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## REPORT ON WORKING GROUPS ON CAREER GUIDANCE FOR NEET INDIVIDUALS

Portugal  
2024

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*“ Career eMerge: Integration of Digital Counseling with Career Development ”*  
*Project Number: 2023-2-PL01-KA210-VET-000171223*  
*Erasmus+ Program, Vocational Education and Training Sector.*

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**Project Partners:**

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**Partner:** AESS (Portugal)

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## Introduction

### 1.1. Objective and Scope of the Report

The objective of this report is to present the findings of the working groups and study visits organized within the framework of the **Career eMerge: Integration of Digital Counseling with Career Development** project, focused on career guidance for NEET individuals. The report summarizes key conclusions, challenges, and recommendations developed during expert meetings and outlines directions for the further development of tools supporting the professional activation of NEET youth.

The working groups aimed to develop two key outputs:

- **Career eMerge Online Tool** – an Individual Action Plan for NEET individuals, supporting their career development path and providing career counselors with an effective diagnostic tool.
- **Mentoring Program for Career Counselors** – a comprehensive educational support system for professionals involved in the activation of NEET individuals, covering essential aspects of counseling and mentoring.

The report also documents the collaboration process between project partners, analyzes the needs and barriers in the activation of NEET individuals, and defines directions for the further development of innovative support tools.

The scope of the report includes an analysis of the activities carried out between **August 5, 2024 – August 10, 2024**, during the working groups and study visits in Lisbon, which took place at the following institutions:

- **CENFIC** – Vocational Training Center for the Construction Industry, Lisbon, Portugal.
- **CINEL** – Vocational Training Center for the Electronics, Energy, Telecommunications, and Information Technology Industries, Lisbon, Portugal.

### 1.2. The Context of the Career eMerge Project in the Field of Career Guidance in Portugal

The **NEET rate** (*Not in Employment, Education, or Training*) refers to the percentage of young people who are neither working, studying, nor participating in training programs. Below is a detailed breakdown of NEET data in Portugal:





### 1. Overall NEET Rate in Portugal:

- In **2018**, the percentage of young people aged **20–34** classified as NEET was **11.9%**.

### 2. NEET Rate by Age Group:

- In **2015**, there were approximately **272,000** young people in Portugal classified as NEET, among whom:
  - **198,000** were unemployed.
  - **74,000** were economically inactive.
- In **2022**, the NEET rate for individuals aged **25–29** was **12.1%**, while for the **20–24** age group, it stood at **10.1%**.

### 3. NEET Rate by Gender:

- In **2018**, the NEET rate among women in Portugal was **20.9%**, whereas among men, it was **12.2%**.

### 4. Comparison with Other EU Countries:

- In **2023**, the average NEET rate in the **European Union** for individuals aged **15–29** was **11.2%**. In Portugal, the rate was slightly lower at **10.9%**.

### 5. Trends Over Time:

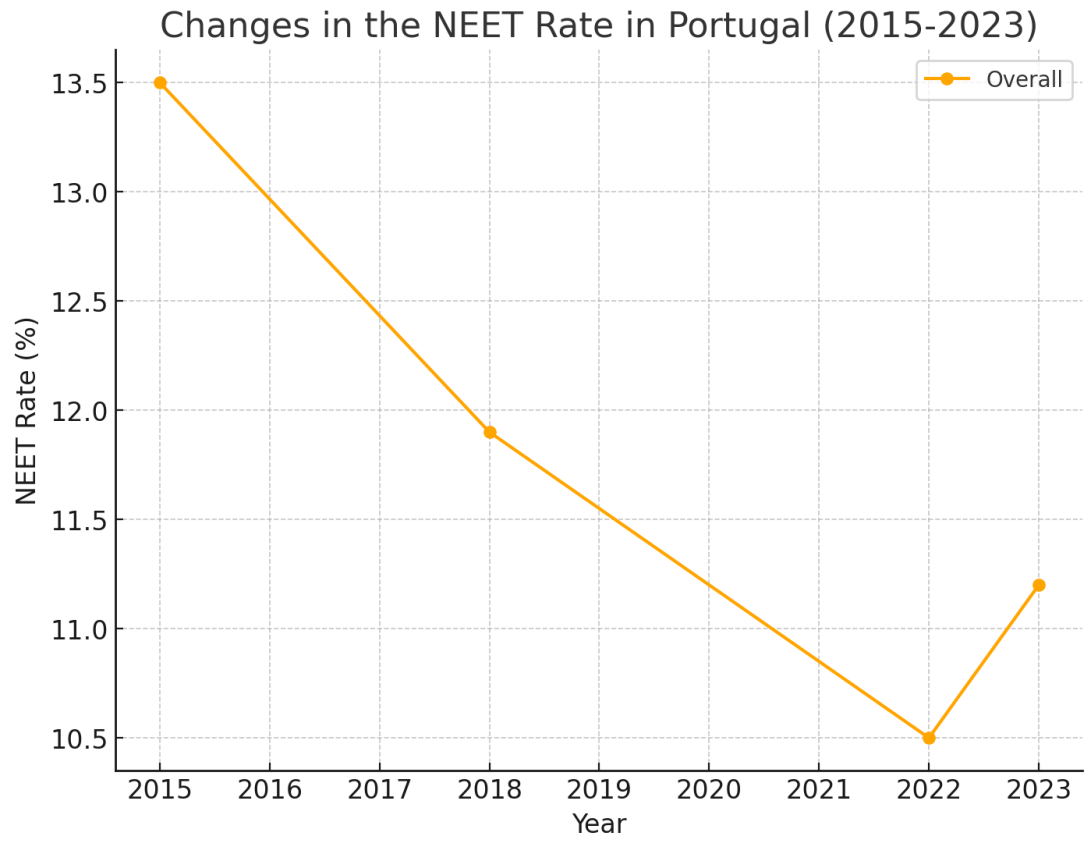
- Between **2013 and 2023**, the NEET rate in the **European Union** decreased by **4.9 percentage points**. A similar decline was observed in Portugal, indicating an improvement in youth participation in the labor market and the education system.

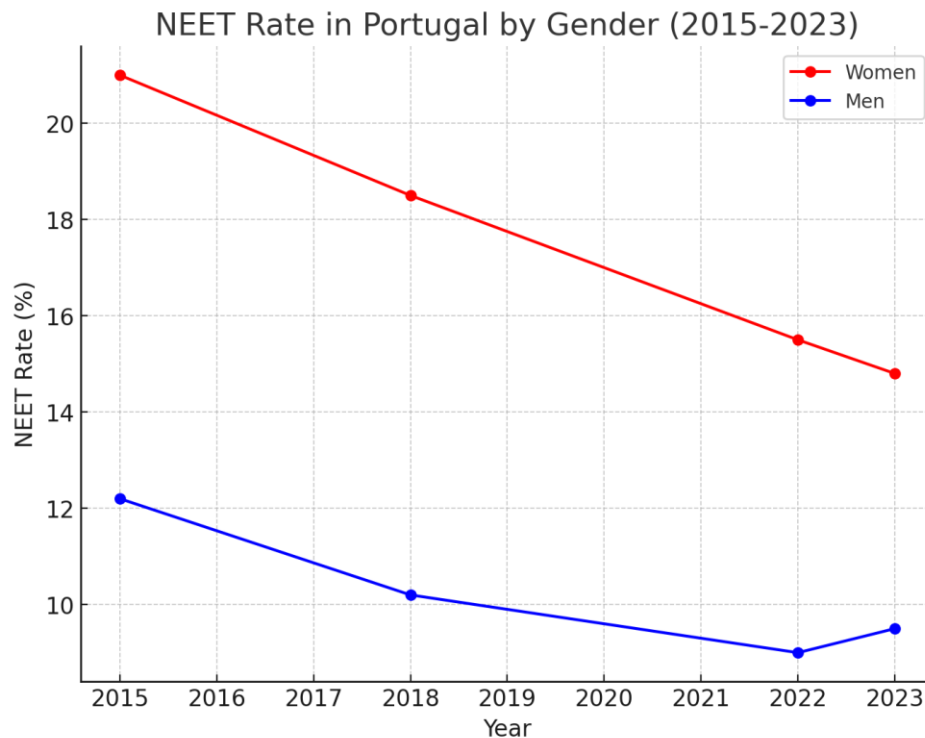
### 6. Factors Influencing the NEET Rate:

- The **high NEET rate among women** may be linked to greater challenges for women in the labor market, gender stereotypes, and increased social pressure to fulfill family roles.

Although Portugal has experienced a decline in the NEET rate in recent years, there is still a need for continued efforts to integrate young people into the labor market and education system, with a particular focus on women.

The data and analysis presented in the accompanying charts indicate that despite a **significant decline in NEET rates since 2015**, after **2023**, there is a **slight upward trend**. Additionally, a **notable gender disparity** remains evident within this group. These findings clearly demonstrate that the NEET phenomenon persists, justifying the need for targeted actions to mitigate and prevent its occurrence.





The **Career eMerge** project was initiated in response to the challenges related to the professional integration of young people classified as **NEET** (*Not in Employment, Education, or Training*) in Portugal. The project aims to develop tools that support career counselors in effectively conducting activation activities targeted at this group.

### The Situation of NEET Youth in Portugal

According to **Eurostat** data, in **2023**, Portugal recorded significant regional disparities in unemployment rates, with the highest levels observed in metropolitan areas, highlighting the need for targeted interventions in these regions (**Eurostat, 2023**).

Regarding youth, in **December 2024**, the unemployment rate for individuals under **25 years old** in the **European Union** was **15.0%**, while in the **euro area**, it was slightly lower at **14.8%** (**Eurostat, 2024**). Although specific data for Portugal during this period is unavailable, previous analyses indicate that youth unemployment rates in the country were similar to or higher than the EU average (**Eurostat, 2023**).

### Challenges in Career Guidance for NEETs





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Career guidance plays a crucial role in integrating NEET youth into the labor market. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is often limited by the lack of tailored tools and training programs for career counselors that address the specific needs of this group (**Cedefop, 2022**). Additionally, regional disparities in unemployment levels require a personalized approach that considers local labor market conditions (**European Commission, 2023**).

### 1.3. The Role of Digital Career Guidance in the Professional Activation of NEET Youth in Portugal

In the face of dynamic labor market changes and ongoing digitalization, career guidance must adapt to new realities to effectively support young people, particularly those classified as **NEET** (*Not in Employment, Education, or Training*). In Portugal, as in other **European Union** countries, the role of digital career guidance is becoming essential in the activation process for this group.

#### The Importance of Digital Career Guidance

Digital career guidance involves the use of **information and communication technologies (ICT)** in professional support processes. This enables:

- **Increased accessibility** – individuals in rural areas or with limited mobility can access career counseling services online (**EPALE, 2024**).
- **Flexibility** – guidance is available at a convenient time for users, promoting higher engagement (**Cedefop, 2023**).
- **Personalization** – digital tools allow content and support formats to be tailored to the individual needs of users (**European Commission, 2023**).

#### Challenges in Implementing Digital Career Guidance

Despite its many benefits, the implementation of digital career guidance faces several barriers:

- **Digital exclusion** – not all young people have access to the Internet or suitable devices, which can deepen existing inequalities (**INCoDe.2030, 2024**).
- **Lack of digital skills** – insufficient ability to use technology can limit the effectiveness of online career counseling (**Portugal Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, 2023**).
- **Trust and security concerns** – fears about privacy and data security may discourage the use of digital services (**Career Compass, 2023**).

#### Examples of Initiatives in Portugal

Portugal has undertaken several initiatives to integrate digital career guidance into the professional activation of NEET youth:





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- **Training programs** – initiatives aimed at improving young people's digital competencies to prepare them for using online job search tools (**Career Compass Project, 2024**).
- **E-learning platforms** – providing online courses and educational materials that support professional and personal development among young people (**EPALE, 2023**).
- **Collaboration with the private sector** – technology companies are involved in projects aimed at developing applications and platforms supporting career guidance (**Portugal Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, 2023**).

In Portugal, as in other **EU countries**, the role of digital career guidance is becoming a **key factor** in the professional activation of NEET youth (**Eurostat, 2023**).

### Case Studies

One of the main programs supporting digital career guidance is **INCoDe.2030**, which integrates education, skills development, and research to improve digital competencies among young people and enhance their employment opportunities (**digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu**). As part of this program, the **Portugal Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition** was established in 2015. This coalition brings together **37 entities**, including government institutions, private companies, NGOs, and academic organizations, working to improve digital skills and increase youth employment in this sector (**digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu**).

Additionally, several projects in Portugal support NEET youth through **digital career guidance**. The **Career Compass** initiative aims to develop **career management skills and resilience** among young adults, helping them adapt to the changing labor market. The program offers **micro-learning resources** and promotes the **integration of career guidance services** with lifelong learning systems, thereby improving NEET youth's ability to plan their career paths (**careercompassproject.eu**).

Furthermore, **educational platforms** such as **EPALE** (*Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe*) provide information and tools supporting adult and youth education. These platforms highlight the **importance of digital skills and career guidance** for at-risk groups, including **NEET youth** (**epale.ec.europa.eu**).





## Organization of Working Groups in Portugal

### 2.1. Location, Time, and Participants

The **working groups** organized in **Portugal (Lisbon)** aimed to explore the challenges of **career guidance for NEET youth** and to develop feedback and key assumptions for tools supporting their professional activation. These meetings were part of the **Career eMerge** project and focused on exchanging best practices, testing digital career guidance methods, and identifying critical challenges related to the integration of NEET individuals into the labor market. A key objective was to establish the next stages of work, define task distribution, and set principles for collaboration within small partnerships to develop **effective and efficient tools** within the project.

The **working groups took place from August 6, 2024, to August 10, 2024, in Lisbon, Portugal.**

The coordinating partner for the working groups was **AESS – Associação Economia Solidária e Sustentável**, an organization that supports initiatives related to career counseling and social integration.

The working groups were attended by **representatives from both partner institutions, WIR and AESS**, including career counselors and professionals engaged in labor market initiatives. The participants included **six representatives from Poland (3F, 3M) and seven from Portugal (3F, 4M)**. Career counselors worked in **transnational tandems** within **small partnerships**, enabling an exchange of experiences between **Poland and Portugal** and facilitating the adaptation of tools to different **cultural and professional contexts**.

### 2.2. Structure and Agenda of the Working Groups

The **working groups** were structured into several key modules:

- **Introduction to the NEET Issue** – discussion of statistical data and labor market analyses in **Portugal and Europe**.
- **Digital Career Guidance and Its Role in NEET Activation** – presentation of online tools and digital solutions used in career counseling in Portugal, such as **ementor.pt**.
- **Mentoring Methods for Career Counselors** – development of the **content framework** for the *Mentoring Program for NEET Professional Activation*.



- **Group Work on the Content and Functionality of Tools** – transnational tandem collaboration on the mentoring program, **hackathon-style work** on solutions and content development for the **online tool**.
- **Presentation of Results and Recommendations** – formulation of conclusions and **strategies for tool implementation** in various career counseling contexts.

The **working groups**, organized by **AESS**, focused on defining the framework for the **Career eMerge online tool** (*Individual Action Plan Online*), which includes:

- A **profiling test** to determine whether a participant belongs to or is at risk of belonging to the NEET category.
- The **application of the DigComp test** to assess digital competency levels.
- **Generation of an IPD report in PDF format**, sent to both the **career counselor and participant**.
- **Transmission of quantitative data** (excluding personal information) to **WIR and AESS**, enabling the monitoring of tool usage.

By integrating **digital technologies**, the tool will facilitate the work of career counselors, enhance accessibility to guidance for NEET youth, and enable a **more personalized approach**. Participants will be able to complete the test **anytime and anywhere**, reducing stress and improving the authenticity of responses.

### 2.3. Description of Study Visits

#### Study Visit to CENFIC – Vocational Training Center for the Construction Industry

The study visit to CENFIC aimed to explore vocational training methods in the construction sector and discuss the integration of career guidance for NEET youth within the vocational education system. Participants had the opportunity to learn about:

- The educational structure and vocational training system in the construction sector.
- Teaching methods based on hands-on workshops and simulations.
- The use of modern technologies, including digital tools and simulators in vocational education.
- Collaboration opportunities between career counselors and vocational education institutions.
- Support programs for NEET youth, designed to facilitate their integration into the labor market.



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During the meetings, discussions also focused on how the Career eMerge tool could be implemented to support career counselors working with young people in the construction industry.

Study Visit to CINEL – Vocational Training Center for the Electronics, Energy, Telecommunications, and IT Industry

The study visit to CINEL aimed to analyze vocational training approaches in the technology sector and explore how innovative digital solutions can support career guidance. The key points of the visit included:

- Presentation of training programs in electronics, renewable energy, telecommunications, and IT.
- Demonstration of digital tools used in vocational education.
- Discussion on the role of career guidance in modern technologies.
- Review of challenges related to the integration of NEET youth in the technology sector.
- Collaboration opportunities between career counselors and educational institutions to improve NEET youth access to technical training.

During the visit, participants had the opportunity to see state-of-the-art laboratories and simulation-based learning environments and gain insights into CINEL's approach to personalized vocational education and mentoring.

#### 2.4. Small partnerships

Within the working groups in Portugal, the small partnerships approach was a key working method. These transnational tandems consisted of career counselors from Poland and Portugal, aiming to exchange experiences, adapt career guidance tools to different national contexts, and develop effective solutions for activating NEET youth.

The small partnerships consisted of six career counselors from Poland and seven from Portugal. Their main tasks included:

- Analyzing the needs of career counselors working with NEET youth in both countries.
- Joint development of the Career eMerge tool, including participant profiling functions.
- Creating the framework for a mentoring program to support career counselors.
- Adapting tools to local labor market conditions by identifying barriers and opportunities for implementation.





- Exchanging best practices in digital career counseling, incorporating methodologies used in Portugal and Poland.

### Structure of Work in Small Partnerships

The small partnerships operated within the working groups and included the following activities:

- Analytical sessions – counselors discussed challenges and needs related to working with NEET youth and exchanged experiences on effective counseling methods.
- Designing the Career eMerge tool – teams worked on the tool’s concept and functionalities, testing different approaches to its structure.
- Developing the mentoring program – teams created training modules for career counselors, focusing on the key competencies required for working with NEET youth.
- Discussions on tool implementation – counselors explored the practical application of the tool in real work environments and considered ways to integrate it into advisory institutions.
- Summary and recommendations – each group presented conclusions on how to improve the tool and tailor it to the specifics of career guidance in their respective countries.

## 2.5. Methodology of Work in the Working Groups

Within the **working groups in Portugal**, the **key working method** was the **small partnerships** approach—**transnational tandems** of career counselors from **Poland and Portugal**. This form of collaboration aimed to facilitate **experience exchange**, **adapt career guidance tools** to different national contexts, and develop **effective solutions** for the activation of NEET youth.

### 1. Methodological Approach

The work in the groups was based on an **interdisciplinary and participatory approach**, which involved:

- **Combining the knowledge and experience** of career counselors from Poland and Portugal to identify **best practices**.
- **Jointly designing digital tools**, considering the specifics of different **career counseling systems**.
- **Working in two- and three-person teams** (*small partnerships*), which facilitated **knowledge exchange** and a **flexible approach** to problem-solving.
- **Applying an iterative method** – gradually **developing and testing** individual elements of the tool based on ongoing insights from the working group.



### Structure of the Working Group Sessions

Each **working group session** followed a structured format consisting of several key stages:

#### 1. Introduction and Problem Analysis

- Discussing **challenges** related to career guidance for **NEET youth**.
- Reviewing **statistical data and research** on this target group.
- Identifying **key needs** of both career counselors and their clients.

#### 2. Development and Testing of the Career eMerge Tool

- **Designing tool functionalities**, including **participant profiling** and the **DigComp test** for digital skills assessment.
- Developing **automated report generation** in **PDF format**.
- Creating a **data collection system** for **monitoring and evaluating** the tool's effectiveness.

#### 3. Work on the Mentoring Program for Career Counselors

- Developing **training modules** on working with **NEET youth**.
- Creating **motivational strategies** and **methods to engage participants**.
- Identifying **key competencies** that career counselors need when working with **NEET individuals**.

#### 4. Evaluation and Adjustments

- **Summarizing** the results of each session.
- **Analyzing feedback** from working group participants.
- Implementing **modifications** to the developed tools and methods.
- This structured **methodology** ensured that the tools and mentoring programs created during the **working groups** were not only **practical** but also **tailored to the real needs** of career counselors and **NEET youth** in both **Poland and Portugal**.

## Foundation for the Development of the Career eMerge Online Tool

### 3.1. Defined Objectives and Functionalities of the Tool

The **Career eMerge tool** was developed within the **working groups** as a **digital platform** designed to support **career counselors** and **NEET youth** in the **career planning and professional activation**





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process. Its **primary goal** is to provide a **modern, accessible, and user-friendly solution** that enables the **diagnosis of young people's needs, profiling their competencies, and developing an Individual Action Plan (IAP) in a digital format.**

### Objectives of the Career Emerge Tool

#### 1. Identification of Youth at Risk of Falling into the NEET Category

- Enables **quick assessment** of the risk of professional and educational exclusion by profiling participants through an **initial diagnostic survey.**

#### 2. Supporting Career Counselors in Effective Guidance

- **Enhances the work of counselors** by providing an **automated tool** for analyzing a young person's situation and proposing **tailored development paths.**

#### 3. Improving the Digital Competencies of NEET Youth

- Uses the **DigComp test** to assess participants' **digital skills** and recommends pathways for **developing** these competencies to **increase employment opportunities.**

#### 4. Personalizing Career Guidance

- Generates an **Individual Action Plan (IAP) in PDF format**, containing **career, education, and professional development recommendations**, accessible to both the **career counselor** and the **participant.**

#### 5. Monitoring the Tool's Usage and the Effectiveness of Career Guidance

- **Collects anonymous quantitative data** (*who, when, and where the tool was used*) to enable **labor market institutions and counselors** to assess the **effectiveness of activation measures.**

#### 6. Supporting Career Counselors in Working with Disadvantaged Groups

- Provides a **multilingual tool** available in **Polish, Portuguese, and English** and accessible **online**, allowing outreach to individuals **with limited access to traditional career counseling.**

#### 7. Reducing Barriers to Career Counseling Access

- Allows **self-directed use** of the tool by participants, reducing **stress** related to **direct interaction** with a counselor and enabling **multiple reviews of the diagnostic results and career recommendations.**

### Functionalities of the Career Emerge Tool





### 1. Participant Profiling

- Initial survey considering social, professional, and educational factors to determine the risk level of falling into the NEET category.

### 2. DigComp Digital Competency Test

- Automatic assessment of the user's digital competency level based on the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp) standards.

### 3. Generation of an Individual Action Plan (IAP)

- PDF report containing an analysis of the participant's professional and educational situation, identifying strengths, areas for improvement, and proposed activation actions.

### 4. Tool Usage Monitoring System

- Anonymous quantitative data transmission to partner institutions (AESS and WIR), enabling the analysis of career counseling effectiveness.

### 5. Online Accessibility

- The tool is available entirely online, ensuring easy and flexible access for users.

### 6. Multilingual and Inclusive Access for Different User Groups

- Available in Polish, Portuguese, and English, enhancing its international applicability.

### 7. User Autonomy

- Users can return to their diagnostic results at any time, fostering reflection on career paths and enabling adjustments to the action plan based on evolving needs.

This structured approach ensures that Career eMerge serves as an efficient, accessible, and innovative digital tool for career counselors and NEET youth, contributing to more effective career planning and activation strategies.

## 3.2. Proposed Technological and Structural Solutions

### Technological Solutions:

- **Career eMerge Tool** – available in **digital format**, enabling **self-assessment, profiling, and automatic generation of an Individual Action Plan (IAP)**.





- **DigComp Test Module** – evaluates the user's **digital competency level** with **automatic result generation**.
- **Automated Reporting System** – **automatic generation of IAP in PDF format** and **distribution to both the career counselor and the participant**.
- **Anonymous Quantitative Data Collection** – monitors **tool usage for statistical and evaluation purposes**.
- **Multilingual Functionality** – available in **Polish, Portuguese, and English**.

#### Structural Solutions:

- **Integration with Labor Market Institutions** – tool accessibility for **career counselors, schools, and employment agencies**, with the ability to **send the IAP report via email** to the user.
- **Flexible Usage** – can be used **independently or with career counselor support**.
- **Career Counselor Networking** – fostering **international collaboration** for the **development and implementation of the tool**.
- **Personalized Career Guidance** – results tailored to **individual user needs**.
- **Adaptation for Disadvantaged Groups** – enabling **remote access** to career counseling at **any time and location**.

### 3.3. Preliminary Concept of the Prototype

The Career eMerge prototype is a digital career guidance tool designed for NEET youth and career counselors. Its key components include:

- Participant Profiling Module – an initial survey identifying the level of NEET risk.
- DigComp Test – assessment of the user's digital competencies.
- Individual Action Plan (IAP) – automated PDF report generation with career recommendations.
- Monitoring System – anonymous quantitative data analysis on tool usage.
- Interactive Online Platform – accessible on computers and mobile devices, allowing for independent use or collaboration with a career counselor.
- Multilingual and Flexible Access – available in Polish, Portuguese, and English, with the ability to review diagnostic results at any time.

The prototype will be developed as a test version, which will undergo evaluation among career counselors and NEET youth.



## Foundation for the Development of the Mentoring Program for Career Counselors Supporting NEET Youth

### 4.1. Key Program Assumptions

The **mentoring program** will be developed to **enhance the competencies of career counselors** working with **NEET youth** by providing them with **effective tools and support methods**.

#### Key Program Assumptions:

- **Holistic Approach to Career Guidance**  
Combining **professional, psychological, and social support** in the **activation process of NEET youth**.
- **Modular Training Structure**  
Five **key modules**, covering:
  - **Self-assessment**
  - **Job search strategies**
  - **Soft skills development**
  - **Psychological support**
  - **Preparation of application documents**
- **Adaptation to Individual Needs of Counselors and Youth**  
Ability to **personalize methods and tools** based on the **specific situations of participants**.
- **Integration of Digital Tools**  
Utilization of the **Career eMerge platform** for **progress monitoring** and **action plan adjustments**.
- **International Perspective and Exchange of Experiences**  
Incorporation of **best practices from Poland and Portugal** in the **context of working with NEET youth**.

The **program aims to improve the quality of career counseling, supporting counselors in effectively working** with youth at risk of **professional and educational exclusion**.

### 4.2. Proposed Modules and Program Content

The **mentoring program** has been structured into **five key modules**, designed to **support career counselors** in working with **NEET youth**, focusing on their **activation and integration into the labor market**.

#### 1. Self-Assessment and Career Planning

- Methods for **assessing the professional potential** of NEET youth.
- Identifying **strengths, interests, and values** in the context of career development.
- Creating an **Individual Action Plan (IAP)** as a strategy for **career growth**.



## 2. Job Search Skills Training

- Strategies for **effective job searching** and analyzing job offers.
- Using **digital tools** in recruitment (**LinkedIn, job portals, networking**).
- **Interview preparation** and self-presentation techniques.

## 3. Soft Skills Development

- **Interpersonal communication** and building workplace relationships.
- **Assertiveness, teamwork, and problem-solving skills**.
- Developing **flexibility and adaptability** to changing professional environments.

## 4. Psychological Support and Stress Management

- Techniques for **coping with stress** and job search pressure.
- **Building motivation and self-confidence** in NEET youth.
- Strategies for working with **long-term unemployed individuals** and **disadvantaged groups**.

## 5. Career Orientation and Application Document Preparation

- Creating **effective CVs and cover letters** tailored to labor market demands.
- Using **digital tools** to build a **professional career image**.
- Preparing NEET youth to make **informed career and educational decisions**.

Each **module** provides **career counselors** with **practical tools and techniques** that can be applied in their work with **NEET youth**, supporting their **professional development, labor market activation, and social integration**.

### 4.3. Best Practices and Innovative Approaches in Mentoring in Portugal

Portugal implements various **innovative approaches** in career mentoring to support **NEET youth** in their **professional and social activation**. Key **best practices** include:

#### 1. "Garantia Jovem" (Youth Guarantee)

A **national mentoring program** that combines **career counseling** with **job offers, internships, and educational opportunities**, providing young people with **support in making career decisions**.

#### 2. Technology-Based Mentoring

The use of **digital career counseling tools**, such as **e-learning platforms, advisory chatbots, and mobile applications**, allowing for **individualized mentoring pathways** tailored to participants' needs.



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### 3. Mentoring Tandems

A model that pairs **career counselors** with **entrepreneurial mentors**, who assist NEET youth in **developing entrepreneurial skills** and taking **initial steps into the labor market**.

### 4. "Empreende Já" Project

A mentoring initiative for young people interested in **starting their own business**, offering **advisory support, training, and access to funding** for startup development.

### 5. Personalized Mentoring Pathways

An approach that considers the **individual psychological and social needs** of NEET youth, focusing not only on **professional development** but also on **building resilience and life skills**.

These **innovative mentoring practices** contribute to the **successful integration of NEET youth into the labor market** and enhance their **motivation for professional growth**.

## Results of the Working Groups in Portugal as a Basis for Tool Development

### 5.1. Key Findings and Recommendations Common to Both Tools

During the **working group sessions** on **Career eMerge** and the **Mentoring Program for Career Counselors**, several **key findings** and **common recommendations** were identified regarding **effective support for NEET youth**.

#### Key Findings:

1. **The need to integrate digital tools with career guidance** – modern technologies enhance **accessibility** and **effectiveness**, particularly for individuals with **limited mobility**.
2. **Individualized approach to NEET youth** – both **Career eMerge** and the **mentoring program** should be tailored to **participants' individual needs, skills, and motivations**.
3. **Lack of digital skills as a barrier** – many NEET youth have **low digital competency levels**, making it essential to include **training modules** to support their **digital development**.
4. **The need for psychological support and motivation-building** – mentoring should incorporate **stress management** and **soft skills development** to **effectively prepare** youth for entering the labor market.
5. **The importance of progress monitoring** – both **career counselors and participants** should have access to **tracking results and progress**, improving the **effectiveness of support measures**.

#### Recommendations:





1. **Integration of Career Emerge with the mentoring program** – the digital tool should **support the mentoring process**, including **automated IAP (Individual Action Plan) generation** and **personalized guidance**.
2. **Flexibility and multi-platform access** – tools should be **available online**, accessible on **various devices**, and allow for both **independent use and counselor support**.
3. **Further testing and optimization** – before full implementation, the tools should undergo **pilot testing** and be refined based on **feedback from counselors and users**.
4. **Adaptation to different NEET subgroups** – tools should address the specific needs of **women, individuals with disabilities, and rural youth**, through **customized content and support approaches**.

A **holistic approach** to implementing both tools will enable **comprehensive support** for career counselors and **NEET youth**, combining **innovative technologies** with **professional mentoring**.

The **working group sessions** resulted in:

- **Refining the functionalities** of the **Career Emerge** online tool.
- **Gathering feedback** from **career counselors and NEET youth** on tool effectiveness.
- **Developing conclusions** on implementing the **mentoring program** within career counseling.
- **Facilitating knowledge exchange** and **strengthening cooperation** between **Portuguese and Polish organizations**.

By leveraging **digital technologies**, the tool will **simplify the work** of career counselors, **increase accessibility** to guidance for NEET youth, and allow for a **more personalized approach**. Participants will be able to **complete assessments anywhere and anytime**, reducing **stress** and enhancing **authenticity in responses**.

#### Beneficiaries of the Developed Tools:

1. **Direct beneficiaries:** Career counselors, psychologists, and labor market specialists, who will gain **new tools** to improve their work and **increase counseling effectiveness**.
2. **Indirect beneficiaries:** NEET youth, who will have access to tools that **assess their risk** of exclusion and **help them choose a career path**.
3. **Institutional beneficiaries:** Labor market institutions, schools, and employment agencies, which will receive **ready-to-use solutions** to support NEET youth.

#### Next Steps of the Project:

- **Testing the tool in real-life conditions**
- **Implementation in career counseling institutions in Portugal and Poland**
- **Developing a dissemination strategy at the local and international levels**





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Through **international collaboration** and the use of **innovative digital tools**, the **Career eMerge project** will contribute to improving the **effectiveness of career guidance** and the **activation of NEET youth** across Europe.

#### Benefits of Small Partnerships:

- **Better alignment of Career Emerge with real needs** of career counselors through **experience exchange** among project participants.
- **Networking of career counselors** – fostering cooperation for further **testing and implementation** of developed tools.
- **Streamlining the process of digital tool development** – joint efforts enabled an **initial evaluation** of the **IAP (Individual Action Plan)** functionality and the creation of **implementation methods**.
- **Adaptation of tools to different target groups** – career counselors analyzed how the tool could be **effectively implemented** in both **urban and rural** institutions.

Small partnerships were a **key element** in the development of both tools within the working groups, ensuring they **better address real challenges in career counseling** and **strengthening international cooperation** in activating NEET youth.

## 5.2. Identification of End-User Needs

The process of identifying the needs of **end users** (*career counselors and NEET youth*) focuses on **adapting the tools to their real expectations and challenges**.

#### Key Needs of Career Counselors:

1. **Effective diagnostic tool** – the ability to **quickly profile participants** and assess their **career situation**.
2. **Process automation** – generation of an **Individual Action Plan (IAP) in digital format**.
3. **Flexibility and accessibility** – the ability to **use the tool online**, including for **remote work**.
4. **Support in mentoring** – access to **ready-made materials and training modules** for working with NEET youth.

#### Key Needs of NEET Youth:

1. **Easy access to career guidance** – the ability to **use the tool independently**, without **time and location constraints**.
2. **Personalized support** – recommendations tailored to **interests, competencies, and life circumstances**.
3. **Development of digital and professional skills** – **training and tests** that help **increase employment opportunities**.
4. **Psychological support** – **motivation and tools** to cope with **stress and lack of self-confidence**.





### 5.3. Key Challenges and Potential Solutions

#### 1. Low Engagement of NEET Youth in Career Guidance

Challenge: NEET youth often lack motivation to actively participate in career guidance programs.

Solution:

- Implementation of interactive digital career guidance tools, allowing users to engage independently at their convenience.
- Integration of gamification elements and dynamic career challenges to enhance platform appeal.

#### 2. Lack of Digital Skills Among NEET Youth

Challenge: Limited familiarity with digital tools makes it difficult to use online career guidance platforms.

Solution:

- Inclusion of training modules within the Career eMerge tool to develop digital competencies.
- Providing career counselor support in the initial stages of tool usage.

#### 3. Limited Access to Career Guidance in Small Towns and Rural Areas

Challenge: Lack of infrastructure and a limited number of career counselors restrict access to career services.

Solution:

- Making the Career eMerge tool available in a mobile version, enabling access via smartphones.
- Establishing remote online consultations with career counselors.

#### 4. Difficulty in Maintaining Participant Motivation

Challenge: Lack of motivation for long-term engagement in career development.

Solution:

- Personalized guidance through an Individual Action Plan (IAP) tailored to users' interests and goals.
- Integration of a mentoring module to provide ongoing support from career counselors.

#### 5. Difficulty in Monitoring Career Guidance Outcomes

Challenge: Lack of systematic tracking of participant progress and career guidance effectiveness.

Solution:





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- Automatic generation of IAP reports in PDF format, accessible to both career counselors and participants.
- Activity and progress tracking system within the platform.

By implementing these solutions, the Career eMerge tool and mentoring program can significantly enhance the effectiveness of career guidance and the activation of NEET youth.

