	<b>3.85</b>
The support from my mentor was beneficial to me achieving my goals	<b>4.13</b>
I would recommend the ITER approach to other young people	<b>3.76</b>

MEETING EXPECTATIONS	Number of Participants
The ITER Platform & approach <b>EXCEEDED</b> my expectations	22 (22%)
The ITER Platform & approach <b>MEETS</b> my expectations	68 (67%)
The ITER Platform & approach <b>DOES NOT MEET</b> my expectations	11 (11%)

## What has worked well...

All participants were asked to report on both their positive experiences as well as potential improvements following their work with IAG Practitioners utilising the ITER platform. Feedback relating to both the adopted approach used for 1:1 mentoring and that for the actual platform itself was very positive in overall.

An average score of **4.13**, out of a possible 5.00, was recorded when participants were asked about the 'ease of use' of the platform whilst a score of **3.87** was recorded for the appropriateness of the language used on the platform – clear and understandable. These were the second and third highest scores.

Interestingly, the joint highest score of **4.51** was returned when participants were asked about the role of the mentor, in particular, the crucial support that Practitioners' offered participants as they progressed through the mentoring sessions.

This positive feedback was further enhanced by the same score of **4.51** which was the score achieved when participants were asked if they would recommend the ITER mentoring approach to other Young People.

Of those participants providing feedback, a total of **89.1%** stated that the ITER platform and approach either met or exceeded their expectations. This score really

does validate the ITER approach to mentoring if used with experienced mentors and willing participants.

Participants collectively reported that they experienced the **ITER platform** to have a range of positive aspects to include:

- 🕒 It helped those who were experiencing difficulty in **expressing their feelings** to do so in a much more confident way
- 🕒 It removed barriers in areas like **literacy, communication, confidence etc**
- 🕒 It provided much needed **structure and self-discipline for NEET Young People**
- 🕒 The animations used are **attractive, fun and engaging**
- 🕒 The platform offered an effective tool to **enable a more enriched, 'deeper' Practitioner-Mentee relationship to develop**
- 🕒 The platform facilitated improved levels of participant **self-esteem and motivation** through demonstration of progress made
- 🕒 The platform helped to open up discussion about **'next steps', transition and referral networks** with the Practitioner and participant.

## What the participants (players) said about the platform....

Participants from each country were asked to provide direct comments to summarise their experiences of the ITER platform as given below –

### UK participant feedback

- 🕒 *"...working with my mentor gave me direction and enabled me to set goals..."*
- 🕒 *"...it helped me have a routine and enjoyed meeting up with my mentor..."*
- 🕒 *"...I feel more confident, and I enjoyed the programme..."*
- 🕒 *"...I really like completing online this kept me interested..."*
- 🕒 *"...I enjoyed the experience, and it was good that my mentor was with me..."*
- 🕒 *"...I really liked this pilot, it helped me to speak to my mentor about making good choices..."*

## Hungary Participant feedback

- 🗣️ *...the platform highlighted the problems and supported the mentees to learn how to manage time, to be able to say “no” in order not to overtake/overdo...”*
- 🗣️ *“participating in piloting and the use of platform increased the self-esteem of participants...”*
- 🗣️ *“...during piloting the participants got continuous support from the mentor...”*
- 🗣️ *“...the young people involved in the project reached their goals with the help of this process...”*

## Italy Participant feedback

- 🗣️ *“...we’ve had some trouble with the platform at first but then we found it very easy to use...”*
- 🗣️ *“...I would recommend this program to a NEET friend...”*
- 🗣️ *“...I’ve really appreciated having someone willing to listen to me...”*
- 🗣️ *“...I found this to be a new way of working...”*
- 🗣️ *“...I can see how this way of working helped me to learn...”*

## Portugal Participant feedback

- 🗣️ *“...participants highlighted the use of the platform to support them to make choices...”*
- 🗣️ *“.... they also referred to the importance of the presence of the mentor in special when they have online sessions...”*
- 🗣️ *“...the online sessions were very useful, and they felt more confident...”*
- 🗣️ *“...this approach helped to spark my interest in learning new things...”*
- 🗣️ *“...working with my mentor in this way was very different but useful...”*
- 🗣️ *“...I really liked it...”*

## Romania Participant feedback

- 🕒 "...the platform has a nice interface, and it is user friendly..."
- 🕒 "...the work sessions were engaging and funny..."
- 🕒 "...the animations were interesting..."
- 🕒 "...this was a simple way to learn..."
- 🕒 "...I found this way of learning really held my interest..."

## Areas for Consideration

In terms of potential areas for improvement, feedback from participants has highlighted the following key issues which may require further exploration. Questions in relation to overall platform content scored lowest overall.

### *The platform content was interesting for me to work on*

3.19

### *The platform content is of high quality – graphics, animations, sound etc.*

3.20

Participants reported a number of other issues with the ITER platform. These have been identified as areas for consideration and/or improvement:

- 🕒 **Suitability:** Participants stated that graphics, animation (characters) and music within the platform could be improved – some content was perceived by some to be not relevant and some of the questions were not applicable or indeed, were repetitive.
- 🕒 **User Profile:** Platform graphics and storyline is best suited to a younger age group (15-18 years old).
- 🕒 **Access:** Some participants reported issues with the platform ‘crashing’ if too many NEET Young People were using it at the same time.

- 🕒 **Flexible approach:** Platform structure was protracted and long-drawn out. This led to repetitive conversations at times, and this had a negative impact on levels of positive engagement for some NEET Young People.
- 🕒 **Questionnaires:** The interpretation of questions caused confusion for some NEET Young People. This seems to be related to the scaling or grading system employed.
- 🕒 **Progress:** A lack of monitoring information relating to the measurement of individual progress was a clear issue for some participants

## 3.2 Practitioner Observations

### What has worked well...

All mentors were asked to report on both their positive experiences as well as potential improvements following their work with mentees utilising the ITER platform. Mentors collectively reported that they experienced the [ITER platform](#) to have a range of positive aspects to include:

- 🕒 It is **easy to understand and navigate, logical sequencing** across each island
- 🕒 Animations used are **attractive, fun and relevant** to young people
- 🕒 Island approach and story content (with sub-titles) is **well-structured** enabling the easy identification of priority support required for participants across each of the 4 zones, Life, Leisure, learning and work and thus **ensuring follow-on support is focussed, realistic and at an achievable pace** with the participant.
- 🕒 Offers an effective tool to **enable mentor-mentee focussed discussion** on the mentee's emerging need and barriers leading to agreed action planning around their own development and career choices
- 🕒 Provides **an innovative resource for mentors that adds value to their mentoring approach** with NEET Young People.
- 🕒 **Ensures ongoing assessment of changing need** and progress using the Island platform questionnaires providing mentors with a targeted methodology **to identify, explore and co-facilitate the implementation of actions** that are

directly related to addressing the participant's personal challenges and progressing career ambitions

- 🕒 Is well received by both the mentor and the participant who viewed it as **a more interesting and engaging method than traditional self-assessment techniques** employed. In a similar type of programme
- 🕒 **Facilitates improved levels of participant self-esteem and motivation** through demonstration of progress made.
- 🕒 Provides **a structure and sequencing that enabled the participant to think, reflect and discuss emerging issues** with their mentor thus **allowing the natural establishment of build close relationship with their mentor** based on trust
- 🕒 **Is highly relevant to both NEET young people with complex and multiple needs** pertaining to literacy, verbal communication and comprehension, **as well as younger people who are identified at risk of becoming NEET**. With both target groups the platform provides **a mechanism through which a young person can reassess options, expand their aspirations and make choices on their future**

## What the Practitioners said about the Platform...

A total of 21 practitioners from each country were asked to provide direct comments to summarise their experiences of working with participants using the ITER platform as given below

### UK Practitioners

- *A useful tool to highlight areas to young people of where they needed to set goals*
- *Using the Platform was useful for working with young people as they prefer a visual*
- *It was good to capture the progress of the young people involved in the pilot through the reporting function*
- *The platform was a good tool to interact and to open up questioning with the participant*
- *An interactive way of showcasing a peer case study would be useful to encourage the younger user.*

## Hungarian Practitioners

- *Based on mentors' feedbacks it can be said many young people should be guided through the process as the obstacles to moving forward are not always visible even during individual counselling.*
- *The questions, issues raised by the platform help the development of self-knowledge and awareness, determining individual goals and steps to take to achieve them. The mentors gained much from the project.*
- *The results were measurable, and participation in piloting was successful for the young people involved*
- *The self-assessment questionnaire gives an evaluation of the mentees own situation which is much more detailed than the average assessments.*

## Italian Practitioners

- *Our mentees were enthusiastic regarding the platform*
- *Establishing a relationship with the mentees and helping them focus their mind about their future has been gratifying*
- *It has been difficult to have the students share their emotions and goals at the beginning, but towards the third meeting they felt comfortable enough to share this information with us*

## Portuguese Practitioners

- *The mentors have to be creative to overcome some obstacles such as the resistance of the students, their unavailability to be with the mentors, the combination of group sessions to explain each step and individual or online face-to-face sessions.*
- *The personal development action plan took more time and requires more sessions with the participant who, needs to be supported in their reflection on the four zones.*
- *In contact with the participants, two major difficulties emerged, among others, time management and stress management, these emerged as two problems that deserve special attention in the mentors work with their mentees.*

## Romanian Practitioners

- *The self-assessment questions should be different from course to course to clearly show the progress of the participant.*
- *Due to the same background music for all course sessions, the courses can become somewhat unengaging, we recommend that the music should be in line with the specifics of each island.*
- *It would be beneficial to include on the platform some success stories of other Young NEET's.*

As reported above, the feedback from the mentors across the five participating countries through monthly reporting, direct questioning and self-completion questionnaires is conclusive in highlighting the key benefits of the ITER Platform as an effective and innovative resource for NEET mentors to engage with young people defined as either NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, providing a platform to guide focussed and relevant mentor support on key personal, social and employability challenges and barriers facing young NEET and, through ongoing assessment of need linked to action planning, support them to access, prepare and take up sustainable career pathways.

## Areas for Consideration

Practitioners reported a number of issues experienced with platform use, from both their own experience of using the platform and their direct observation of the participant, that have been identified as areas for consideration and/or improvement for consideration:

- 🕒 **User Profile:** Platform graphics and storyline is best suited to a younger age group (15-18 years old). However, it is recognised that the platform is also particularly useful to work with NEET Young people (all ages) with significant literacy and comprehension challenges
- 🕒 **Platform Music:** - The current platform music could be improved to provide more options that better reflect (1) participant preferences and (2) the story of each of the 4 island stories.
- 🕒 **Platform Reporting:** - current data reporting process and outputs to be extended to enable 'real-time' reporting to be more visible including the use of graphics to measure and highlight participant's journey progression. Mentors were unanimous in reiterating the importance of letting the young person clearly see the progress they are making and how this is linked to both motivational and participation levels.
- 🕒 **Platform Use Instruction:** - It is recognised that current and future users of the platform would benefit from guidelines, including demonstrations, on (1) the purpose of the platform and (2) how to use the platform to include registration, navigation and developing reports.
- 🕒 **Mentor Role:** - It is recognised that the platform questionnaire, the purpose of which is to continually assess the progress of participants across each island session, could be potentially viewed by participants as repetitive. This has highlighted the critical role the mentor plays in ensuring that the participant's platform journey is interactive, relevant and though provoking and that the questionnaire findings form the basis for the basis of bespoke development and support It is recognised that mentors (including future mentors) will further

benefit from practical guidelines/training on how to best use the platform narrative, questionnaires, and self-assessment tool to secure optimum levels of participant engagement in a meaningful, focussed manner.

- 🕒 **Added Value considerations** – the platform offering could be further enhanced through including a package of practical resources for both mentors and young people that will compliment, reinforce, and add value to the one-to-one mentoring process. Resources for consideration to focus on addressing common challenges experienced by NEET young people include motivational videos, blogs, practical tasks, professional materials and recognised models

### 3.3 Recommendations

Summarised below are the key recommendations directly drawn from the evaluation of the pilot programme experience from the perspective of both Practitioners and participants in each of the five partner countries. Recommendations have been presented to project partners and will be implemented as part of the Project's Intellectual Output 5 and within the parameters of the Project budget and timeline.

- 🕒 The level of engagement generated through the platform graphics and content has been identified as a key issue. This is a challenge which Practitioners can address by adapting their mentoring approach and levels of flexibility in order to meet the specific needs of each individual participant. After all, the platform is a vehicle to support or enhance mentoring – it is not a replacement for virtual or face to face relationships. It is recommended that in order for the ITER approach to mentoring to reach its full potential, experienced Mentors should be involved from the onset.
- 🕒 The ITER approach to mentoring should ideally be targeted at NEET Young People aged between 13-15 years of age. Targeting older NEET Young People is still viable option but will require more input from mentors.

- ④ NEET Young People who are struggling to express themselves, those challenged with comprehending tasks or developing interpersonal relationships could also be targeted.
- ④ It is recommended that where 'accelerated learning' is a key objective of the mentoring approach, the ITER approach should be a key consideration.
- ④ NEET Young People entering or within a period of transition (e.g primary to secondary education) will particularly benefit from this approach. It is recommended that this type of target audience should be prioritised if possible.
- ④ It is interesting to note whether any correlation can be drawn between the approach to mentoring and the number of weeks that participants remained on the pilot programme. Early indications suggest that the ITER approach has both retained high levels of engagement with participants as well as keeping drop out levels to a minimum. However, there is no comparable evidence available to make a case either way at this stage.

## Key Recommendations Summary

Guide for Platform Users	Guide for Mentors	Maximise the Platform Offering	Platform Reporting Function	Platform Technical Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a video for new platform users that clearly sets out how to use the platform - registration, session participation, island questionnaires and progress checking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A practical guide for new (to platform) mentors that sets out how to best use the platform to maximise participation, advancement and impact for the user.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a menu of added value resources that will add value to the mentor-participant experience across each of the four islands</li> <li>• Potential resources to include motivational videos, blogs, best practice models, templates and diagnostics, peer input &amp; Reference models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the potential of the platform to generate a range of reports to include               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore opportunities to be able to download reports that provide a graphical display of progress</li> <li>• identify how information can be retrieved via 'real time progress checks'</li> <li>• Identify how best to let the young person (the player) see how they are progressing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ascertain if the current platform music can be changed or varied to reflect the different islands</li> <li>• Consider the inclusion of additional slides within the platform that               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduces the platform to the user</li> <li>• Links the Island questionnaires to the final self-evaluation questionnaire (Session 13)</li> <li>• Consider feasibility of allowing individual users direct registration and platform access to simplify the process</li> <li>• Ensure participants cannot move to next slide until current one is completed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 3.4 The Role of the Mentor

In addition to the significant one to one mentoring delivered to NEET Young People through pilot participation, partner country mentors also held a half-day focus group with their pilot participants the purpose of which was to further explore their views and opinions with regards to the role of a mentor specifically:

- The key traits of a good mentor
- The benefits derived from working with a mentor during the pilot

#### What makes a good mentor – a young person’s perspective ...

- 🕒 The role of the mentor is seen as key to young people’s progression in terms providing advice and guidance, pastoral, and practical support.
- 🕒 A good mentor should be able to build a relationship of trust with the mentee, a sense of honesty and mutual respect
- 🕒 A good mentor is like a good parent: it supports, encourages, and helps. As parents help us through the challenges of private life, mentors lead and keep us on track through professional development
- 🕒 A good mentor is
  - Empathetic, open and honest, non-judgemental, patient, positive and encouraging in approach
  - A good listener and easy to talk to, flexible in approach
- 🕒 Has a sound understanding and knowledge of what’s available for young people and able to use their networks to organise specific support interventions

## The key benefits of working with a mentor- a young person's perspective....



## Participant Case Studies

Included overleaf are case studies of the impact of the pilot on a sample of NEET young people who participated in the pilot study across the partner countries.

## NEET Young Person – Northern Ireland, UK

**17-Year-Old Male. Referral from School.**

**Pilot Participation 7 months to 31 March 2022**

### Education/Employment History

Young Person Attended Ashfield Boy's School up until Year 10 and then was referred to Pathways Project (Alternative Education Provision) for Year 11 and 12. He attended The Pathways project as he was bullied in school and his attendance was under 45%.

### Rationale for joining the ITER pilot.

This participant's referral highlighted that he would require mentoring support and group work to challenge several issues that included

- Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties
- Support while undergoing testing for ADHD
- Finds it difficult to identify, manage and regulate his emotions
- Lack of Exercise due to unhealthy lifestyle (Playing Xbox all day etc)
- Poor mental health.

Due the different types of support this young person would require we decided that the pilot would benefit him as he enjoyed using computer games and had very little social skills so using the platform to engage him would help the mentor build a relationship with the young person.

### A summary of the barriers identified with the young person as part of the assessment process

- 🕒 **Life:** The young person lived with his mother and two younger siblings and had no friends in the area he lived in. Due to bullying in school, he had trust issues and found it difficult to meet up with people due to social anxiety.
- 🕒 **Leisure:** Poor diet and sleeping patterns as was up all-night playing Xbox, did not carry out any other social activities or engage in sport.

- 🕒 **Learning:** Completed Princes Trust Programme so gained equivalent to 5 GCSE's and had obtained Maths and English at level 2 so was academically capable but had poor motivation.
- 🕒 **Work:** Through initial home visits he stated that he would like to do something with his hands, so we explored different options with him within local VETS.

## The Agreed Action Plan

- 🕒 Weekly Mentoring Sessions to include visits to VETS and taster sessions of different courses.
- 🕒 Set up a bank account and obtain ID
- 🕒 Look at traveling independently.
- 🕒 Setting achievable goals around sleeping diet and exercise.

## Soft skills measurement & achievements

It allowed us to work with the young person with the use of the ITER platform so that we could build a relationship of trust with young person and enabled us to focus on different aspects of his barriers at the same time. The Participant appears to be more confident, and his mum also reports he has gained a more independent attitude regarding his future.

## Next Steps...

Support will continue with Participant over the coming months to ensure he settles into their VET programme and enjoys the course he has chosen.

## NEET Young Person – Northern Ireland, UK

**16-Year-Old Male. Referral from Community Partner**

**Pilot Participation from August 2021 with mentoring support ongoing**

### Education/Employment History

The young person had just left school with low qualifications and needed advice and guidance in getting into vocational training.

### Rationale for joining the ITER pilot.

The young person joined the ITER Pilot get help in finding training in the Barbering and Hair industry. He had recently finished school and was interested in joining a vocational training course where he would be able to learn the skills in training and practice them in a work placement. The young person did not want to return to school feeling that he would rather follow a vocational route to employment.

### A summary of the barriers you identified with the young person as part of the assessment process

- 🕒 Learning Zone- The young person was interested in further training.
- 🕒 Life Zone- The young person does not need help in this zone at present.
- 🕒 Leisure zone- The young person does not help in this zone
- 🕒 Work Zone – The young person would like help in employability skills and getting a work placement to compliment his training.

### The Agreed Action Plan

- 🕒 Learning Zone –The young person will research training in the Barbering Sector.
- 🕒 Work Zone –The young person will take part in job search activities.

## Soft skills measurement & achievements

- 🕒 Learning Zone - The young person took part short beauty therapies training.
- 🕒 Work Zone – The young person took part in Group Employability training

The young person scored below average on all zones in the Needs and Barriers assessment, however his mentor did recognise signs of low self-confidence when speaking to the young person.

The young person's mentor gave him a list of different training organisations in Belfast that catered for training in Barbering and Hair. He set up a meeting with a smaller training organisation who pride themselves with excellent pastoral care alongside the vocational training and would be able to help the young person with his confidence. This organisation had also recently started a Barbering course which would work aside with the Hair dressing course.

The young person felt comfortable in this environment and took part in head massage, hopi ear and up styling short training courses with the training centre to sample different therapies in the beauty industry. He also met the tutor who was able to answer any queries he had.

The young person also wanted to improve his employability skills so that he could apply for placements and other employment opportunities. He took part in one-to-one mentoring sessions and also in group employability training. He looked at the skills he had and began to identify how he could use these in different employment positions. He created a CV and researched different barbers where he could enquire about work placements.

The young person recognised the important issues to consider when completing application forms and also practiced completing examples. The young person also

attended interview technique training and completed a mock interview with his mentor. He is now ready to apply for work placements and part-time employment

### **Next Steps ...**

Young person receiving ongoing mentoring support whilst on his vocational training programme.

## NEET Young Person – Hungary

**21 year-old Female. Referral as a jobseeker**

**Pilot Participation 4 months (July – October 2021)**

### Education/Employment History

The client has been a registered jobseeker since 08/07/2020. He has a bachelor's degree of a professional manufacturer of confectionery products.

### Rationale for joining the pilot.

During the cognition, it turned out that the young person did not complete the supported training (physiotherapist), his family environment does not help. He is completely dependent on his family, and he does most of the housework. She has a supportive, helpful friendship group. At the time of entry, his self-knowledge is weak, he is not characterized by independence. The first step was to outline the goals. Negative experiences were gained in the areas of learning (unsuccessful physiotherapist training), work (in simplified employment, short-term job opportunities), and life (mother's attachment, psychological burden). However, positive abilities and values (eg reliability, need for change) have also emerged. In my opinion, with proper support, significant development and change can be achieved and the young person also recognized the potential of the program, so he joined the program.

### A summary of the barriers you identified with the young person as part of the assessment process

#### Life

- increase confidence
- an overview of parental responsibilities
- reduction of stress due to mental health / lack of experience and knowledge
- possibilities to reduce financial dependency

- utilization of previous experience, highlighting and strengthening positives

### Leisure

- reviewing schedules, breaking away from family pressure - more useful time with helping friends, increasing adaptability
- integrating sport / exercise into everyday life

### Work

- 🕒 She has little work experience; it is a problem to contact employers. Creating a CV, expanding knowledge of the labour market and job search, raising confidence, preparing for teamwork (behaviour, acceptance).
- 🕒 Discuss suitable job opportunities. To map out what options you have as a masseur.

### Learning

- 🕒 She attended medical massage training with support, but failed to pass the final exam in theory, the practice was successful. Assess the cause of the failure of the supported training. Mapping her own limits. "Learn from mistakes." Planning for the future - defining new training directions, taking into account skills and opportunities.
- 🕒 Defining skills / abilities - training opportunities. Start of Swedish masseuse training. Her longer-term plans include completing medical massage training.

## The Agreed Action Plan

- 🕒 Increasing self-confidence, self-esteem, expanding self-knowledge, increasing the ability to appear in an interview, adapt, react to a new situation.
- 🕒 Reduce stress by gathering information.
- 🕒 Increase flexibility - consult with family - take up a job / training
- 🕒 Changing the leisure schedule, e.g. time to look for a job, to research training opportunities. Participation in recharging programs.
- 🕒 Compile a training plan. Survey of sports opportunities
- 🕒 Formulation of location goals and expectations.
- 🕒 Creating a resume; Job search - visiting employers - sending and sending a CV

- 🕒 Discussing the job interview process. Strengthening the ability to present skills, knowledge and interest. Preparing Questions from Both Sides - What to Expect? How to react?
- 🕒 Exploring training opportunities, taking into account financial opportunities and individual goals. Create a schedule. Asking for help, internet search.
- 🕒 Apply for online masseuse training, complete the course.

## Soft skills measurement & achievements

- 🕒 She has taken independent steps in the search for a job, in the field of entering training, through increasing self-knowledge and confidence.
- 🕒 Spending useful time with friends has increased. She considered the time she spent with his girlfriend to be a builder.
- 🕒 The training was formulated as a plan, it has not been integrated into everyday life yet.
- 🕒 Her CV has been completed and forwarded to 4 employers.
- 🕒 She has mastered interview techniques.
- 🕒 Participated in an interview with an employer agreed with the mentor, which ended with a positive experience.
- 🕒 She was looking for a job on her own and appeared in several interviews.
- 🕒 Result: She work with a daily report and have been given other opportunities.
- 🕒 She realistically experienced that she needs to work to create her independence and the foundation for her training and then her own business plan.
- 🕒 She has applied for an online course. She continues to weave her plans for the future. She did not rule out the fact that she would start training the stopping masseur again later.
- 🕒 Completed online training, working in the acquired profession is one of her short-term goals.

## Next Steps...

She has an employment relationship with a local employer and has been removed from the jobseeker register.

## NEET Young Person – Italy

**19 year-old Male    Referral from community outreach**

**Pilot Participation 2 months (October & November 2021)**

### Education/Employment History & rationale for joining the pilot.

The NEET had stayed home for 3 years. He had few social relationships that he maintained only through online contact. He has a good emotional relationship with his parents, but there have been several quarrels caused by mutual misunderstandings. He left the Technical Institute in the third year, was unemployed. He dedicated himself to programming and data science but had no idea how to transform his self-taught skills into a job.

### A summary of the barriers you identified with the young person as part of the assessment process

The NEET didn't communicate with his peers in presence but only online and his relationships were based only within his interests in programming and coding. He didn't take care of his physical appearance and health, he was very thin, pale and he had not cut his hair for a long time. When it comes to learning, he self-teaches, studies, reads and enquires about coding and programming. He had been working on a project by himself that absorbed most of his time without bringing any concrete results. He had no idea about any possible job he could take. He would like the job to coincide with his skills and competences and he was not willing to do other jobs before finding the one that best suits him.

### The Agreed Action Plan

The obtained results are an increase in awareness on the NEETs side and a precise will to action. He well understood the concepts that have emerged in the conversations and after 4/5 meetings he decided - and decision making is part of his maturation process - to work synchronously on different fronts:

- 🕒 Independent work on a personal data science project with the goal of creating an app.
- 🕒 Reorganizing, updating and sending resumes
- 🕒 Enrolment in a professional development course as a Java Developer
- 🕒 Outdoor walks 2/3 times a week
- 🕒 Weekly meetings in presence with peers and research of activities to do together and experiences to share
- 🕒 Taking care of his physical well-being through sports and outdoor activities

During the last meeting he said that being active in these different areas has also improved the relationship with his parents, characterized by obvious misunderstandings and moments of conflict.

## Soft skills measurement & achievements

The platform has been a useful tool for reasoning and help in the clarification of his personal problems and critical issues related to the 4 areas: life, leisure, work, learning. It has been useful to give a method to visualize the steps of growth and to overcome the initial shyness.

## Next Steps

One month after the end of his programme, the NEET successfully enrolled in an international high school on new technologies and changed his city of residence.

## NEET Young Person – Romania

**25 year-old Female**

**Referral – former student of University**

**Pilot Participation 4 months (December 2021 – March 2022)**

### Education/Employment History

The mentee has bachelor studies in Engineering and Management and started a master's degree in Industrial Engineering, but she stopped pursuing her studies in the first semester due to financial constraints.

### Rationale for joining the pilot.

She found the concept of the project interesting and believed that it could help her explore and develop her skills.

### A summary of the barriers you identified with the young person as part of the assessment process

The fundamental issues that arise are primarily related to the socio-economic environment in which the subject lives, including national socio-economic constraints, namely a lack of opportunities and a near complete lack of structural social development help necessary for each person to achieve at list a part of their potential.

### The Agreed Action Plan

Considering the circumstances, there was limited practical advice that could be provided, beyond guiding her towards applying for jobs in areas of economic activity where her already acquired educational skills as well as natural personal skills could prove to be a fit. Towards achieving this, a series of practical steps were taken in identifying her existing set of skills as well as conducting a summary review of the economic domains which show the most promises in Bucharest, both in terms of employment opportunities as well as in regard to her practical chances of successfully integrating in the respective companies.

## Soft skills measurement & achievements

The young person is now more confident in herself. She started the process of applying for jobs in Bucharest and she hopes that her applications will be successful and she will be able to achieve financial independence.

## Next Steps ...

At the conclusion of the pilot project, she was yet to have secured a stable form of employment. However, she was already accepted for a number of face-to-face interviews in Bucharest following her applications and she feels confident in her prospects.

## NEET Young Person – Portugal

Female 17 years old

Pilot Participation 5 months (November 2021 – March 2022)

## Education/Employment History

Student of 10th grade of Secondary School. She needs to use different transports to do 22 kms to reach school. She wakes up very early in the morning and has no motivation to be at school.

## Rationale for joining the pilot.

This student will be 18 this year before completing the compulsory education. She is at risk to leave school before the new school year. Most of the time she is sleepy in class, has shown no motivation either for the course or the school. Introvert has not made friends or participated in lessons. Should have been signposted to additional measures provided for in recent inclusive education legislation. As is 'normal' the parents are no longer very involved in their daughter's schooling because she is about

to reach the age of majority and like almost all potential NEETs she has a history of being held back.

## **A summary of the barriers you identified with the young person as part of the assessment process**

The approach to this young woman was almost always in face-to-face sessions because from the beginning of the piloting we became aware of the serious problems of illiteracy. With this young woman it is necessary to deconstruct concepts and use examples so that she understands what is being asked. In addition, she has difficulty in expressing herself and it is difficult to construct sentences because she does not master much vocabulary. What we were able to ascertain is that she has a short-term project of entering the labour market to be a hairdresser's assistant. However, she recognises that she has neither the previous knowledge of the profession, nor does she know how to use tools that would allow her to apply for a job.

## **The Agreed Action Plan**

A first design was discussed on the basis of the first assessment. This first plan design was based on the recognition of the lack of skills to apply for the labour market.

### **Life**

- The need to work on motivation was also prioritised by setting achievable objectives in a short space of time and becoming more ambitious over time;
- Her reserved attitude as being linked to a complicated relationship with her body. It was designed a progressive week plan to increase nightly rest time and the participation in physical education classes;
- In this plan was also included a healthy menu and the mentor shared some guidelines and healthy recipes;
- The question of appearance as a requirement for finding the desired job and exercising this profession was addressed at the same time as the need to acquire knowledge and skills specific to the profession was also discussed.

### Leisure

- The young girl is still unable to equate her participation in activities in her community of residence so the physical education programme was restricted to a more regular active participation in classes which has not been the case so far.

### Work

- As the young girl has very weak competences in several domains the mentor tried to reinforce the importance of completing the secondary education or, equating with the class director and in articulation with the Centro Qualifica other professional education options that correspond to her professional objectives.
- The uncertain future of those who do not have consolidated competences was a topic addressed throughout the mentoring period and when the young girl accepted to use the platform the results of the previous period were evident as she clearly expressed her difficulties

### Learning

- The young girl identified her expression problems as being related to the lack of reading habits. The National Reading Plan is a Ministry of Education Programme with a wide range of books available in the school library. The young girl was to make an effort to visit the library on a weekly basis and first of all to have contact with the magazines and newspapers. In a second phase, she will consult the titles in the National Reading Plan to do a reading list. To overcome the difficulty in understanding the meaning of texts was to make a list of the unknown words and look up the different meanings on the internet or in a dictionary;

- She was to ask for help from the teachers who will be dealing with job search issues (drafting a Cv, a motivation letter, responding to a job advertisement, how to prepare for an interview);
- The mentor reinforced the importance of staying in school and the advantages it would give her in finding a stable and secure job.

## Soft skills measurement & achievements

As mentioned above, implementing a mentoring programme cannot be restricted to the testing period of a project, as it leads to the discrediting of this follow-up and of the tools that were created to support this process. Our expectation is to continue supporting these young NEETs by completing the whole process.

## Next Steps ...

It is urgent that this student be propose to have individual support and recovery measures if she returns to school. In any case, the class director and the course director can refer the student to the Centro Qualifica in order to study a modality that will allow her to finish her schooling, for example in a professional school with an offer for the professional area she wishes to pursue.

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **OVERVIEW OF ITER PROGRAMME DELIVERY TEMPLATE**

## TEMPLATES FOR PILOT DELIVERY

Template Number	Template Name	Purpose	Guidance Notes
<b>ITER01</b>	<b>Participant Enrolment Form</b>	Gather profile information on participant to support action planning and enable evaluation analysis at country and project level	<p>Each partner should contextualize the Question on Educational Attainment to country specific educational system (Note 1)</p> <p>Each Participant will be appointed a Unique Participant Number for identification purposes. The name, address and telephone number for participant will be retained by the partner and will not be shared with the Project.</p> <p>Mentors will be responsible for registering their participants on the ITER platform using email address linked to Unique Participant Number.</p>
<b>ITER02</b>	<b>Participant Needs and Barriers Assessment Guidelines</b>	Provide mentor and participant with guidance on the meaning of each of the questions asked of the participant at the end of each of the 12 ITER Platform sessions.	The Mentor takes the lead in establishing rapport with the participant and creating an environment that encourages exploration. The Mentor should give the needs assessment process time and patience to enable sufficient exploration and full understanding of questions asked. The Mentor's role is to help the young person arrive at their own answers

<b>ITER03</b>	<b>Personal Development Action Plan (PDP)</b>	A summary document that outlines a plan of action for participants focused on their own personal, educational and career development goals.	<p>The PDP is a live document, co-designed with the mentor and participant, that provides a road map - What, When, Where, How - for the participant to address identified needs across each of the 4 zones and progress their next steps career aspirations.</p> <p>The PDP should be regularly reviewed in line with the completion of each ITER Platform Session and outcomes achieved noted.</p>
<b>ITER04</b>	<b>Mentor Contact Record</b>	A live document, completed by the mentor, that summarizes key points discussed during 1-1 mentoring and records key actions arising for both the mentor and participant	<p>Mentors to have direct contact with their participant at least one per week to progress and review actions agreed. Each direct contact session should last a minimum of 1.5 hours with follow up actions to be carried out by both mentor and participant in advance of the next scheduled weekly meeting.</p> <p>It is important that mentoring support focuses on progressing the agreed action plan (ITER03) on each of the LLLW zones and is reflective of the circumstances that the participant is facing at that point in time.</p>

<b>ITER05</b>	<b>Transitions</b> <b>Readiness</b> <b>Assessment</b> <b>Guidelines</b>	<p>Completed by mentor and YP at Session 13 of the platform</p> <p>This self-analysis questionnaire provides both the mentee and the mentor with an opportunity to assess the mentee's current 'readiness' to move forward e.g next steps 'handover' to VET</p>	<p>Both mentee and mentor work through each question – ideally together – discussing the importance of each competency and how well they believe that the mentee is demonstrating that competency, scoring each question from 1 through to 5. If it is not possible for mentee and mentor to work together, then they can work through the questionnaire independently of each other but must then compare scores together at a later date. They must then arrive at a score for each question that each, following discussion, agrees with.</p> <p>Finally, it is the mentor's responsibility to score the questionnaire in terms of red, amber, green for each question, providing a number of priority areas for development for the mentee moving forward as well as highlighting the areas where the mentee no longer requires support.</p>
<b>ITER06</b>	<b>Transitions Plan</b>	<p>The Transitions Plan is an overview of the knowledge, skills and resources that the mentee still requires support with as he/she transitions to the next</p>	<p>The mentor captures all relevant information on the Transitions Plan. Each section is completed with particular emphasis on section 3, the Transitions Action Plan. It is imperative, in this section, that the mentor and mentee reach consensus on the mentee's strengths and areas for development. They should also agree the mentee's 'state of readiness' in terms of transition – on a scale of 1-10.</p>

to stage of their career/life journey. The purpose of this plan is to summarize what has been achieved to date, what still needs to be addressed in terms of development needs, barriers etc and what goals have been set for the future. This is particularly useful information for the 'hand over' organization.

This should be completed for each of the 4 zones. The mentor and mentee should highlight any resources/support/assistance that is available to the mentee eg housing benefit, probation officer, support grants etc. Both individuals will then complete an action plan for each zone.

Section 4 'moving forward' is completed by the mentor (the sending organization), the mentee and the receiving organization. This is a crucial aspect of the plan and ensures that both the 'sending' and 'receiving' organizations are working together in the best interests of the mentee. This is formally signed off by all 3 parties.



BÉKÉS MEGYEI  
KORMÁNYHIVATAL



**desincoop**



*University of*  
**HUDDERSFIELD**  
Inspiring global professionals



This Publication has been funded with support from the European Commission. This website is the sole responsibility of the publisher, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



To Contact us please complete the form on our website <https://www.iter-project.info/>