Interreg Danube Region

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D3.1.2: Cooperation-based pilot designs

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Contributing partners: UBBSLA (BG), HÉTFA (HU), Sapientia (RO), PULSE Balkans (RS), SBA (SK), COPSC (UA)

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1. Executive summary

This deliverable presents the six cooperation-based pilot designs developed under Activity 3.1 of the COOPOWER project for implementation in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. Together, these pilots form the project's experimental intervention component under Specific Objective 3 and aim to strengthen cooperation mechanisms that support vulnerable young people in their transition to education, training and employment. As set out in the approved Description of Action, each pilot design specifies the aim of the pilot, the target group and planned scale of engagement, the key activities, timeline, cooperation model and involved stakeholders.

The deliverable builds directly on the Joint Implementation Framework developed in D3.1.1, which provides the common structure for articulating local problems and needs, defining objectives, developing intervention logic and organising intersectoral cooperation. Accordingly, the pilots are presented as context-specific applications of a shared cooperation-based logic: all are grounded in intersectoral cooperation, theory-of-change thinking and structured logic-model design, while remaining responsive to local institutional settings, stakeholder ecosystems and target-group realities.

The six pilot designs were developed through a staged and participatory process led by ZSI, combining early concept development, transnational co-creation, a detailed pilot template, iterative support through three pilot clinics, peer review of the individual pilot drafts, local stakeholder validation, and final methodological and editorial quality assurance. While ZSI led and structured the process, the deliverable is the result of a genuinely joint effort across the partnership, including substantial input from pilot partners, non-pilot partners involved in co-creation and peer review, Associated Strategic Partners, and local stakeholders contributing feedback and validation in several countries.

In line with the cooperation model typology developed in D3.1.1, Bulgaria is positioned as business-oriented; Hungary, Serbia and Ukraine as civil-society-oriented; Romania as education-oriented; and Slovakia as a dual helix model combining education and business. This positioning supports cross-pilot comparability without reducing the intersectoral character of the pilots, since all pilots remain grounded in quadruple-helix cooperation and involve other domains according to their implementation roles.

Beyond documenting the six pilot designs, the deliverable also provides the basis for the next stages of the COOPOWER work process, in particular the joint evaluation under Activity 3.2 and the development of local and transnational strategies under Activity 3.3, while also supporting later transfer, upscaling and documentation of the six local models of intersectoral cooperation.

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2. Introduction and purpose of the deliverable

The COOPOWER project addresses youth unemployment, social exclusion and territorial disparities in the Danube Region through a transnational approach centred on intersectoral cooperation. Within this wider project logic, Activity 3.1 is dedicated to the co-development and implementation of innovative cooperation-based pilot actions in six partner countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. These pilots are intended to engage and empower vulnerable young people, strengthen cooperation between public, educational, business and civil-society actors, and generate learning for later evaluation, transfer and strategy development.

D3.1.2 translates this project ambition into six concrete pilot designs. As specified in the approved Description of Action, the purpose of this deliverable is to compile the detailed designs prepared by the pilot-implementing partners, including their aims, target groups and planned participant numbers, specific activities, implementation timelines, chosen cooperation models and involved stakeholders. In that sense, D3.1.2 is both a planning deliverable and a quality-assured implementation reference for the six pilots.

The deliverable builds directly on D3.1.1, which established the shared methodological foundation for all COOPOWER pilots. D3.1.1 provides the common pilot definition, target-group framing, design principles, theory-of-change and logic-model architecture, engagement framework, and cooperation model typology. The present deliverable does not repeat that framework in full. Instead, it applies it to the six concrete pilot designs and shows how the shared COOPOWER approach has been translated into locally adapted interventions across different territorial and institutional contexts.

A key principle underpinning both D3.1.1 and the present deliverable is that pilot design should be needs-led rather than activity-led. In other words, the pilots are not built by simply selecting familiar organisational formats or existing services. They are designed by starting from the identified local challenge and the underlying needs of the target group, and by deriving objectives, activities and cooperation structures from that analysis. This is also why the cooperation model differs across pilots: not because some pilots are more intersectoral than others, but because different target-group needs require different dominant cooperation logics within the same shared framework.

The six pilots remain part of one coordinated transnational learning process. They are linked not only by the common methodology developed under Activity 3.1, but also by the wider COOPOWER architecture, including the analytical foundations created under Specific Objective 1, the Local Cooperation Incubators and transnational HUB developed under Specific Objective 2, and the later work on joint evaluation and strategy development under Activities 3.2 and 3.3. In this way, D3.1.2 should be read not as a set of stand-alone national plans, but as a structured collection of locally grounded pilot designs developed within a shared transnational intervention logic.

At the same time, D3.1.2 is not only the product of a shared methodology, but also of a broad collaborative drafting process across the consortium. While ZSI designed and guided the process, the pilot partners invested substantial work in developing their pilot designs and refining them across multiple iterations. Partners not directly implementing pilots were actively involved as critical friends during co-creation and peer review, and the project coordinator was closely engaged throughout the support process, including in the pilot clinics and in communication with the donor where adjustments to the originally approved plans became necessary. The Associated Strategic Partners were also involved in the development of the pilot designs; in several cases they contributed directly during the Vienna co-creation workshop, while in some countries additional feedback and validation were provided by wider stakeholders and by members of the Local Cooperation Incubators.

The deliverable is structured as follows. Chapter 3 describes the methodology through which the pilot designs were co-developed, refined and quality-assured. Chapter 4 presents a comparative overview of the six pilots. Chapter 5 positions the pilots within the COOPOWER cooperation model typology. The following chapters then present the six pilot designs in detail.

3. Methodology for developing the cooperation-based pilot designs

The six cooperation-based pilot designs presented in this deliverable were developed through a structured, iterative and participatory process led by ZSI under Activity 3.1. The process combined early concept development, transnational co-creation, a shared methodological framework, a detailed pilot design template, iterative support formats and multi-stage review. Its purpose was to ensure that all pilot designs were locally grounded while remaining methodologically coherent across the consortium and ready for implementation, evaluation, transfer and later replication. This overall approach is consistent with the objective of Activity 3.1, which is to design, test and implement innovative cooperation-based pilot actions that respond to local youth-employment and inclusion challenges, strengthen intersectoral cooperation and generate learning for scaling and transfer into Activities 3.2 and 3.3.

3.1. Building a shared starting point: Kick-off mini co-creation workshop

The process started at the COOPOWER kick-off meeting in Budapest on 15 May 2025, where ZSI facilitated a mini co-creation workshop on pilots. This workshop served as the starting point for the collaborative development of the six pilot actions. It had a dual purpose: first, pilot partners presented their initial pilot ideas and first implementation considerations; second, ZSI guided a structured collective reflection on what a pilot should mean in the COOPOWER context, what the minimum goal of each pilot should be, and what should be avoided during implementation.

This first workshop was important because it created a shared conceptual basis for the work that followed. The discussion helped partners converge around a common understanding of pilots as innovative, practical and experimental actions that test solutions in real settings, generate learning through implementation, and should be designed in ways that support adaptation, transferability and replication. It also surfaced shared priorities such as meaningful youth engagement, stakeholder activation, measurable outreach, and learning from testing, while at the same time identifying early risks including superficial box-ticking, ethical risks in working with vulnerable youth, communication breakdowns, stakeholder resistance and loss of motivation among participating young people. The results of the workshop were documented in a protocol.

The initial pilot ideas discussed in Budapest remained within the thematic and territorial scope of the approved DoA, but the workshop also made clear that these concepts would need to be further refined through subsequent co-creation and methodological guidance. In this sense, the kick-off workshop did not aim to finalise pilots, but to move from proposal-level ideas to a shared starting frame for structured co-design.

3.2. Methodological orientation

Between the kick-off workshop and the main co-creation workshop in Vienna, ZSI prepared and shared a concept note for Activity 3.1 in order to align expectations, structure the workflow and clarify the pathway towards D3.1.1 and D3.1.2. The concept note functioned as an internal coordination and quality-assurance tool. It defined the scope of Activity 3.1, clarified expected outputs, translated the initial kick-off discussions into a staged process and made explicit how pilot development connects to evaluation and strategy work within Specific Objective 3.

The concept note also clarified that the pilots should build on the analytical foundations produced under Specific Objective 1 and on the engagement structures established through the LCIs and HUB, while at the same time feeding directly into the evaluation and strategy activities under SO3. In this way, ZSI framed pilot development not as an isolated exercise, but as part of a broader cycle of experimentation, assessment, transfer and policy learning.

3.3. The Vienna co-creation workshop

The central methodological step in the development of the pilot designs was the Vienna meeting in November 2025, which ZSI designed as a three-day sequence combining inspiration, exchange and hands-on co-creation. The first day was intentionally dedicated to inspiration and exposure to practice. It included a thematic tour in Vienna on youth-related vulnerabilities led by a former vulnerable young person, followed by a study visit with presentations by seven Austrian initiatives working with the target group and a marketplace for exchange and networking. This was designed to expose partners to concrete approaches, cooperation constellations and engagement practices before they moved into the detailed development of their own pilots.

On the second day and the first part of the third day, ZSI facilitated the main pilot co-creation workshop as an interactive working space combining short inputs with hands-on teamwork. ZSI structured the workshop around core design dimensions such as stakeholder and target-group

mapping, barriers to cooperation, engagement logic, needs identification, incentive approaches and the elaboration of individual pilot actions. The explicit aim was to develop first draft pilot concepts and jointly define practical building blocks that would feed into both D3.1.1 and D3.1.2.

In most workshop exercises, ZSI organised the work around the individual country pilots. This allowed pilot-implementing partners to work in a focused way on their own pilot concepts and to further develop core design elements such as the target group, stakeholder constellation, expected results, engagement logic and planned activities. Project partners not directly involved in pilot implementation supported these country groups as peers and critical friends, contributing ideas, questions and comparative perspectives. Where ASPs were linked to specific pilots, they were also involved in the respective country discussions and provided thematic and territorial input. At the same time, the pilot concepts were not developed in isolation. Intermediate results were repeatedly brought back into the plenary, and all participants had the opportunity to comment, exchange ideas and provide feedback across pilots. This culminated in the feedback carousel on the third day, where each pilot team presented its draft action and received structured peer feedback on strengths, risks and gaps.

Methodologically, this workshop design created value on two levels at the same time. It enabled each pilot team to work in a context-sensitive way on its own emerging design, while also ensuring that all pilots benefited from wider transnational exchange and collective reflection. This made it possible to refine country-specific pilot ideas in detail without losing the common methodological backbone needed for coherence across the project.

3.4. Translating co-creation into a detailed pilot design template

Following the Vienna workshop, ZSI translated the outcomes of the co-creation process and the emerging logic of the Joint Implementation Framework into a detailed common pilot design template. The concept note foresaw this step explicitly, and the process timeline set the delivery of the template for mid-December 2025.

The template was designed to ensure that pilot partners did not simply describe activities, but developed coherent intervention designs. It required them to work through the problem statement, underlying needs, target group, objectives, theory of change, key activities, cooperation model, outreach strategy, barriers to engagement and mitigation measures, incentive model, risks and mitigation, sustainability and transferability, and a milestone-based workplan with Gantt chart.

The template also explicitly included sections on governance and communication structure, collaboration roles and responsibilities, and how cooperation contributes to youth outcomes.

The level of detail in the template was intentional. ZSI designed it in a way that would support internal coherence, comparability across pilots and readiness for later learning and transfer. In particular, activities were to be described step by step, with sequencing, responsibilities and handovers made explicit so that implementation fidelity could be supported and third-party replication would be possible without relying on tacit knowledge or informal explanations. The template also required explicit reflection on sustainability, transferable elements and limits to transferability, thereby embedding replication and transfer in the design process from the outset.

This detailed documentation logic was closely aligned with the Joint Implementation Framework, which defines replication-oriented activity design, milestone-based implementation planning, sustainability and transferability, and the explicit articulation of intervention logic as shared pilot design principles. It also reflects the wider project logic that the piloted local cooperation models will later feed into a toolbox containing their design, evaluation results and practical implementation tips.

3.5. Iterative support through pilot clinics

To support pilot partners during the drafting process, ZSI complemented the written guidance with three pilot clinics held for 1.5 hours each on the 13th of January 2026, 17th of February 2026 and 11th of March 2026. These clinics were designed as practical support and peer-learning formats accompanying the pilot design sprints. The clinics were explicitly framed as flexible support spaces with no fixed agenda, open exchange, clarification and peer feedback in a critical-friend spirit. It also clarified the drafting and review deadlines.

Across the clinics, ZSI used the discussions to respond to practical design questions as they arose. These included, for example, the openness and reusability of training materials, the extent to which existing materials from other projects could be adapted, how work with minors and informed consent should be handled, how pilots and LCIs could relate to each other, how engagement levels and KPIs should be interpreted, and how outreach could be strengthened through work with parents or trusted local actors. The clinic discussions therefore played an important role in bridging the gap between the common methodological framework and the concrete realities of local pilot planning.

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The third clinic, held after the peer-review phase and before final submission, was used by ZSI to strengthen the final quality and comparability of the pilot designs. Key issues addressed at this stage included the assigned cooperation models, the need to strengthen the sections on roles and responsibilities, governance and communication structures, the logic of engagement ladders and KPIs, the alignment of designs with the DoA, and the replication-oriented question of how pilot materials might also be made available in English. This clinic also confirmed that the minimum implementation period discussed in the first clinic should be around nine months in order to allow sufficient time for trust-building and meaningful engagement.

3.6. Peer review and final quality assurance

The final stage of the methodology combined peer review of the individual pilot drafts, local validation, and final editorial quality assurance led by ZSI. Following the pilot design sprints, pilot partners completed their draft pilot designs on the basis of the common template and methodological guidance provided by ZSI. These drafts then entered a structured review phase before their consolidation into the final deliverable. This corresponds to the quality-assurance approach developed for Activity 3.1, which combined shared tools, participatory review processes and final synthesis into D3.1.2.

Within this process, each individual pilot draft was peer reviewed by three partners, including at least one partner not implementing a pilot itself. This created a structured transnational feedback mechanism and ensured that the designs were read not only by those closest to the respective local context, but also by peers able to identify issues of clarity, coherence and comparability across pilots. The review helped reveal where draft designs still required strengthening, for example in the articulation of problem and needs statements, the internal consistency of the theory-of-change logic, the use of the engagement ladder, the measurability of target numbers, and the specification of governance structures, roles and responsibilities. The third pilot clinic confirmed that this feedback was then used by partners to further refine and consolidate their pilot designs before final submission.

In addition to the transnational peer-review process, some pilot partners also used local validation formats to further test and refine their pilot designs toward the end of the drafting phase. In several cases, the first meetings of the Local Cooperation Incubators were already used to discuss and validate elements of the planned pilots, gather reactions from relevant stakeholders and assess local feasibility. Hungary reported that the first LCI meeting generated active interest and concrete offers of support; Slovakia reported positive feedback from stakeholders across helices, including interest in cooperation and offers to share existing tools; Bulgaria linked early pilot

refinement to stakeholder consultation through the LCI logic and to exchanges with tourism-sector actors expected to be actively involved in implementation; and Romania referred to encouraging feedback from a stakeholder already engaged during the Vienna process. These local feedback loops added an important layer of feasibility checking, stakeholder ownership and implementation readiness before the finalisation of the designs.

In parallel, ZSI reviewed all pilot designs from the perspective of methodological coherence, alignment with the Joint Implementation Framework, and consistency with the approved Description of Action (DoA). This review did not only assess whether the pilots were conceptually sound and comparable across countries, but also whether the evolving designs still corresponded to what had been committed in the approved project application. In the final pilot clinic, this was explicitly discussed as a coordinator "gatekeeper role": if a pilot no longer fully reflected what had been promised in the DoA, the change needed to be justified and, where necessary, communicated to the donot.

As part of this compliance-oriented review, ZSI systematically checked the key parameters of each pilot design against the DoA, including target group, territorial focus, intervention logic and core activities. Where inconsistencies, feasibility constraints or context-driven deviations became visible, these were flagged to the respective pilot partners and to the project coordinator so that they could be clarified, documented and, where necessary, formally reported to the donot. This applied in particular to two cases. In Hungary, the pilot location had to be changed and the intervention method was adapted accordingly so that the final design would better reflect the new location and the needs of the target group in that context. In Ukraine, the original plan to work in two regions had to be reconsidered because implementation in one of the initially foreseen regions was no longer feasible, among other reasons because of the war situation. At the same time, the partners remained confident that they would still reach the planned number of young people across the intended target groups. These issues were reported to the donor; by the time of finalising this deliverable, the Hungarian adjustment had already been approved, while the Ukrainian adjustment had been accepted in substance and was pending formal approval.

In this same final quality-assurance phase, ZSI also positioned the pilots within the cooperation model typology developed in D3.1.1. As confirmed in the third pilot clinic, all partners agreed with the final positioning of their respective pilot within the shared typology. Only after these review, validation and alignment steps did ZSI consolidate the six revised pilot designs into the final version of D3.1.2.

The final deliverable is therefore not simply a compilation of six independently prepared pilot concepts. It is the result of a staged quality-assurance process led by ZSI that combined peer review of the individual pilot drafts, local stakeholder validation, methodological revision, DoA consistency

checks, and final editorial consolidation in order to produce six context-sensitive but methodologically aligned pilot designs.

3.7. Methodological added value

This methodology created added value on several levels. First, it ensured local relevance by allowing each pilot to be shaped in relation to its own territorial context, stakeholder ecosystem and target-group realities. Second, it ensured transnational coherence by grounding all six pilots in the same staged process, the same common principles and the same detailed design structure. Third, it strengthened implementation readiness by moving systematically from early ideas to operational pilot designs with explicit intervention logic, governance arrangements, outreach pathways, risks and mitigation measures.

A particularly important added value of the process lies in its replication and transfer orientation. Already at the kick-off workshop, partners associated pilots with scalability, transferability, documentation and learning. ZSI then embedded these expectations into the concept note, the Joint Implementation Framework and the pilot design template. By requiring detailed activity descriptions, explicit role allocation, milestone-based planning, and dedicated reflection on sustainability, transferable elements and limits to transferability, the methodology ensured that the pilot designs were documented in sufficient depth to support later learning, adaptation and replication in other contexts. This is directly relevant for the later toolbox of local intersectoral cooperation models foreseen by the project.

4. Comparative overview of the COOPOWER pilots

The table below summarises the initial pilot concepts as they appeared in the approved Description of Action and as refined during the kick-off co-creation workshop. These ideas provide the starting frame for co-design; they may evolve in response to updated local contexts, stakeholder input, and forthcoming co-creation outcomes.

Region / Country	Pilot title	Pilot partner	Overall objective	Main target group and planned scale of engagement	Core activities	Cooperation model variant
Burgas / Bulgaria	Skills for Seasons: Upskilling Youth for Sustainable Tourism Employment	UBBSLA	To improve the employability and labour-market integration of low-skilled young people in the tourism and hospitality sector in the Burgas region through coordinated, multi-actor skills development and workplace-based support.	Young people aged **15–29** young people who are interested in employment in tourism and related service sectors, who are in lower secondary or vocational education, or who have recently left education without a clear transition into training or employment. → Planned scale: 200–300 informed; **120 reached**; 80-100 involved; 50 engaged	▪ Skills-needs validation with tourism employers. ▪ Outreach, recruitment and profiling. ▪ Job-focused training modules. ▪ Soft-skills and work-readiness workshops. ▪ On-the-job learning and mentoring in tourism SMEs. ▪ Job-matching and referral support.	Business-oriented

Szerencs district / Hungary	"Survival Starter Pack" – Mentorship Programme	HÉTFA & Hungarian Research Church Aid	To strengthen young people's confidence, self-knowledge and readiness to make informed decisions about further education and labour-market entry through mentoring, guided reflection and exposure to real educational and labour-market pathways.	Secondary school students in the final two years of vocational, grammar or technical education in the Szerencs area, typically **16–19**, with a possible range of **15–22**. → Planned scale: 500 informed**;** **100 reached;** 50 involved; 20 engaged.	▪ School-based information and recruitment. ▪ Assessment and individual development planning. ▪ Co-creation. ▪ Study trips. ▪ Comprehensive individual mentoring. ▪ Career Lab.	Civil-society-oriented
Harghita County / Romania	SAPStep – Near-peer mentoring and career guidance to prevent Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET)	Sapientia University	To prevent early leaving from education and training by strengthening motivation, persistence, exam participation and transition planning among final-year secondary education students.	Final-year secondary school students aged **18–19** in three schools in Harghita County. → Planned scale: 250 informed; **180-200 reached**; 150-170 involved; 140-150 engaged	School-based career inspiration and information events; class-based career guidance programme; voluntary near-peer mentoring by university students.	Education-oriented

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Niš region / Serbia	Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) and TEAME-like programme in Niš	PULSE Balkans & ENECA	To establish a Local Cooperation Incubator and strengthen local capacity to deliver entrepreneurship-driven learning and coordinated support pathways for vulnerable youth in Niš.	Young people aged **16–24** in NEET status or at risk of disengagement in the Niš region. → Planned scale: 700 informed; **100 reached;** 40 involved; 20–24 enrolled; 20 engaged (12 sustained engagement)	▪ Local labour-market validation and partnership setup through the LCI. ▪ Decentralised outreach, recruitment and profiling. ▪ TEAME-like training. ▪ Employer exposure. ▪ Transition/follow-up support.	Civil-society-oriented
Prešov Region / Slovakia	Stay & Grow: From School to Opportunity – Building Future Pathways in the Prešov Region	Slovak Business Agency (SBA) & Junior Achievement Slovakia (JA SK)	To strengthen self-awareness, confidence, entrepreneurial thinking and career orientation among young people at a key educational transition point, while producing replicable materials and a teacher methodological handbook for wider use.	Grade 9 pupils aged **15** in lower secondary schools in the Prešov Region, with complementary workshops/webinars for upper secondary students aged **16–19**. → Planned scale: 170 informed; **100 reached;** 55 involved; 40 engaged.	▪ Collaboration with schools. ▪ Three-day school-based training. ▪ Development / testing of student materials and teacher handbook. ▪ Complementary webinars/workshops. ▪ Progression pathway into JA SK competitions / programmes.	Dual helix (Education-Business)

Ivano-Frankivsk region / Ukraine	Skills Future for Youth	Platform for Social Change (COPSC)	To improve employability and labour-market readiness, practical skills in among others social entrepreneurship, career orientation and sustained participation of vulnerable young people through a bootcamp model combining non-formal learning, coaching and psychosocial support.	Young people aged **15–29** in the Ivano-Frankivsk territorial community and surrounding municipalities, especially NEET youth, IDPs, rural/peri-urban youth and recent VET / secondary graduates. Planned scale: 300–500 informed; **150–200 reached;** 120–150 involved; 100–120 engaged.	▪ Stakeholder engagement, validation and participant recruitment ▪ 5-module Skills Bootcamp with coaching/career guidance/mentorship ▪ Integrated wellbeing and psychological-support component	Civil-society-oriented

5. Positioning of the pilots within the COOPOWER cooperation model typology

Building on the cooperation model typology developed in D3.1.1, the six COOPOWER pilots are positioned according to the domain that is most prominent in responding to the identified needs of the target group through the intervention design. This follows the shared methodological logic of COOPOWER: pilot activities are derived from the identified problem and underlying needs of the target group, rather than from familiar organisational formats or existing service routines. All pilots are based on intersectoral cooperation and involve actors from across the quadruple helix. The distinction therefore does not concern whether a pilot is intersectoral or not, but which domain is most central in translating identified needs into concrete activities, support pathways and expected outcomes, while other domains contribute according to their implementation roles.

Pilot country	Cooperation model variant	Rationale
Bulgaria	Business-oriented	Strong labour-market focus and employer engagement shape the pilot's skills-development logic and expected outcomes.
Hungary	Civil-society-oriented	Outreach, mentoring and support for vulnerable young people are primarily coordinated through NGOs and community-based actors.
Romania	Education-oriented	The intervention is embedded in school environments and educational transition pathways, with education actors shaping implementation and outcomes.
Serbia	Civil-society-oriented	Participant support and mentoring structures coordinated through civil-society actors.
Slovakia	Dual helix (Education–Business)	School-based delivery combined with strong entrepreneurship and labour-market orientation.
Ukraine	Civil-society-oriented	Programme centred on youth empowerment and support services delivered by civil-society actors.

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5.1. Bulgaria: Business-oriented model

The Bulgarian pilot is best positioned as business-oriented because the needs identified for the target group are addressed through a pathway in which business actors play a particularly strong role. The pilot responds to a local mismatch between tourism-sector labour demand and the skills profile of low-skilled and low-qualified young people, including weak language and customer-service skills, little work experience, limited access to relevant training, and fragile entry pathways into stable employment. To address these needs, the pilot builds a structured pathway from employer-informed skills identification to training, mentoring, on-the-job learning and job-matching. In this logic, business actors are prominent because they help define relevant competences, validate training content, host placements, appoint mentors and open realistic entry routes into work.

At the same time, the other helix domains play clearly differentiated roles. Civil society contributes through UBBSLA's coordinating and quality-assurance role and through trusted outreach structures; public actors such as municipalities and the Labour Agency support local outreach, inclusion measures, mediation and legal/employment guidance; and education actors contribute pedagogical input, training quality and career guidance. The pilot is therefore not business-led in isolation, but business-oriented within a broader intersectoral structure designed around the target group's needs.

5.2. Hungary: Civil-society-oriented model

The Hungarian pilot is best positioned as **civil-society-oriented** because the needs identified for the target group point primarily to the importance of personalised, trustworthy and participant-centred support. The pilot addresses secondary school students in a disadvantaged rural area who face uncertainty about educational and career pathways, lack reliable and up-to-date guidance, have weak access to career counselling, and need more reflective and individualised support at key transition moments. The intervention responds to these needs through mentoring, individual assessment, personal development planning, co-creation, study trips and sustained accompaniment. This gives the pilot a strong participant-support logic, which is most closely aligned with the civil-society-oriented model.

The other domains are nevertheless clearly present. Education actors are essential because schools provide the main access route to the target group and create the conditions for outreach and recruitment; public actors contribute information on employment incentives and may support crisis management and referral where needed; and business actors contribute practice-based

labour-market insight through professionals, head-hunters and study-trip participation. Even so, the intervention is not primarily structured around school delivery or employer demand, but around the mentoring and guidance pathway coordinated by the civil-society implementing actors.

5.3. Romania: Education-oriented model

The Romanian pilot is best positioned as education-oriented because the identified needs of the target group are primarily situated within the educational transition and the risk of non-completion of upper secondary education. The pilot targets final-year students in technological secondary education who may lack confidence in their ability to complete secondary education, have limited awareness of realistic post-graduation pathways, and need relatable support to stay engaged with final examinations and the transition beyond school. The intervention responds to these needs through school-based inspiration events, class-based career guidance and near-peer mentoring, mostly embedded in the school environment and linked to educational progression. The pilot design itself explicitly describes the model as education-oriented, with educational institutions providing the main structural environment for the intervention.

At the same time, the pilot clearly mobilises the other domains. Civil-society and youth actors support outreach, mentoring and youth-friendly formats; public educational support institutions contribute counselling expertise, mentor preparation and methodological support; and business actors provide labour-market perspectives and inspirational input. The dominant logic nonetheless remains education-oriented because the pilot is embedded in schools and its central expected outcomes concern educational persistence, exam participation and successful transition from school.

5.4. Serbia: Civil-society-oriented model

The Serbian pilot is best positioned as civil-society-oriented because the needs identified for the target group emphasise trust-building, gradual activation, coordinated outreach and participant-centred support for NEET youth. The pilot is organised around the Local Cooperation Incubator and a TEAME-like programme designed to support vulnerable young people through profiling, modular training, mentoring and transition support. In this configuration, civil-society actors do not simply deliver one activity among others; they provide the operational core of the model through coordination, implementation, trust-based engagement and structured follow-up. This fits

closely with the civil-society-oriented logic in D3.1.1, where participant-centred pathways and responsiveness to individual barriers are central.

The other helix domains are, however, functionally important. Public actors such as the municipality and the National Employment Service contribute referrals, outreach channels and transition pathways; business actors provide labour-market relevance, exposure opportunities and insight into workplace realities; and education actors contribute learning content and progression routes into further education or training. The Serbian pilot is therefore best understood as a civil-society-oriented coordination model that integrates the other domains into a broader support ecosystem.

5.5. Slovakia: Dual helix model (education-business)

The Slovak pilot is best positioned as a dual helix (Education-Business) model because the needs identified in the pilot require equally strong contributions from the education and business domains. The intervention is strongly embedded in the school environment: it is delivered during regular school hours, depends on school leadership and teacher involvement, and includes the development of a teacher methodological handbook so that the approach can be sustained and replicated within schools. At the same time, the pilot responds to needs related to entrepreneurial self-confidence, practical labour-market orientation, regional opportunity awareness and exposure to relatable role models. This is why local entrepreneurs and business contributors are not marginal additions but an integral part of how the pilot addresses students' needs.

The remaining domains also contribute. Civil-society actors, especially JA SK, bring methodological expertise in entrepreneurship education, dissemination capacity and progression routes beyond the pilot; broader stakeholder platforms such as the LCI support validation and exchange; and public or education-system actors can support future institutional diffusion through teacher networks and educational structures. Still, neither education nor business clearly dominates the intervention logic. The pilot is most convincingly framed as a dual-helix model in which school embedding and business relevance are jointly central.

5.6. Ukraine: Civil-society-oriented model

The Ukrainian pilot is best positioned as civil-society-oriented because the needs identified for the target group require a flexible, participant-centred and trust-based support model that combines

non-formal learning, coaching and psychosocial support. The pilot addresses young people facing exclusion linked to displacement, interrupted education, limited guidance opportunities, skills mismatches and psychosocial strain. The intervention responds to these needs through a bootcamp model coordinated by Platform for Social Change, with Anima Help providing an integrated wellbeing component that is treated as part of the core support structure rather than an optional add-on. This gives the pilot a strong civil-society support logic centred on empowerment, accompaniment and accessibility.

The other domains remain important in enabling progression and credibility. Public actors contribute participant referral, legitimacy, in-kind support and employment tracking; business actors provide mentoring, labour-market perspectives and opportunity pathways; and education actors contribute specialist content and possible continuation routes into formal education or training. The pilot is therefore civil-society-oriented not because other domains are absent, but because the central coordination and participant-support pathway is anchored in civil society.

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6. Pilot design: Bulgaria

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BULGARIA

Cooperation-based pilot design

Project partner: UBBSLA

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1. Basic information

1.1. Pilot title:

Skills for Seasons: Upskilling Youth for Sustainable Tourism Employment

1.2. Region / country:

Burgas (BG341) / Bulgaria

1.3. Implementing organisation(s):

Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities (UBBSLA)

1.4. Contact details:

Polina Antonova, Communication manager: coordinator@ubbsla.org

1.5. Collaborating organisation(s) / initiative(s) involved:

- Municipalities of Burgas, Nessebar, Pomorie, Primorsko
- Professional high school of tourism "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" – Burgas
- Burgas Free University Career Center
- Burgas Regional Tourist Chamber
- Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association
- Labor Agency - Burgas
- Regional Department of Education – Burgas
- Youth NGOs

1.6. Period of implementation:

April 2026 – March 2027 [M13 – M24]

2. Problem statement (local challenge)

In the Burgas region, tourism is the main economic sector, yet many young people aged 15–29 are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). NEET rates in the South-eastern Planning Region are higher than the national average, especially in coastal and rural municipalities. At the same time, tourism and hospitality businesses report ongoing difficulties in finding local workers with the basic skills needed for stable employment. This situation is largely caused by a mismatch between labour-market demand and young people's skills. Many NEETs have low or interrupted education, limited language and customer-service skills, and little work experience. Seasonal employment in tourism often leads to short job contracts, frequent job changes and periods of inactivity. Existing training and employment support is fragmented and not sufficiently adapted to the specific needs of low-skilled youth or to the realities of seasonal work. As a result, vulnerable young people remain excluded from stable employment or are trapped in low-quality jobs, while local employers increasingly depend on external or foreign labour. Stronger coordination between education providers, employment services, municipalities and tourism businesses, combined with targeted skills development and workplace-based support, is needed to improve youth employability and build a more stable local workforce.

3. Underlying needs

- Need for accessible and relevant skill development aligned with concrete labour-market demand in tourism and hospitality.
- Need for improved English language skills, communication and customer-service competences to meet employer expectations.
- Need for structured pathways linking training, on-the-job learning and employment opportunities.
- Need for trust-based, ongoing support and guidance during entry and retention in seasonal employment.
- Need for stronger coordination between municipalities, employment services, education providers and tourism businesses.
- Need for opportunities to diversify skills beyond seasonal roles, enabling off-season employability.

4. Target group

4.2. Description of the target group

The pilot targets young people aged 15–29 living in the region of Burgas who are in lower secondary or vocational education, or who have recently left education without a clear transition into training or employment. In the Burgas region, approximately 55,000–60,000 young people are aged 15–29.

Based on regional NEET rates of 17–19%, an estimated 9,000–11,000 young people are not in employment, education or training. In this pilot, the priority is given to low-skilled and low-qualified youth with little or no work experience, limited family or social support, and weak connections to employers. Many come from low-income households, rural or peri-urban areas, or ethnic minority communities, and face barriers such as poor English language skills, limited access to training and guidance, and low confidence in navigating the labour market. The pilot focuses on young people who are interested in employment in tourism and related service sectors, including hospitality, events and other customer-facing services, and who would benefit from practical skills training, mentoring and stronger links to local employers.

4.3. Barriers to participation and inclusion and equity considerations

Many young people in the target group face transport constraints, financial barriers, low motivation due to repeated unsuccessful job experiences, limited foreign language proficiency and mistrust toward formal institutions. Seasonal workloads, irregular schedules and caring responsibilities may further restrict participation. These barriers will be mitigated through decentralised training locations, travel cost reimbursement, flexible scheduling aligned with tourism seasons, practical and low-threshold learning formats, and cooperation with trusted local actors (municipalities, NGOs, employment offices). Gender-sensitive facilitation, culturally appropriate communication and safeguarding procedures will ensure inclusive and equitable participation, particularly for Roma youth and minors.

5. Pilot objectives

Overall Objective

To improve the employability and labour-market integration of low-skilled young people in the tourism and hospitality sector in the Burgas region through coordinated, multi-actor skills development and workplace-based support.

Specific Objectives

- To align youth skills development with **concrete labour-market needs** in tourism and hospitality.
- To strengthen **local cooperation structures** between public authorities, employers, education and employment services.
- To test and implement a **mentorship-based on-the-job learning model** within tourism SMEs.
- To increase **youth retention and employability** during and beyond the tourism season.

The pilot responds to a clear local challenge: tourism businesses struggle to find prepared staff, especially for entry-level positions, while many young people aged 15–29 remain NEET and face difficulties entering the labour market. To address this mismatch, the pilot creates a practical skills bridge between young people and local employers by combining short, job-focused trainings with

mentorship and job-matching support. Rather than a one-off training, the pilot is designed as an integrated and repeatable pathway that can be embedded in existing local structures. Employers are actively involved in defining skills needs and mentoring young workers, increasing the chances of meaningful employment, longer retention and sustainable cooperation beyond the pilot period.

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6. Theory of change (core logic model)

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes (within the pilot period)	Medium-term outcomes / contribution to impact	Key assumptions and contextual factors
UBBSLA staff time; municipal expertise; employer networks; meeting facilities; facilitation tools	Joint identification of skills needs with tourism and hospitality employers through interviews and a local skills working group	• Local tourism skills profile produced • Priority skills list validated • SMEs formally engaged (≥10)	Training and support measures are aligned with concrete labour-market needs in tourism and hospitality	Improved relevance of local training offers; stronger employer willingness to engage in youth employment initiatives	Employers are willing to invest time; tourism demand remains stable; skills needs do not change abruptly due to external shocks
UBBSLA coordination capacity; municipalities; schools; Regional department of education – Burgas, Youth NGOs, Labour Agency; outreach materials; travel budget	Outreach, recruitment and profiling of youth (15–29), including NEETs, through decentralised information sessions (school visits; Open door event or Career Day) and individual intake meetings or Hackathon	• ≥120 youth reached and profiled • Individual participation pathways defined	Vulnerable young people are activated and engaged in a structured employability pathway linked to tourism	Reduced risk of long-term NEET status; improved access of disadvantaged youth to labour-market support	Youth trust local institutions; transport and cost barriers are effectively mitigated; families support participation

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Experts; trainers; training facilities; curricula; employer input; training materials	Design and delivery of short, job-focused training modules (customer service, language, hospitality, event skills)	• ≥3 training modules delivered • ≥50 youth complete at least one module	Participants upgrade job-relevant technical and service skills required for entry-level tourism employment	Higher employability and adaptability of young people across seasonal and off-season roles	Training content remains relevant; attendance is maintained during peak tourism periods
Training provider; facilitators; workshop materials	Delivery of soft-skills and work-readiness workshops (workplace behaviour, communication, labour rights,)	• 6–8 workshops delivered • ≥50 participants attend	Participants improve work readiness, confidence and understanding of workplace expectations	Improved job retention and reduced early drop-out from seasonal employment	Youth are motivated to participate; employers value soft-skills development
Tourism SMEs; workplace mentors; mentoring guidelines; UBBSLA monitoring capacity	On-the-job learning and mentoring; Youth Competition among participants for sustainable tourism placements within tourism SMEs	• ≥10 youth placements completed • ≥5 workplace mentors involved	Young people gain supported work experience and strengthen attachment to local employers	Increased likelihood of repeat or extended employment relationships	SMEs provide adequate mentoring support; seasonal workload allows time for mentoring
Labour Agency cooperation; job-matching tools; employer vacancies; UBBSLA facilitation	Job-matching, referral and employment support (CVs, interviews, referrals)	• Job-matching sessions organised • ≥10 youth placed in jobs	Transition from training to employment is facilitated through coordinated referral mechanisms	More stable school-to-work and training-to-work transitions in the local tourism sector	Sufficient vacancies are available; contractual conditions are acceptable for youth

7. Key activities

7.1. Activity title: Joint Identification of Skills Needs with Tourism Employers

7.1.1. Objective:

To align youth skills development with concrete and current labour-market needs in the tourism and hospitality sector in the Burgas region.

7.1.2. Target group:

- Tourism and hospitality SMEs (hotels, restaurants, event organisers, attractions, etc.)
- Employer associations and chambers
- Municipal tourism and economic development departments

7.1.3. Detailed description:

This activity establishes a structured mechanism for employer-driven identification of skills needs**,** ensuring that all subsequent pilot actions are demand-oriented. UBBSLA coordinates a Local Tourism Skills Working Group to collect, validate and prioritise skills requirements for entry-level and seasonal positions suitable for young people aged 15–29. This group members may be part of the established LCI in Bulgaria. The activity focuses on both technical and transversal skills and distinguishes between seasonal and off-season needs. Taking in mind the national report, developed within Activity 1.1. Territorial diagnosis and baseline study, this activity will finalise a list of skills needs (Priority skills list) and validate it.

7.1.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Organisation of a multi-stakeholder working group meeting to validate findings**: the implementing organisation, UBBSLA, informs the members of the Local Tourism Skills Working Group (part of the established Local Cooperation Incubator - LCI) about mapped and selected tourism SMEs across Burgas region, analysing the results from the national data collected (skills gaps, recruitment challenges, mentoring capacity). During the meeting together key stakeholders jointly will validate and interpret findings.

2. **Prioritisation of skills relevant for training modules and placements**: Following validation, UBBSLA will coordinate a prioritisation process to define which skills will be addressed by the pilot. Prioritisation criteria: relevance to multiple employers; feasibility within short training formats; suitability for low-skilled youth; applicability to both seasonal and off-season contexts; alignment with safety and labour regulations. Skills will be grouped into: core technical skills; customer service and communication skills; transversal and behavioural skills.

3. **Formal confirmation of employer engagement in the pilot**: To ensure commitment and accountability, UBBSLA will formalise employer participation through light, non-bureaucratic agreements. Confirmation process: bilateral follow-up meetings with selected SMEs; clarification of expected roles (mentoring, placements, job offers); signing of letters of intent or cooperation statements. Employers will confirm: participation in mentoring or placements; estimated number of youth they can host; contact persons for pilot coordination.

7.1.3.2. Timing and duration

M13–M14 / (April 2026-May 2026)

7.1.3.3. Roles and responsibilities:

- UBBSLA: coordination, facilitation, synthesis of results
- Employer associations: mobilisation of SMEs
- Municipalities: support outreach to local businesses
- SMEs: provision of labour-market input

7.1.3.4. Methods

Structured interviews
Focus group discussion
Participatory validation workshop

7.1.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

Skills needs questionnaire
Meeting facilitation tools
Online meeting platforms (if needed)
Summary templates

7.1.4. Expected engagement

≥10 tourism SMEs
Employer associations actively involved

7.1.5. Key indicators

- Local Tourism Skills Profile produced
- Priority skills list validated
- Number of SMEs formally engaged (target: ≥10)

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7.2. Activity title: Co-design and Delivery of Job-Focused Training Modules

7.2.1. Objective

To equip low-skilled young people in the Burgas region with job-ready, employer-validated competences in tourism and related service sectors by delivering short, modular and practice-oriented trainings, co-designed and implemented in close cooperation with tourism SMEs, municipalities, education providers and employment services, and linked to on-the-job learning and job-matching activities under the pilot.

7.2.2. Target group

50 youth selected for pilot activities

7.2.3. Detailed description

This activity focuses on the co-design, piloting and delivery of three intensive job-focused training strands addressing key skills shortages identified by tourism employers in the Burgas region:

1. **Customer service, communication and interpersonal skills**
2. **Language, cultural competencies and tour operation basics**
3. **Event management and support for cultural and business tourism**

The training modules are short-term (10–15 hours each), competency-based and adapted to the needs of low-skilled youth. They combine practical exercises, simulations, employer-led inputs and real-life workplace scenarios. The content is directly linked to entry-level job profiles in hotels, restaurants, event venues, tour operators and municipal cultural initiatives. UBBSLA leads the activity by coordinating stakeholders, ensuring alignment with local labour-market needs, piloting cooperation mechanisms, and embedding the training model into existing local structures for sustainability and transferability within the COOPOWER framework.

7.2.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Co-design of training curricula based on skills profile:** The modules will be designed by external experts, the content will be adapted for low literacy and low-confidence learners using visual and practical approaches, curricula will be validated with employers, vocational schools and employment services. For each of the three training strands, UBBSLA coordinates the development of a clear competence framework, specifying what participants should know, be able to do, and demonstrate in practice upon completion.

   Core competences Module 1. Customer service, communication and interpersonal skills, include: Professional behaviour and workplace ethics in tourism; verbal and non-verbal communication with guests; basic conflict prevention (mediation) and complaint handling; teamwork in hospitality settings; time management and reliability during peak seasons. Job relevance: waiter, receptionist assistant, housekeeping staff, beach service staff, visitor centre assistant.

Core competences Module 2. Language, cultural competencies and tour operation, include: Functional communication in a foreign language (English); use of standard service phrases and vocabulary; cultural awareness of key tourist nationalities visiting Burgas; basic destination knowledge (local heritage, attractions, events); introduction to tour operation and assisting tour guides. Job relevance: hotel assistant, tour assistant, visitor information staff, event support staff.

Core competences Module 3. Event management and coordination skills include: Understanding event types (cultural, business, sports); basic event planning and logistics; coordination with suppliers, performers and service staff; guest registration and on-site support; health, safety and crowd management basics. Job relevance: event assistant, conference support staff, festival crew, municipal event teams.

2. **Recruitment of trainers and practitioners**: Trainer's selection (experienced tourism and event professionals) and capacity alignment. Prepare trainers for modular, practice-oriented delivery and delivery plans. Scheduling and promotion of training modules

7.2.3.2. Timing and duration

M14–M17 / *(May 2026-August 2026)*

7.2.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- UBBSLA: coordination and quality control
- External experts: develope training modules
- Employers: input and guest contributions

7.2.3.4. Methods

- Interactive workshops
- Role-playing and simulations
- Practical exercises

7.2.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Training curricula
- Learning materials
- Digital presentations
- Attendance tracking tools

7.2.4. Expected engagement

- ≥50 youth completing at least one module

7.2.5. Key indicators

- Number of modules delivered (≥3)
- Number of external experts involved

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7.3. Activity title: Outreach, Recruitment and Profiling of Youth

7.3.1. Objective

To activate and engage vulnerable young people in a structured employability pathway linked to tourism and hospitality.

7.3.2. Target group

- Young people aged 15–29 who would be interested in the field of tourism, recreation and hospitality
- NEETs and youth at risk of becoming NEET (aged 15-29)
- Low-skilled and low-qualified youth (aged 15-29)

7.3.3. Detailed description

This activity ensures inclusive access to the pilot through low-threshold outreach and individual profiling**.** UBBSLA coordinates decentralised recruitment actions in cooperation with municipalities, schools and the Labour Agency, focusing on trust-building and accessibility. Individual profiling allows tailoring participation pathways to each young person's needs and constraints.

7.3.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Planning outreach actions with municipalities and schools**: UBBSLA will coordinate a local outreach planning phase together with participating municipalities, secondary schools, vocational schools and the Labour Agency to ensure coherent and targeted recruitment. Key actions: Identification of priority outreach locations, including vocational and lower secondary schools; youth centres and municipal facilities; communities with higher NEET prevalence.

2. **Organisation of school visits, Career Days and Open Door events**: Based on the outreach plan, UBBSLA will organise face-to-face engagement events designed to be low-threshold, interactive and trust-building. Event structure: short, visual presentation of the pilot and opportunities; testimonies from employers or young workers (where available); Q&A sessions focused on practical concerns (work conditions, pay, schedules).

   Sample types of events:
   - School visits: short presentations during class time or school assemblies
   - Career Days: interactive events with employers and training providers
   - Open Door events: informal sessions at municipal venues or training centres

3. **Dissemination of accessible information materials**: To complement face-to-face outreach, UBBSLA will disseminate accessible, youth-friendly information materials, ensuring inclusivity and clarity. Materials will include: flyers and posters with simple language and visuals; short digital announcements for municipal and school channels; social media posts via municipal and youth networks

4. **Individual intake meetings or hackathon-style engagement sessions**: Interested youth will be invited to individual intake meetings or group-based hackathon-style sessions, depending on local context and participant numbers. The aim of this step is both initial assessment of skills, interests and barriers and direct engagement with motivated youth.

   Individual intake meetings:
   - one-to-one conversations (10–15 minutes)
   - focus on education, interests, constraints and motivation
   - conducted in safe, familiar settings

   Hackathon-style sessions:
   - short group activities and challenges related to tourism and service scenarios
   - observation of teamwork, communication and problem-solving
   - informal identification of strengths and support needs

7.3.3.2. Timing and duration

M16–M20 / (July 2026-November 2026)

7.3.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- UBBSLA: coordination, profiling methodology
- Municipalities: local outreach and venues
- Schools / Labour Agency: identification and referral of youth

7.3.3.4. Methods

- Information sessions
- One-to-one interviews
- Group engagement activities

7.3.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Outreach materials
- Profiling templates
- Registration and consent forms
- Simple digital databases

7.3.4. Expected engagement

- ≥120 youth informed
- ≥50 youth selected for pilot activities

7.3.5. Key indicators

- Number of youths reached and profiled
- Individual participation pathways defined

7.4. Activity title: Soft Skills and Work-Readiness Workshops

7.4.1. Objective

The objective is to strengthen the soft skills, work readiness and employment-related competences of young people participating in the pilot, enabling them to successfully transition into on-the-job learning and entry-level employment in the tourism and hospitality sector in the Burgas region.

7.4.2. Target group

≥50 youth selected for pilot activities

7.4.3. Detailed description

This activity consists of a structured series of interactive and intensive workshops focused on soft skills, work readiness and practical employment preparation, tailored to the realities of seasonal tourism and hospitality work in the Burgas region. Specifically, the activity aims to: improve participants' communication, teamwork, customer-service and basic workplace behaviour skills; build confidence, motivation and realistic expectations regarding seasonal tourism work; prepare participants for recruitment, onboarding and retention in tourism SMEs; create a shared understanding between youth and employers regarding workplace norms and mutual expectations; reduce early drop-out during on-the-job learning and initial employment. The workshops are not generic employability trainings, but are co-designed with local tourism employers and delivered using practical, experiential methods. Real workplace situations from hotels, restaurants, events and tourist services are used as learning cases. The workshops serve as a screening and preparation phase, helping both youth and mentors identify suitable roles and support needs before job placement.

7.4.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Delivery of training sessions**: Delivering training in decentralised locations (municipal centres, schools, tourism facilities), combining short theoretical inputs, role-playing and simulations, practical demonstrations, employer-led sessions (e.g. "a day at the hotel front desk"). Ensure flexible schedules (half-day sessions, seasonal timing). Each participant will be included in 30-45 training hours 3 modules workshops.

2. **Reflection and feedback collection**: Practical assessment and certification of participants. Assessing participants through: practical tasks, simulated customer interactions, attendance and engagement. Certified participants ready for workplace learning by UBBSLA and employer partners. Feedback form participants will be collected via online questionnaire.

7.4.3.2. Timing and duration

M20–M21 (November 2026-December 2026)

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7.4.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

UBBSLA: Overall coordination and quality assurance, monitoring and reporting

Training provider: facilitation and content delivery

7.4.3.4. Methods

- Experiential learning
- Role-playing and simulations
- Peer learning
- Case-based discussions
- Mentoring-oriented facilitation
- Gender- and culture-sensitive approaches

7.4.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Trainer manuals and participant workbooks
- Role-play cards and scenario sheets
- Simple CV templates
- Short instructional videos (tourism service situations)
- Online communication tools (e.g. closed Facebook or Viber groups)
- Feedback and self-assessment forms

7.4.4. Expected engagement

- ≥50 young people participate
- Average attendance rate above 80%
- Active participation in role-play and discussions
- Strong employer-youth interaction

7.4.5. Key indicators

- Number of workshops (training sessions) delivered
- Number of participants completing the workshops
- Percentage of participants assessed as “work-ready”
- Participant self-reported improvement in soft skills

7.5. Activity title: On-the-job learning and mentoring within tourism SMEs

7.5.1. Objective

This activity will facilitate the practical labour-market integration of young people by placing them in structured on-the-job learning positions within tourism and hospitality SMEs in the Burgas region, supported by a mentorship-based model**.** The activity aims to: enable participants to apply newly acquired skills in real work environments; support a smooth transition from training to employment; improve retention and job quality in seasonal tourism work; strengthen SMEs' capacity to mentor and integrate young workers; test a scalable cooperation model between SMEs, municipalities and employment services.

7.5.2. Target group

≥10 youth placements completed
≥5 workplace mentors involved

7.5.3. Detailed description

This activity establishes structured one-week on-the-job learning placements or study visits in tourism SMEs (hotels, restaurants, event organisers, tourist services), combining real work tasks, guided mentoring and innovation-oriented learning**.** In addition to workplace mentoring, participants take part in one-month guided competition for innovative ideas aimed at improving full-season or off-season employment opportunities in Black Sea tourism**.** This component encourages young people to reflect on their workplace experience, identify challenges of seasonality and propose practical solutions together with their mentors. UBBSLA coordinates the placements, supports SMEs in mentoring roles and facilitates the innovation component, ensuring alignment with COOPOWER principles of cooperation, inclusion, skills development and sustainability**.**

7.5.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Identification and preparation of host SMEs**: UBBSLA, together with the tourist chambers and employer associations: identifies interested tourism SMEs willing to host on-the-job learners and verifies compliance with labour, safety and safeguarding requirements. As a result of this step, we expect to have a list of approved host SMEs and signed cooperation agreements.

2. **Definition of learning placements and mentoring plans**: A simple learning and mentoring plan is prepared, including: tasks and responsibilities, skills to be developed and weekly mentoring moments. Each SME appoints a workplace mentor. UBBSLA provides mentor guidelines and templates and supports for matching participants to SMEs based on interests, skills and location.

3. **On-the-job learning implementation**: Participants begin their placements under real working conditions. Assigned mentors introduce workplace rules and routines, demonstrate tasks, provide

daily guidance and feedback. Participants are encouraged to reflect on seasonality challenges, observe opportunities for improving services or extending activity beyond summer.

4. **Youth Competition for innovative solutions for full-season Black Sea tourism employment** (Integrated into the mentoring programme). UBBSLA launches a structured competition among 10 participants, supported by their workplace mentors. Participants work individually or in small teams (2–3 persons) to develop practical ideas addressing: off-season tourism products or services; new event formats (cultural, sports, educational tourism); improved use of facilities outside peak season, skills diversification enabling year-round employment, etc. Mentors support participants by providing workplace insights, validating feasibility and single/group meetings on idea development and presentation. UBBSLA organises a final pitch session with a mixed jury (municipalities, SMEs, tourism organisations) and selection of best idea. Recognition may include: certificates of excellence, small symbolic prizes or internships, presentation of ideas at a local tourism forum, etc.

7.5.3.2. Timing and duration

M22–M23 /(January 2027 – February 2027)

- Placement duration/study visits: 1 weeks
- Competition activities may run in parallel

7.5.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- UBBSLA: overall coordination and monitoring; SME engagement and mentor support; organisation of the competition and final pitching event; quality assurance and reporting
- Tourism SMEs**:** provision of placements**;** appointment of mentors; support to innovation ideas

7.5.3.4. Methods

- Work-based learning
- Mentoring and coaching
- Learning-by-doing
- Peer learning and reflection
- Innovation challenge and pitching

7.5.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Learning and mentoring plans
- Participant logbooks
- Mentor guidelines
- Innovation idea templates
- Presentation tools (PowerPoint, Canva)
- Digital communication groups (Viber / WhatsApp)
- Evaluation and feedback forms

7.5.4. Expected engagement

- 10 young people in placements
- 5 SMEs involved

- 5-10 innovation ideas developed
- Strong mentor–participant interaction

7.5.5. Key indicators

- Number of youths completing placements
- Number of SMEs hosting placements
- Participant and employer satisfaction rates
- Number of innovation ideas developed
- Percentage of participants transitioning to employment or further training

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7.6. Activity title: Job-matching and referral support

7.6.1. Objective

The objective is to support selected 10 young people (those who participated from the very beginning of the pilot) in securing concrete employment or further training opportunities in the tourism and related service sectors by providing structured job-matching support**.** The activity aims to: translate training and on-the-job learning outcomes into real job placements, improve the quality and stability of employment outcomes, reduce early drop-out after placement, etc.

7.6.2. Target group

≥10 youth placements completed

7.6.3. Detailed description

This activity provides individualised job-matching and referral support, ensuring that each participant receives tailored guidance to transition from learning to employment. Unlike passive job brokerage, the activity uses active mediation**,** combining: employer feedback from mentoring placements; participant skill profiles and preferences, real-time labour-market information. UBBSLA coordinates the process, working closely with the Labor Agency – Burgas, municipalities and tourism SMEs to ensure that job offers are realistic, appropriate and supportive for young people entering the labour market for the first time.

7.6.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Consolidation of participant profiles and readiness assessment**: UBBSLA compiles individual participant profiles, including: Skills gained (from Activities 3, 4 and 5); Mentor evaluations and references; Preferred job roles and locations; Availability (seasonal / year-round). As a result of this Step, we expect to have an updated employability profile for each participant.

2. **Mapping of job opportunities and employer needs**: UBBSLA, together with municipalities and employer associations: collects available job vacancies from tourism SMEs; identifies opportunities for contract extensions, off-season roles, part-time or flexible employment, etc. As result from this Step, we expect to have an updated job-opportunity list aligned with participant profiles.

3. **Active job-matching and mediation**: UBBSLA and Labor Agency match participants to suitable job opportunities, organise interview appointments or trial days. UBBSLA experts assist with documentation (CVs, interviews, referrals).

7.6.3.2. Timing and duration

M23–M24 / (February 2027 – March 2027)

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7.6.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- UBBSLA: Overall coordination and job-matching, assistance with logistics and inclusion measures
- Project mediators**:** Employment mediation, legal and contractual guidance, referral to employment services
- Tourism SMEs: Provision of job offers

7.6.3.4. Methods

- Individual counselling
- Active job brokerage
- Employer mediation
- Follow-up coaching
- Problem-solving support

7.6.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Individual employability profiles
- Job-matching databases (Labor Agency systems)
- Simple tracking tools (Excel / shared files)
- Phone and messaging apps (Viber / WhatsApp)
- Follow-up and feedback forms

7.6.4. Expected engagement

- ≥10 receiving job-matching support
- 10–15 employers involved
- High intensity of one-to-one support

7.6.5. Key indicators

- Number of participants receiving job-matching support
- Number of referrals made
- Number of participants entering employment
- Employment retention after 1–3 months
- Employer satisfaction levels
- Reduction in NEET status among participants

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8. Cooperation model

8.1. Collaborating organisations/initiatives, roles and responsibilities

Sector	Actor	Role and responsibility across the pilot	Why this role is needed at pilot level
Civil society	UBBSLA	• Lead implementing and coordinating organisation • Overall pilot management, coordination and reporting • Facilitation of cooperation between municipalities, employers, education providers and employment services • Quality assurance across all activities (skills needs identification, training, mentoring, job-matching) • Monitoring, documentation and contribution to COOPOWER project outputs	• Ensures integrated, multi-actor approach in line with COOPOWER methodology • Provides neutral coordination platform trusted by public and private actors • Guarantees consistency, continuity and scalability of the pilot beyond individual institutions
Civil society	Burgas Regional Tourist Chamber	• Representation of local tourism SMEs • Contribution to skills needs identification • Mobilisation of employers for mentoring, placements and job offers • Participation in evaluation and innovation competition jury	• Bridges pilot activities with real labour-market demand • Increases employer ownership and relevance of pilot outcomes
Business	Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association	• Sectoral expertise on hospitality standards and workforce needs • Support in employer engagement and dissemination • Validation of training and mentoring content	• Ensures alignment with national sector standards • Strengthens credibility and transferability of pilot results

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Public	Municipalities of Burgas, Nessebar, Pomorie, Primorsko	• Local outreach and recruitment of young participants • Provision of venues and logistical support • Support to vulnerable youth (transport, inclusion measures) • Participation in coordination meetings and innovation competition	• Local proximity to target group and employers hence facilitating access • Essential for inclusive access and territorial coverage across the region
Public	Labor Agency – Burgas	• Employment mediation and job-matching support • Guidance on labour contracts, rights and obligations • Referral to employment and training measures • Monitoring employment outcomes	• Ensures legal compliance and sustainability of employment outcomes • Connects pilot participants to formal labour-market instruments
Business	Tourism SMEs (hotels, restaurants, event companies, tourist services)	• Co-definition of skills needs • Hosting on-the-job learning placements/study visits • Appointment of workplace mentors • Provision of job opportunities and feedback	• Provide real work environments and employment pathways • Reduce skills mismatch and improve retention of local workforce
Business	Seasonal and year-round tourism employers	• Testing of flexible employment models • Engagement in innovation competition on full-season employment	• Supports pilot objective of extending employment beyond peak season
Academia / Education	Professional High School of Tourism "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" – Burgas	• Pedagogical input into training and soft-skills workshops • Trainers and facilitators • Alignment with vocational education pathways	• Ensures quality and relevance of learning content • Links pilot to formal education and qualification systems
Academia / Education	Burgas Free University – Career Center	• Career guidance and counselling • Support to job-search skills and employability • Contribution to monitoring and evaluation	• Strengthens transition from education to employment • Adds expertise in career development and youth guidance

Academia / Education	Regional Department of Education - Burgas	• Providing connection and direct contact with targeted schools • Pedagogical input into training and soft-skills workshops • Alignment with vocational education pathways	• Ensures quality and relevance of learning content • Links pilot to formal education and qualification systems

8.2. Governance and communication structure

- Overall governance structure:
  - UBBSLA acts as lead implementing organisation, coordinating all pilot activities, with a Local Tourism Skills Working Group (part of LCI), comprising municipalities, education providers, Labor Agency – Burgas, Regional Department of Education - Burgas, tourism associations, and employer representatives.
- Coordination roles and routines:
  - UBBSLA manages overall planning, activity sequencing, monitoring and reporting.
  - Activity leads (training, mentoring, job-matching) hold bi-weekly coordination calls.
  - Municipal youth coordinators and SME mentors provide local implementation updates.
- Communication channels and frequency:
  - Regular channels: email, WhatsApp/Viber groups for day-to-day coordination, shared online folders for documentation.
  - Steering group meetings: quarterly to review progress and address challenges.
  - Ad hoc calls or site visits for urgent issues.
- Decision-making and escalation pathways:
  - Activity-level operational decisions are made by UBBSLA with respective partners.
  - Escalation to the Local Tourism Skills Working Group occurs if major resource, compliance, or risk issues arise.
  - Final strategic decisions and resource allocation are approved by UBBSLA in consultation with Local Tourism Skills Working Group.

8.3. How cooperation contributes to youth outcomes

- Municipal outreach + civil society coordination → earlier and wider access to support.
- Municipalities' proximity to young people, combined with UBBSLA's coordinating role, enables early identification and engagement of vulnerable youth who would not normally access employment services, reducing drop-out before labour-market entry.
- Education providers + employers → skills that match real jobs.
- Joint design (business + education) of training and soft-skills workshops ensures that learning content reflects actual workplace expectations, improving participants' readiness and confidence when entering employment.
- Employers + mentors + public employment services → smoother transitions into work.

- The combination of workplace mentoring and formal job-matching support reduces the risk of early contract termination and helps young people navigate recruitment, onboarding and employment conditions.
- Civil society coordination + public services → continuity of support across stages.
- UBBSLA's coordination links training, mentoring and job placement into a single pathway, preventing gaps between activities where young people typically disengage.
- Multi-actor problem-solving → tailored responses to individual barriers.
- Regular coordination among municipalities, employment services and employers allows rapid adjustment of support (e.g. scheduling, transport, additional coaching), addressing practical and motivational barriers in real time.
- Employer involvement + youth participation → higher trust and motivation.
- Direct interaction with local employers during training, mentoring and innovation activities builds mutual trust, increases youth motivation and improves employers' willingness to invest in young workers.
- Cross-sector cooperation → opportunities beyond seasonal work.
- Joint reflection by youth, mentors, municipalities and tourism organisations generates ideas and pathways for off-season roles, supporting more stable employment outcomes.
- Coordinated governance → sustainable and transferable support models.
- Shared ownership among actors embeds the pilot within existing local structures, increasing the likelihood that successful approaches continue beyond the pilot period and benefit future cohorts of young people.

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9. Outreach strategy

9.1. Shared COOPOWER baseline definitions

At the pilot co-creation meeting in November 2025 in Austria, all partners agreed that there are different engagement levels of the target group (see Table below). In the sections below, please describe what these engagement levels mean bases on your pilot's activities, cooperation model and local youth realities.

Level	Description	Examples in practice
Inform	Young people **receive information** about opportunities, services, or rights. **Communication is one-way.**	Flyers, school visits, or social-media posts announce a new training or mentoring offer.
Reach	Young people are contacted and **take part once or briefly**, usually as participants or beneficiaries. **Their role is mainly passive.**	They join a single job-skills workshop or attend an event run by partners.
Involve	Young people **participate more than once in activities** and can **express opinions or preferences**, with potential to shape design.	They attend several mentoring sessions, share feedback, or help spread the word.
Engage	Young people take **part actively and continuously**, showing **commitment** and initiative within the activities. They help keep momentum and **bring their perspective** into planning, outreach, or implementation.	They participate throughout a full training cycle, mentor peers informally, or help sustain a youth group.

9.2. Pilot-specific definition

Level	Related activity / steps	Expected number of young people
Inform	Awareness campaigns through municipalities, schools, social media, etc. Direct schools' visits Distribution of information flyers and digital materials Public presentations at local youth centres, relevant partner events, etc.	200-300 youth

Reach	Outreach and recruitment for the pilot (Activity 3) Initial profiling and registration of interested participants Targeted efforts for NEETs and vulnerable youth	120 youth (attending Open door events, career days)
Involve	Participation in soft-skills and work-readiness workshops (Activity 4) Participation in co-design sessions and innovation idea activities Active engagement in mentorship preparation	80–100 youth (attending personal meetings/Hackathon)
Engage	On-the-job learning and mentoring within tourism SMEs (Activity 5) Competition for full-season employment solutions Job-matching and referral support (Activity 6) Follow-up and retention support	50 youth (training completed, mentored, and supported into employment or further training)

9.3. Barriers to engagement and mitigation measures

Barrier	Mitigation measure
Transport constraints – youth living in rural or peri-urban areas may have difficulty reaching training venues or workplaces	- Decentralised training locations close to target communities - Reimbursement of travel costs or provision of transport support - Scheduling placements and workshops near home municipalities
Financial barriers – costs of participation, materials, or unpaid placements may discourage youth	- Covering training materials and protective gear where needed - Travel allowances and small incentives for attendance - Collaboration with municipalities to reduce indirect costs
Low motivation and previous negative experiences – youth may be discouraged due to failed job attempts or NEET status	- Mentorship support during training and placements (Activities 4 & 5) - Positive reinforcement and recognition through certificates and innovation competition awards - Peer support groups and reflection sessions
Limited language and communication skills – may restrict employability in tourism sector	- Targeted language support in workshops (Activity 4) - Role-playing and practical customer-service exercises - Workplace mentoring with gradual exposure to real customer interactions
Irregular schedules and seasonal work – youth may struggle to combine participation with family or other responsibilities	- Flexible scheduling of workshops and mentoring aligned with school calendars and tourism season - Options for shorter or modular participation blocks - Coordination with employers for predictable work hours during placements
Mistrust of formal institutions – youth may hesitate to engage with public bodies or NGOs	- Use of trusted local intermediaries (municipal youth coordinators, NGOs) - Transparent communication about roles, support and safeguarding - Small-group, low-threshold workshops to build confidence

Safety and safeguarding concerns for minors – particularly for participants aged 15–17	- Adherence to child protection procedures - Parental consent for all placements - Mentors trained in safeguarding and monitoring
Limited employer readiness to mentor youth – SMEs may lack experience or time	- Mentor training and guidelines - Regular coordination and support from UBBSLA - Recognition of participating SMEs through public communication and awards

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10. Incentive model

Engagement level	Incentive	Needs addressed	Barrier addressed	Purpose / expected effect
Reach	Transport reimbursement and decentralised training locations	Access to relevant support; inclusion of youth from rural/peri-urban areas	Transport constraints; financial barriers	Reduces practical obstacles to first contact and initial participation; increases reach among vulnerable youth
Reach	Low-threshold information sessions with municipal youth workers and NGOs	Need for trust-based guidance; clarity about opportunities	Mistrust of formal institutions; low motivation	Builds initial trust and understanding; lowers psychological entry barriers
Involve	Group-based soft-skills workshops with peer interaction	Need for communication, confidence and social skills	Low confidence; previous negative experiences	Strengthens peer belonging and motivation; increases sustained attendance
Involve	Provision of learning materials and meals during workshops	Need for accessible, relevant skill development	Financial barriers; irregular daily routines	Enables full participation without additional costs; supports concentration and continuity
Involve	Certificates of participation and documented skill acquisition	Need for structured pathways and employability signals	Low perceived value of training	Makes learning outcomes visible and meaningful; increases commitment to progression
Engage	Paid or supported on-the-job learning placements with mentors	Need for practical experience and stable entry into work	Lack of work experience; fear of job failure	Facilitates real labour-market entry; reduces early drop-out through mentoring
Engage	Workplace mentoring and regular feedback	Need for ongoing guidance and	Adjustment difficulties; stress during	Builds confidence and resilience; improves retention and job quality

		retention support	first employment	
Engage	Innovation competition on full-season tourism employment	Need for skill diversification and year-round employability	Seasonal employment instability	Encourages forward-looking thinking; links youth ideas to local development
Engage	Public recognition of innovation ideas and employer references	Need for recognition and employer visibility	Low self-esteem; weak labour-market signalling	Reinforces motivation; strengthens CVs and future employment prospects

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11. Risks and mitigation

Risk category	Description of risk	Likelihood [Low / medium / high]	Potential impact	Mitigation strategy	Responsible actor
Cooperation	Declining engagement or withdrawal of tourism SMEs due to seasonal workload, staff shortages or changing business priorities	Medium	Reduced number of placements and job opportunities; weakened employer ownership	• Early formalisation of commitments through written agreements • Flexible placement scheduling aligned with business needs • Regular communication and recognition of SME contributions	UBBSLA
Cooperation	Unclear division of roles between municipalities, employment services and education providers	Low–Medium	Duplication of efforts, gaps in support for youth	• Clear role definitions and activity leads • Written coordination protocols • Regular coordination meetings	UBBSLA
Operational	Staff turnover or overload among coordinators or trainers	Medium	Delays in activities; reduced quality of delivery	• Back-up staff identified in advance • Standardised tools and documentation • Workload planning and phased implementation	UBBSLA
Operational	Delays due to school calendars, exams or seasonal tourism peaks	Medium	Reduced participation or shortened activities	• Early scheduling and coordination with schools and SMEs • Flexible	UBBSLA

				timelines and modular delivery	
Ethical / safeguarding	Safeguarding incidents involving minors during placements or workshops	Low	Harm to participants; reputational and legal consequences	• Mandatory parental consent • Mentor safeguarding guidelines • Clear reporting and escalation procedures	UBBSLA
Ethical / safeguarding	Risk of stigmatisation or unequal treatment of vulnerable youth	Low	Reduced trust and participation	• Inclusive communication • Non-stigmatising recruitment • Gender- and culture-sensitive facilitation	UBBSLA
Data & M&E	Incomplete or inconsistent data collection across activities and partners	Medium	Weak evidence base; limited learning and reporting	• Standardised indicators and templates • Centralised data collection by UBBSLA • Regular data quality checks	UBBSLA
Data & M&E	Limited capacity of partners to contribute to monitoring and evaluation	Low–Medium	Delays or gaps in reporting	• Simple, user-friendly tools • Short training for partners on data collection • Ongoing technical support	UBBSLA

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12. Sustainability and transferability

12.1. Sustainability at local level

The sustainability of the Burgas pilot is grounded in its integration into existing local structures and mandates, rather than the creation of parallel services dependent on permanent external funding. From the outset, the pilot functions as a testing and structuring exercise, demonstrating how municipalities, employment services, education providers and tourism employers can cooperate more effectively to support youth entry into tourism employment.

At the local level, the most sustainable outcome is the cooperation model coordinated by UBBSLA. This model relies on regular communication routines, shared tools and clarified roles, rather than new governance bodies. After M24, this cooperation can realistically continue in a lighter format, for example through periodic coordination meetings linked to tourism season planning. The practical benefits of this cooperation—better anticipation of workforce needs and smoother youth transitions—create a clear incentive for partners to remain engaged.

Several pilot activities are designed in a modular and reusable way, allowing continuation with limited resources. The soft-skills and work-readiness workshops can be embedded into existing programmes delivered by the Professional High School of Tourism, municipal youth services or the Labor Agency. These actors already have mandates for training and activation; the pilot adds targeted, sector-specific content that can be maintained with modest staff time and small operational budgets.

The mentorship-based on-the-job learning model also has strong sustainability potential, as it formalises onboarding practices already used informally by tourism SMEs. With simple mentoring guidelines and recognition by municipalities or employer associations, SMEs can continue mentoring young workers beyond the pilot without external coordination.

Job-matching and referral support aligns closely with the statutory role of the Labor Agency and municipalities. By strengthening informal cooperation and information exchange with employers, the pilot enables this function to continue within existing employment services.

Overall, sustainability depends on modest but essential conditions: limited staff time, light coordination resources, and institutional recognition of mentoring and work-based learning. While not all activities will continue at the same scale, the core cooperation model, tools and practices are realistically embedded into local operations, making the Burgas pilot sustainable in practice rather than as an idealised continuation.

12.2. Transferable elements

The Burgas pilot demonstrates a set of transferable cooperation and implementation elements that can be adapted by other regions working on youth employment in seasonal or service-based sectors.

A key transferable element is the structured cooperation mechanism between municipalities, education providers, employment services and employers. Clear referral pathways and regular coordination formats link outreach, training, mentoring and job placement into a single pathway. This reduces fragmentation and can be replicated using existing local institutions without creating new structures.

The pilot's engagement funnel logic (Inform → Reach → Involve → Engage) is another transferable feature. It provides clear criteria for sustained participation and helps regions focus resources on young people who are ready for deeper engagement, while still maintaining broad outreach.

The Burgas pilot also offers transferable engagement and incentive approaches, combining practical support (e.g. transport), social incentives (peer groups, mentoring), learning incentives (certificates, references) and recognition. This balanced mix supports motivation and progression without relying on financial rewards alone.

In addition, the pilot develops light, reusable tools and processes, such as sector-specific soft-skills curricula, mentoring guidelines for SMEs, employability profiles and job-matching templates. These tools are low-cost and easily adaptable to other contexts.

Finally, the governance model, with a neutral coordinating actor facilitating cooperation and communication, is transferable to regions with similar intermediary bodies, such as regional associations or development agencies.

Together, these elements form a replicable implementation logic that other regions can adopt and adapt to improve youth labour-market integration.

12.3. Limits to transferability

While the Burgas pilot offers several transferable elements, some context-specific factors may limit direct transfer to other regions and should be considered when adapting the model.

First, the pilot is strongly shaped by the local labour-market structure, particularly the dominance of tourism and hospitality and the availability of a large number of SMEs accustomed to seasonal employment. Regions without a comparable concentration of tourism employers, or where youth employment opportunities are spread across different sectors, may need to adapt the sector focus, timing and types of placements.

Second, institutional and legal frameworks influence how easily elements can be transferred. In Bulgaria, municipalities, schools and employment services have clearly defined roles that support cooperation around youth employment and work-based learning, including placements for minors. In other contexts, legal restrictions on youth employment, safeguarding requirements or labour contracts may require adjustments to mentoring models, placement duration or working hours.

Third, the pilot benefits from the presence of a neutral coordinating organisation (UBBSLA) with strong links to both public authorities and employers. Regions without a similar intermediary may face challenges in sustaining coordination and trust among actors, requiring either the creation of a coordination function or stronger leadership from public authorities.

Finally, transferability depends on the availability of partners and basic resources, such as motivated employers willing to mentor young people, staff time for coordination, and minimal

funding for logistics and incentives. Regions with limited institutional capacity or employer engagement may need to scale down activities or implement them gradually.

Recognising these limits strengthens the pilot's learning value by highlighting that successful transfer requires adaptation to local economic, institutional and capacity conditions, rather than simple replication.

13. Timeline and workplan

13.1. Milestone-based workplan

	Milestone	Key activities covered	Timeframe (month/year & project month)	Actor(s)
1	Pilot governance and employer needs confirmed	Establishment of local coordination group; joint identification of skills needs with tourism employers; agreement on pilot roles and referral pathways	April–May 2026 (M13–M14)	UBBSLA (lead), Municipalities, Burgas Regional Tourist Chamber, Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association, Labor Agency
2	Training and mentoring model developed	Co-design of job-focused training modules; development of soft-skills curriculum; preparation of mentoring guidelines for SMEs; validation with employers	May–August 2026 (M14–M17)	UBBSLA (coordination), Education/tourism experts, Professional High School of Tourism, Burgas Free University Career Center, Employers
3	Youth outreach and profiling completed	Outreach campaigns; recruitment of participants; individual profiling and readiness assessment; referral to appropriate activities	July–November 2026 (M16–M20)	UBBSLA (coordination) Municipalities, Schools, NGOs, Regional department of edcation
4	Soft-skills and work-readiness training delivered	Delivery of soft-skills workshops; work-readiness sessions; group activities and confidence-building exercises; preparation for workplace entry	November–December 2026 (M20–M21)	UBBSLA (coordination), Training provider
5	On-the-job learning and mentoring implemented	Placement of youth in tourism SMEs; mentoring support; workplace monitoring; innovation competition on full-season tourism employment	January–February 2027 (M22–M23)	UBBSLA (coordination), Tourism SMEs, Employers' Associations

6	Job-matching, evaluation and consolidation	Job-matching and referral support; follow-up with employers and youth; documentation of results; sustainability and transferability planning	March 2027 (M24)	UBBSLA (lead), Labor Agency, Municipalities, Employers, Education providers

13.2. Gannt-chart

		M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
		April 26	May 26	June 26	July 26	Aug 26	Sept 26	Oct 26	Nov 26	Dec 26	Jan 27	Feb 27	Mar 27
M1	Pilot governance & coordination setup (Local Tourism Skills Working Group)												
M1	Employer consultation & skills needs analysis (Priority skills list validated)												
M2	Design of training & mentoring model (Development of soft-skills curriculum & tools)												
M2	Recruitment of trainers and practitioners												
M3	Outreach & communication campaign												
M3	Youth recruitment & profiling (Info sessions in schools, Open Days, Career Day, Hackaton)												
M4	Soft-skills & work-readiness workshops												
M5	Workplace preparation & matching with SMEs												
M5	On-the-job learning placements												
M5	Mentoring support in SMEs												
M5	Competition for innovative ideas for full-season tourism solutions												
M6	Job-matching & referral support												
M6	Follow-up with youth & employers												
M6	Evaluation, learning & sustainability planning (reporting)												

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7. Pilot design: Hungary

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Hungary

Cooperation-based pilot design

Project partner: Hétfa Research Institute

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1. Basic information

1.1. Pilot title

“Survival Starter Pack” – Mentorship Programme

1.2. Region / country

Hungary, Szerencs district

1.3. Implementing organisation(s)

HÉTFA Research Institute and Hungarian Research Church Aid

1.4. Contact details

Anna Szerepi, +36 70 286 7106 szerepi.anna@jobbadni.hu

1.5. Collaborating organisations involved

1. Bocskai István Catholic Grammar and Vocational School, Szerencs
2. Tokaj-Hegyalja University – Tokaj Commercial and Tourism Technical School, Vocational School and Dormitory
3. Tokaj-Hegyalja University – Tokaj Agricultural Technical School, Vocational School and Dormitory
4. Tokaji Ferenc Technical, Vocational and Secondary School
5. Szerencs Vocational Training Centre Technical and Service Vocational Grammar School and Vocational School

1.6. Period of implementation

April 2026 – March 2027

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2. Problem statement (local challenge)

Rural depopulation and outmigration in the Szerencs district, is very strong: according to the interviews, 30-50% of youngsters leave the area to the Western part of Hungary or to Western countries since these are more attractive due to employment opportunities, infrastructure, and living standards. Nevertheless, according to stakeholder interviews, young people's decision to leave the area is usually based on emotional reasons (such as hearsay, friends' opinions, sudden interest or opportunity etc.) rather than reliable and concrete information.

Youngsters in the Szerencs district show significantly lower participation in higher education than the EU and national level; vocational education is still the most favourable educational form for vulnerable young people and their families (because there you can get a generous stipend, and it is a shorter stay in school), which, without the necessary certificate (granted by taking a matura exam, only available through grammar schools), makes it impossible for them even to consider entering higher education.

Youngsters in rural areas face serious barriers to participation in adult education often due to insufficient information, limited time, financial constraints, or a lack of perceived benefits.

The modernisation of the education system has fallen behind; competence-based teaching and learning that could lead to a successful career in the future labour market is scarcely present in secondary education in rural areas such as the Szerencs district.

Young people are increasingly stressed and burdened about their future prospects due to rapid changes related to automation and digitalisation; they lack access to essential and reliable information.

For young people in their secondary education no career counselling is available in rural areas: youth or employment NGOs are completely missing, state-funded, private and educational organisations do not have the capacity to tackle this issue.

3. Underlying needs

- Need for reliable, up-to-date and concrete information about local, national and international labour market opportunities, including information on labour mobility and migration pathways.
- Need for structured information and targeted support during key educational transitions in order to reduce the risk of exclusion from higher education, particularly among talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Need for systematic and accessible information on local, regional and national education opportunities, including both offline and online formats, in order to reduce barriers to participation and promote lifelong learning as a strategy for long-term employability and resilience.
- Need for integrating the development and understanding of transversal competencies throughout the school career, enabling young people to recognise their relevance for future employment, adaptability and career progression.
- Need for fostering an open, reflective and resilient mindset among young people, equipping them to make evidence-based decisions regarding their educational and career pathways.
- Need for personalised, detailed, and trustworthy career guidance that provides clear orientation regarding educational pathways and labour market opportunities.

4. Target group

4.1. Description of the target group

The pilot targets **secondary school students in the final two years** of vocational, grammar or technical education (typically 16–19-year-olds but can range from 15 to 22) in the Szerencs area, who are approaching the completion of their studies and report uncertainty regarding their post-school educational or career pathways. In terms of age, participants are expected to range from 16 to 19 years of age, depending on the duration and type of programme they are currently in (three-year vocational, four-year grammar school, or five-year technical programme). Students attending the involved schools are usually in a disadvantaged socio-economic situation (most of the "better off" students are attending schools in the county seat). **This may include students with limited family support, those living in segregated or marginalised communities (including Roma communities), those living with disabilities, and those experiencing social isolation or mental health challenges.**

4.2. Barriers to participation and inclusion and equity considerations

Participants may face **transport** and **time constraints** that could **limit participation** in mentoring sessions. These barriers will be addressed through the **reimbursement of public transport costs, scheduling mentoring sessions outside school hours, and using mixed communication formats (**in-person and online meetings), where appropriate. Participants experiencing **low confidence or limited family encouragement** will receive additional support through **joint initial meetings involving trusted referral partners and informal introductory sessions** before one-to-one mentoring begins. **Safeguarding and confidentiality** will be ensured through written **informed consent procedures, a named safeguarding lead** within the implementing organisation (HRCA), and **clear communication** of confidentiality limits at the outset of participation.

5. Pilot objectives

- Participating young people report increased confidence and enhanced readiness to transition into post-compulsory education or employment.
- Participating young people demonstrate increased awareness of the importance of lifelong learning and transversal competences as key factors for the sustainable participation in the future labour market.
- Participating young people develop a more realistic self-assessment and increased awareness of their "work personality" (i.e. their typical working style, behavioural tendencies in task situations, collaboration patterns and response to structure), as well their strengths, and areas for development.
- Participating young people strengthen their capacity to make informed decisions regarding further education and labour market entry, taking into account their personality, competences, interests and labour-market realities.
- Core elements of the mentoring model are documented and prepared for continuation or integration into the implementing organisation's regular services, and where relevant, into territorial and regional career development initiatives.

6. Theory of change (core logic model)

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes (within the pilot period)	Medium-term outcomes / contribution to impact	Key assumptions and contextual factors
Cooperating secondary schools and their staff	Information events about the pilot targeting the engagement of young people	Number of information events held in homeroom periods	Readiness to join the mentorship program	Increased active engagement in career planning and self-development related to future educational and career pathways	Good personal relationship and high level of cooperation with headmasters and homeroom teachers. Young people are open to hear about the initiative
Available mentor and volunteers Interested youngsters	Engagement of young people in the mentorship program	Number of secondary school pupils engaged Number of signed agreements	Commitment of secondary school pupils to participate in the mentorship program	Increased sense of individual responsibility for personal education and career development.	Youngsters enrol voluntarily and remain willing to engage
A set of tests, methods and tools for initial assessment Prepared mentor	Assessment of youngsters' personality, competences, personal socio-cultural	Number of completed and evaluated tests Number of implemented assessment methods	Improved self-awareness of young people in terms of strengths, weaknesses, barriers and drivers	Increased capacity to align future education or career choices with personal skills, competencies and available options	Finding the adequate online channels and physical spaces for collaboration between mentor and youngsters

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	situation and fields of interests	Number of personal development plans	affecting their future career paths		
Facilities for co-creation Mentors Young participants	Co-creation sessions to define the concrete destinations and content of workshops and study trips	Number of co-creation sessions Number of participants Number of concrete plans and timelines for workshops and study trips	Increased enthusiasm of youngsters for nonformal learning opportunities	Sustained participation in the mentorship program Increased level of responsibility and proactiveness	Continuous commitment, interest and dedication from the side of youngsters. The mentors possess adequate competences in active listening and co-creation facilitation.
Mentor Young participants Professionals willing to actively collaborate from all sectors (state, business, social economy etc (working in professions selected by the co-creation sessions)	Workshops Study trips	Number of: workshops, study trips Number of young participants Number of professionals actively involved	Increased knowledge about professions and career-paths' Increased awareness of competencies required in professions Increased understanding of lifelong learning	Increased capability to make responsible decisions about further education and labour market entry based on personality, competences, interests and labour-market realities	The mentor is able to mobilise and coordinate professionals from diverse sectors Labour market stakeholders are willing to provide realistic and up-to-date insights.

Mentor Young participants Adequate online and offline communication channels	Individual mentorship following the individual development plan	Number of youngsters actively engaged in mentorship activities	Increased understanding of youngsters' personal background and support system Increased level of youngsters' own understanding about personal and family-based, social rooted barriers and drivers	Increased likelihood of transition to further education or employment	Youngsters' openness to share personal information, experiences and family situation Youngsters' families understanding of the mentorship programme's goals and willingness to support the participants Finding the adequate online and offline channels and physical spaces to keep communication active
Facilities for co-creation Mentor Young participants LCI stakeholders	Career-lab: co-creation workshop about the future of labour market	Number of participants in the career lab session	Better understanding of the yet unknown future labour market's requirements Increased ability of participants to reflect on and articulate lessons learnt during the programme	Participating young people become more aware of the importance of lifelong learning and transversal competences as means to success in the future labour market Increased capacity to reflect on and communicate personal development in broader educational and labour market contexts	Continuous commitment, interest and dedication from the side of youngsters LCI stakeholders are open and willing to co-create with young people

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7. Key activities

7.1. Activity title: Informing and recruitment of the schools

7.1.1. Objective:

Inform all secondary school leaders, staff targeted by the pilot about the initiative.

7.1.2. Target group:

- Maintaining authorities (Vocational Training Centres, Tokaj-Hegyalja University)
- Headmasters
- Homeroom teachers
- School staff involved in career orientation / talent development.

7.1.3. Detailed description:

7.1.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Face-to-face **meetings with maintaining authorities** to ensure they support the schools' involvement.
2. Face-to-face **meetings with headmasters** of all collaborating secondary schools (5 meetings) to ensure they support the initiative and give permission to meet the staff and pupils.
3. Group-based **meeting with homeroom teachers and other school staff involved in career orientation or talent development** to ensure they understand the core concept of the program and welcome the organisations responsible for implementation into their class.

7.1.3.2. Timing and duration

April – May 2026

7.1.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA: organise meetings with all relevant authorities and school staffs, implementation of Information events.

HETFA: supporting the information events if HRCA finds that there is a need for it

7.1.3.4. Methods

Personal meetings

7.1.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Posters and flyers
- Facebook page

7.1.4. Expected engagement

Contact: 5 headmasters, 10-25 homeroom teachers

7.1.5. Key indicators

- 3 maintaining authorities providing permission
- 5 secondary schools involved in providing information about the program

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7.2. Activity title: Informing and engaging young people enrolled in secondary schools

7.2.1. Objective:

Inform all secondary school pupils targeted by the pilot about the initiative.

7.2.2. Target group:

- Pupils aged 15-22 in the final two years of their secondary school careers.

7.2.3. Detailed description:

7.2.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Information events: sessions held with all targeted classes (pupils) across all five participating secondary schools** to introduce the programme and raise awareness with the support of homeroom teachers. The events will take place on a class-by-class basis or by grouping all relevant classes together, depending on what best fits the operational structure and scheduling of each school.

7.2.3.2. Timing and duration

May – June 2026

7.2.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA: implementation of information events

HETFA: supporting the information events if HRCA finds that there is a need for it

Homeroom teachers: providing the opportunity to meet pupils and inform them about the programme during homeroom periods, either within individual classes or in joint sessions covering multiple classes, depending on what best fits the school's daily schedule and operational structure.

7.2.3.4. Methods

Group meetings

7.2.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Posters and flyers
- Social media channels (Discord, Tiktok, Instagram)

7.2.4. Expected engagement

Inform: 500 young people aged 15-22

7.2.5. Key indicators

- 1-7 Information events per school, 5-35 Information events altogether
- 500 pupils informed about the program

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7.3. Activity title: Reach and enrolment of young people in the programme

7.3.1. Objective:

Engaging secondary school pupils in the mentoring programme

7.3.2. Target group:

- Pupils aged 15-22 in the last two years of their secondary school careers

7.3.3. Detailed description:

7.3.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Registration in to the programme:** collection of contact details and completion of a GDPR consent form.
2. **Agreement on communication channels:** find suitable communication channels that meet pupils' needs and communication preferences. Communication channels can vary on a wide range; the goal is to find the ones which are the most appropriate for them as well for the objectives of the mentorship programme. Channels may include online, offline or blended formats, selected accordingly.
3. **Signing the partnership agreement:** participating young people and HRCA sign an agreement that outlines the purpose, scope, and timeframe of the cooperation. Where required, parents or legal guardians are also contacted and informed about the program and its objectives.

7.3.3.2. Timing and duration

May – June 2026

7.3.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA: providing all necessary documentation, reaching out to young people registered in the programme, maintaining regular contact and providing further information as requested.

Homeroom teachers: support communication between HRCA and pupils if necessary.

7.3.3.4. Methods

- Personal meetings

- Online communication (as preferred by the youngsters, including social media channels such as Instagram, Whatsapp, Discord etc.)

7.3.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Online registration form
- GDPR consent form
- Partnership agreement form

7.3.4. Expected engagement

Reach: 100 young people aged 15-22

7.3.5. Key indicators

- 100 pupils sign the partnership agreement

7.4. Activity title: Initial assessment of participants and setting up the framework of the mentorship programme

7.4.1. Objective:

To gain a comprehensive understanding about participants' personality, working style, competences and interests.

7.4.2. Target group:

Pupils aged 15-22 enrolled in the mentorship programme

7.4.3. Detailed description:

7.4.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Completion and joint evaluation of individual** assessment tools measuring personality (including work personality), educational and transversal competences, as well as entrepreneurial competences in order to support self-reflection and create the basis for the individual development plan.
2. Implementation **group-based methods** to assess societal and transversal competences.
3. **Assessment of individual socio-cultural contexts** and identification of barriers and drivers including family patterns, family and peer support, mental health challenges etc.
4. **Assessment of areas of interest:** development of an overview of potential professional fields and positions aligned with participants' interests.
5. **Preparation of an individual development plan:** based on steps 1-4, development of an individual development outlining goals, methods and tools as well as the timeframe for cooperation within the mentorship programme.

7.4.3.2. Timing and duration

May – July 2026

7.4.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA is responsible for the implementation of the overall activity.

HETFA: participating in the collection, selection and evaluation of the assessment tests.

Participants are responsible for maintaining communication, attending scheduled appointments and remaining active during the assessment process.

7.4.3.4. Methods

- Online and offline assessment tools
- Methods designed to assess social and transversal competences
- Group and one-to-one meetings, in person

7.4.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Individual development plan
- Digital co-working spaces

7.4.4. Expected engagement

Involve: a minimum of 50 young people aged 15-22

7.4.5. Key indicators

Minimum 50 participants have an individual development plan

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7.5. Activity title: Co-creation workshop to design the content of study trips

7.5.1. Objective:

To design the specific objectives of the workshops and study trips, and to agree on the professions and positions about which participants would like to gain more comprehensive knowledge about.

7.5.2. Target group:

Pupils aged 15-22 reached by the information events

7.5.3. Detailed description:

7.5.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Organisation of the workshop:** finding a suitable venue, engaging participants and preparing the co-creation methods and materials.
2. **Implementation of the co-creation workshop**: building on the results of the individual assessments and using structured co-creation tools, participants democratically agree on the seven professions / positions about which they wish to gain more comprehensive, experience-based knowledge. As participants are enrolled in different vocational and technical pathways covering a wide range of professional fields, the workshop places particular emphasis on work-related behavioural traits and transversal competences, as well as cross-cutting aspects of the labour market and adult education, rather than focusing exclusively on specific professions (although the study trips/workshops will be based on specific professions, the focus will be on transversal skills).

7.5.3.2. Timing and duration

June 2026

7.5.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA is responsible for the implementation of the overall activity.

HETFA supports and moderates the workshop.

Participants are responsible for actively engaging in the co-creation workshop.

7.5.3.4. Methods

- Co-creation workshop

7.5.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Co-creation canvas
- Flipchart table, office supplies
- Digital tools to be used during the workshop

7.5.4. Expected engagement

Involve: a minimum of 30 young people aged 15-22

7.5.5. Key indicators

- 1 co-creation workshop implemented
- Minimum 30 participants attending and actively participating in the workshop
- 7 workshop / study trip plans developed, including concrete details on location, professionals to be involved, timeframe, logistics etc.

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7.6. Activity title: Study trips

7.6.1. Objective:

To provide participants with an experience-based, comprehensive understanding of selected professions / positions, as well as cross-cutting aspects of the labour market and adult education.

7.6.2. Target group:

Pupils aged 15-22, primarily those who were participating in the co-creation workshop

7.6.3. Detailed description:

7.6.3.1. Sequence of steps

Organising seven study trips: identify labour market stakeholders who are willing to share their educational and career pathways and engage participants in practical activities; decide for each planned event whether it will take the form of a locally hosted be a study trip (depending on the capacities of the relevant labour market stakeholders and the needs articulated during the co-creation workshop); plan logistics to ensure that all participants can join even those from remote settlements; develop a detailed agenda for each event etc.

Implementing the study trips: deliver the seven planned study trips in line with the previously designed agendas. The study trips will be based on nonformal educational methods to ensure that by the end of the seven events, all identified cross-cutting topics are covered.

Regardless of which professions we visit, the following cross-cutting topics related to adult education and labour market will be addressed:

Employment or having children?

- pros and cons
- what I gain and what I lose with early parenthood in terms of personally, society and labour market
- when it is advisable to have children — responsible parenthood, parental competences

Further education or employment?

- it is NOT a linear process — you can start, interrupt, and continue later
- the decision should be based on self-knowledge, interests, and individual competence sets
- advantages and disadvantages
- higher education in practice: housing, living costs (student jobs / student dorms), travel, scholarship opportunities, etc.

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- labour market expectations vs. young people's expectations — a real gap
- in case of uncertainty: Voluntary Diaconal Year / EVS — a free opportunity to gain experience abroad

Labour market realities

- junior and entry-level positions available in the region / in Hungary
    - differences between sectors (public – private – civil – social economy)
    - realistic benefits packages for beginners
    - expectations (salary, home office, working conditions, workload, etc.) from both students and employers (with input from a head-hunter)
- the importance of internships and voluntary work as ways to gain work experience — not only for the CV

Lifelong learning

- adult education opportunities
- the need for and importance of continuous self-education
- diversifying income sources, adaptability to change
- further training / retraining
- offline and online training opportunities (regional / national / international)

Staying in Hungary or going abroad – is outmigration the only solution?

- working abroad does not fit for all (importance of competences)
- learning aspects (where, at what cost, what international programmes are available)
- employment aspects
    - advantages and disadvantages
    - how NOT to start — common pitfalls
    - practical information and country-specific factors
        - types of contracts
        - accommodation
        - cost of living
        - support networks available abroad
    - mobility between countries
    - whether return after a longer stay abroad — and why

Living in the countryside or in the city?

- job opportunities in rural areas
- possibilities of online work / building an online business
- advantages and disadvantages now and in the future

Employee or entrepreneur?

- employee and entrepreneurial competences + leadership skills
- advantages and disadvantages
- these forms of employment are not mutually exclusive

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Offline and online work

- what kinds of online jobs exist at all?
    - advantages and disadvantages
- what competence set is needed for online work
- what about being an influencer as a mean of online career

Mental and physical health

- what mental health and a healthy body mean
- why this is important at all
- how to take care of one's health
- the value of realistic self-knowledge

7.6.3.2. Timing and duration

July 2026 – March 2027

7.6.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA is responsible for the implementation of the overall activity.

Young participants are responsible for actively engaging and participating.

Volunteers of HRCA provide support in operational aspects (logistics, communication, recruiting professionals, catering etc.).

Labour market stakeholders cooperate with HRCA in organising the program, hosting the program and providing the necessary capacities needed for the study trip, actively engaging and sharing their knowledge and experience to the participating pupils.

7.6.3.4. Methods

Study trips

7.6.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Co-creation canvas
- Flipchart table, office supplies
- Digital co-working space

7.6.4. Expected engagement

Engage: 20 young people aged 15-22

7.6.5. Key indicators

- 15 professionals involved

- 20 participants participating on all study trips, 50 participants participating on at least one study trip
- 7 study trips implemented

7.7. Activity title: Comprehensive individual mentorship

7.7.1. Objective:

To provide comprehensive support especially for vulnerable young people, enabling them to overcome the obstacles hindering their educational or labour market career pathways.

7.7.2. Target group:

Pupils aged 15-22 enrolled in the mentorship program

7.7.3. Detailed description:

7.7.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Based on the individual development plan**, the mentorship process addresses obstacles that may hinder their individual development. Family-related issues (such as neglect, insufficient motivation from parents, unemployment issues, abuses of any form), issues within the peer support system (including isolation, loneliness, communication obstacles etc.), social-cultural issues (including those related to segregated or Roma communities, poverty, cultural differences, etc) and mental health challenges(such as anxiety, fear of missing out (FOMO), etc.) will be addressed step-by-step throughout the mentorship process, as relevant to the individual participant. Where necessary, the mentorship process may involve families and refer participants to appropriate external services or support schemes (e.g. scholarship programmes provided by the state or Church-based organisations).

7.7.3.2. Timing and duration

June 2026 – March 2027

7.7.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA is responsible for implementing the overall activity.
Young participants are responsible for actively engaging and participating in the process.
Volunteers of HRCA provide support within the mentorship program as needed.

7.7.3.4. Methods

- Individual sessions (mix of online and in-person meetings)
- Family trips

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7.7.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Digital tools
- Individual development plan

7.7.4. Expected engagement

Engage: 20 young people aged 15-22

7.7.5. Key indicators

- Minimum 20 participants participating in the comprehensive individual mentorship programme
- Minimum 20 individual development plans implemented and completed

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7.8. Activity title: Career-lab: Co-creation workshop on the future of the labour market

7.8.1. Objective:

- To create an opportunity for participants to prepare for the future labour market.
- To evaluate the programme and the participants' development.
- To develop dissemination material summarising the lessons learnt.

7.8.2. Target group:

- Pupils aged 15-22 enrolled in the mentorship program and/or participating on the study trips
- Labour market stakeholders taking part in the study trips
- LCI members

7.8.3. Detailed description:

7.8.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Preparing and organising the event:** finding a suitable venue, designing the agenda and preparing the tools for co-creation, inviting professionals who have already participated in workshops / study trips as well as experts in the fields of AI, corporate business analysis, labour market research etc., sending out invitations etc.
2. **Implementing the co-creation workshop:** using innovative and co-creation methods, the workshop will map projections for the future labour market (drawing on existing analyses and data of OECD, McKinley or other relevant sources on disappearing and emerging professions and competences of increasing significance) and summarise key lessons on how to navigate in the fast-changing world. The workshop will also provide an opportunity for participants to showcase their individual development processes and lessons learnt through formats they consider most suitable (e.g. individual or group presentation, social media content, or launching a social innovation initiative such as a peer support group or a podcast). The workshop is planned to coincide with the second LCI meeting, creating an opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on the programme and discuss the sustainability of the achieved results.

7.8.3.2. Timing and duration

March 2027

7.8.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

HRCA is responsible for implementing the overall activity.
HETFA is contributing to the moderation of the workshop.
Participants are responsible for actively engaging and participating.
Volunteers of HRCA will provide support in the workshop as needed.
LCI members and labour market stakeholders are active participants.

7.8.3.4. Methods

- Co-creation methods and tools
- Workshop
- Social media contents

7.8.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Digital tools
- Venue
- Office supplies

7.8.4. Expected engagement

Engage: minimum 20 young people aged 15-22

7.8.5. Key indicators

- 1 workshop implemented
- 20 pupils participating in the workshop
- 1 social media content created about the achievements of the programme

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8. Cooperation model

8.1. Collaborating organisations/initiatives, roles and responsibilities

Sector	Actor	Role and responsibility across the pilot	Why this role is needed at pilot level
Civil society	HRCA staff (implementing organisation) HRCA volunteers	Responsible for the overall implementation of the pilot, including delivery of activities and indicators, safeguarding oversight, reporting and compliance Provide operational support during implementation (organisation, transportation, supervision etc.)	Ensures implementation of core activities and achieving agreed indicators Due to staff shortages in the pilot region, HRCA will rely significantly on its volunteers in the implementation phase.
Public	Employment Department of the Szerencs District Governmental Office (LCI members)	Provides information about employment incentives and programmes available for youngsters during the career lab workshop	Although state incentives are limited, when available, they may provide valuable support for young people transitioning from secondary education.
Business	Professionals working as employees or entrepreneurs Personal consulting agencies / head-hunters HETFA (implementing organisation)	Providing professional input during study trips and the final co-creation workshop by sharing professional experiences and labour market insights. HETFA is supporting the pilot activities and actively participating in selected activities.	Their involvement in the study trips / final co-creation workshop is crucial, as they can provide first-hand insights and professional input on labour-market realities within their business sector.
Academia / Education	Bocskai István Catholic Grammar and Vocational School, Szerencs	They provide time and space within the school setting to inform and reach the target group.	They are the most important channel for outreach and recruitment of pupils.

Sector	Actor	Role and responsibility across the pilot	Why this role is needed at pilot level
	Tokaj-Hegyalja University – Tokaj Commercial and Tourism Technical School, Vocational School and Dormitory Tokaj-Hegyalja University – Tokaj Agricultural Technical School, Vocational School and Dormitory Tokaji Ferenc Technical, Vocational and Secondary School Szerencs Vocational Training Centre Technical and Service Vocational Grammar School and Vocational School		

8.2. Governance and communication structure

- Monthly coordination meetings between HÉTFA and HRCA (mentor and volunteers).
- Ad hoc meetings with homeroom teachers (if necessary, in case any unseen event occurs in the participants' lives and the school officially steps in).
- Bi-weekly case reviews for active participants conducted by HRCA staff (mentor and volunteers).
- Shared referral folder and participant progress log (access restricted to authorised personnel from HRCA).
- Jointly agreed safeguarding escalation pathway, activated when risks or protection concerns arise.

8.3. How cooperation contributes to youth outcomes

- Monthly coordination meetings between implementing organisations → smooth coordination of activities, timely adjustments where needed → maximised efficiency of the programme.
- Monthly meetings with homeroom teachers → better outcomes of crisis management → reduced early dropout
- Regular case reviews → early identification of risks and improved crisis response including referral and external support → improved retention and continuity within the pilot.
- Engagement of professionals and experts from state-based organisations, business sector, academia and NGOs (including LCI members) → provision of up-to-date and practice-based insights on further and adult education as well as evolving labour market demands → a more grounded and evidence-based understanding of individual opportunities after completing secondary education → improved networks and strengthened local ecosystem.

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9. Outreach strategy

9.1. Shared COOPOWER baseline definitions

At the pilot co-creation meeting in November 2025 in Austria, all partners agreed that there are different engagement levels of the target group (see Table below). In the sections below, please describe what this engagement levels mean based on your pilot's activities, cooperation model and local youth realities.

Level	Description	Examples in practice
Inform	Young people **receive information** about opportunities, services, or rights. **Communication is one-way.**	Flyers, school trips, or social-media posts announce a new training or mentoring offer.
Reach	Young people are contacted and **take part once or briefly**, usually as participants or beneficiaries. **Their role is mainly passive.**	They join a single job-skills workshop or attend an event run by partners.
Involve	Young people **participate more than once in activities** and can **express opinions or preferences**, with potential to shape design.	They attend several mentoring sessions, share feedback, or help spread the word.
Engage	Young people take **part actively and continuously**, showing **commitment** and initiative within the activities. They help keep momentum and **bring their perspective** into planning, outreach, or implementation.	They participate throughout a full training cycle, mentor peers informally, or help sustain a youth group.

9.2. Pilot-specific definition

Level	Related activity / steps	Expected number of young people
Inform	Awareness raising campaign through social media channels. Information about the programme displayed through posters in schools. Information shared with homeroom teachers for onward communication.	500 young people (young people are exposed to information about the programme but are not yet participating in substantive activities)

	Direct outreach in classes through information days	
Reach	Registration to the programme via an online form. Agreement on preferred communication channels with registered participants. Singing the GDPR consent form and the Partnership Agreement with HRCA	100 young people (Young people take an initial active step to join the programme but have not yet engaged in substantive activities.)
Involve	Face-to-face and online personal meetings as part of the initial assessment process. Elaboration of the individual development plan for each registered participant. Co-creation workshop and at least one study trip.	50 young people (Young people participate in several structured activities and have the opportunity to express preferences and provide input regarding the content of upcoming activities.)
Engage	Participation in all study trips. Comprehensive individual mentorship. Participation in a co-creation workshop about the future of the labour market.	20 young people (Young people participate continuously and actively, contribute their perspectives and show sustained commitment throughout the mentorship cycle.)

9.3. Barriers to engagement and mitigation measures

Barrier	Mitigation measure
Low motivation and previous negative experiences – youth may be discouraged from enrolling in the programme due to past failures or perceived stigmatisation of the educational system**.**	During information days, we clearly communicate that the programme will not take place within the school setting and does not follow the traditional assessment-based approach, which may help reduce initial anxieties. We use information and communication channels that young people are familiar with and trust.

Not being able to cope with the results of the assessment tests - and dropping out of the pilot.	Inviting them to study trips if they drop out from the mentorship program.
Diverse educational and family backgrounds within the participant group – young people enrolled in vocational schools or coming from poverty or Roma communities may feel discouraged due to perceived peer judgement or social hierarchies.	During information days, we make it clear that the program in inclusive, and individual needs will be highly taken into consideration Where necessary, activities may be organised in smaller groups, including familiar peers, to foster psychological safety and confidence.
Uncertainty and scepticism regarding democratic and co-creation approaches – young people in secondary education may have limited prior experience with the concept of participatory decision-making and co-creation methods and may initially question the credibility and seriousness of such approaches or the programme as a whole.	From the very beginning measures are taken to ensure that young people's voices are heard (e.g. during the information days, interactive tools like Mentimeter are used to allow immediate feedback) Usage of direct, clear and concise communication. Strong focus on individual support and follow-up.

10. Incentive model

Engagement level	Incentive	Needs addressed	Barrier addressed	Purpose / expected effect
Inform	Clear, relevant and low-burden presentation of the programme to school headteachers and teachers	Schools' need for relevant opportunities for students that align with their educational mission without creating additional administrative workload.	Information overload; inaccessibility of "project lingo" No capacity and reluctance to host external initiatives	Secures institutional cooperation and facilitates access to the youth target group by positioning the programme as beneficial for pupils and feasible within existing school structures.
Reach	Accessible and engaging information sessions with students	Young peoples' need for guidance and clarity regarding their educational and career pathways, as well as reassurance about participation expectations.	Information overload; uncertainty about the future; potential mistrust towards unfamiliar authorities, projects, or professionals	Reduces perceived risk and builds initial trust, increasing the likelihood that young people register and actively take part in the programme
Involve	Provision of meals and snacks during workshops and mentoring sessions	Basic physiological needs and needs for a supportive and welcoming participation environment.	Financial barriers; irregular daily routines and reduced capacity to participate effectively over longer sessions.	Removes participation-related costs; supports concentration and continuity of attendance; strengthens group cohesion.
Involve	Access to professional assessment combined with personalised	Need for better self-knowledge and understanding of	No access to trustworthy materials, or professional help in interpretation	Better self-knowledge in participants; build engagement; helps facilitating other

	feedback and interpretation	skills and competences		parts of the program
Engage	Free access to organised study visits and workshops, tailored to the participants' needs and development plans, and also offering an opportunity to visit places they have never been before.	Young peoples' need for intersectoral knowledge, development of transversal skills, and practical insight into educational and labour market pathways.	Limited access to reliable, experienced -based information and to professional networks; information overload without structured guidance.	Provides concrete experience-based learning opportunities; strengthens understanding of available pathways and reinforces sustained engagement in the programme.
Engage	Regular personalised feedback and continuous support from the mentor and peer community	Young peoples' need for ongoing guidance, reassurance, recognition of progress and sense of belonging.	Limited access to supportive adults and lack of consistent encouragement in their immediate environment.	Improves confidence and self-efficacy; fosters a sense of community and supports sustained commitment to the mentorship programme.
Engage	Participating in co-creation workshops where their voices can be heard.	Young people's need for articulating their needs, opinions, and being treated as a relevant stakeholder in their own life.	There is limited opportunity for a young person to articulate their needs, especially in a public setting.	Increased self-confidence and gaining experience in participative processes.

11. Risks and mitigation

Risk category	Description of risk	Likelihood [Low / medium / high]	Potential impact	Mitigation strategy	Responsible actor
Cooperation	One secondary school where the managing authority is the Catholic Church may hesitate to engage, since the implementing organisation is funded by the Hungarian Reformed Church	Medium	Reduced number of schools leading to a lower number of pupils being reached by the programme	Engage in early dialogue and transparent communication about the programme's non-denominational objectives; where appropriate, involve the Inter-Church Council as a neutral mediator to facilitate trust and cooperation	HRCA
Cooperation	The general elections are taking place in April 2026, and a potential change in government may have a profound effect on state-governed institutions' (including state-managed schools, state-funded organisations etc.) willingness to cooperate with a church-affiliated pilot-implementing organisation	Medium	The recruitment period can be longer than expected - as a consequence, the launch of the entire pilot programme will be delayed Reduced number schools and pupils potentially reached the programme	Proactively build and maintain strong professional relationships with managing authorities, headmasters and school staff Accentuate the benefits the programme can provide for youngsters and avoiding direct references to the Church	HRCA

Operational	Limited staff capacity within HRCA and potential staff fluctuation during the pilot period.	Medium	Delays in planned activities; reduced quality of delivery or smooth continuity of the programme.	Identification of back-up volunteer personnel in advance; Use standardised tools and documentation to ensure continuity Proactive workload planning and phased implementation of activities	HRCA
Operational	Drop-out of the involved pupils	Low-medium	Indicators not met	Clear communication among the parties, child protection referral who can be contacted by the mentee if they have an issue with the mentor, ad hoc meetings with homeroom teachers	HRCA
Operational	Youngsters initially interested in the programme may lose motivation over time leading to full or partial disengagement	Medium	Reduced participation rates, difficulties to deliver the planned indicators and decreased group continuity	Maintain regular, open and supportive communication from the mentoring staff; ensure activities remain relevant and responsive to participants' needs; use a balanced mix of practical, social and learning incentives to	HRCA

				sustain motivation.	
Operational	Mentees overstepping boundaries with the mentor	Low	Burnout of the mentor	Supervision and regular check-ins among the implementing organisations	HRCA HETFA
Ethical / safeguarding	Safeguarding incidents involving peers during workshops / study trips (e.g. peer conflict, inappropriate behaviour, or boundary violations).	Low	Physical or psychological harm to participants; reputational damage; potential legal consequences ; loss of trust among stakeholders.	Clear safeguarding policy and code of conduct for mentor and volunteers; co-creation of rules of collaboration and of programme; clear reporting and de-escalation procedures; named safeguarding lead responsible for oversight.	HRCA
Ethical / safeguarding	Risk of stigmatisation or unequal treatment among participating youth (e.g. based on educational pathway, socio-economic background, ethnicity or gender).	Low	Reduced trust within the group; decreased participation and potential disengagement of affected participants	Use non-stigmatising recruitment and Communication practices; establish jointly developed group norms and collaboration guidelines; apply inclusive and gender-sensitive facilitation methods; monitor group dynamics	HRCA

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				throughout activities.	
Data & M&E	Incomplete, inconsistent or delayed data collection during implementation	Low-Medium	Weak evidence base for assessing pilot outcomes; limited ability to generate learning and inform future scaling.	Use standardised indicators and data collection templates; regular data quality checks; regular meetings and discussion with the partner responsible for evaluation and monitoring	HRCA HETFA

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12. Sustainability and transferability

12.1. Sustainability at local level

There are a number of schools, institutions and NGOs that may benefit from the outcomes of the pilot programme, depending on future funding and potential structural changes in the educational sector.

On the other hand, HRCA already has a number of services for vulnerable people inside and outside of the pilot area, including comprehensive social care for children, pupils and families, as well as educational development programmes for children and primary school pupils. The pilot methodology can build on these existing efforts and may be incorporated into the service-provision portfolio of the organisation. The required conditions for this are: support from the management of the organisation; staff time and competence; availability of programme frameworks in which these elements could be embedded.

Not probable, but possible for local schools to adopt part of the pilot activities (such as workshops, co-creation methods etc.). The necessary conditions for this are: support from school management and maintenance; policy support and flexibility; time and competence of teachers or other staff.

12.2. Transferable elements

The following elements of the pilot are considered transferable:

- Connection of stakeholders in the pilot, especially labour market actors and schools.
- Co-creation methods and the involvement of young participants.
- Future-oriented workshop and methods.

The pilot's achievements and overall methodology can be partly incorporated into a number of local initiatives:

- The Country Chamber of Commerce has a career-orientation activity, which is the only state-organised career-focused series of events available for rural primary schools. The pilot's approach may have the potential to be launched by the CCC regionally, specifically for secondary school pupils.

- The Tokaj Talent Council has launched a special class in September 2026 for 9th grade students incorporated into the core curriculum: the program aims to prepare pupils for the usage of AI tools in all aspects of life. The pilot programme's elements related to the future labour market, especially the focus on transversal competences may be incorporated into this AI-class as an additional element.

12.3. Limits to transferability

The most important limit of transferability is the lack of funding and the fragmented structure of the Hungarian educational and labour-market service provision sector, where stakeholders have limited information about initiatives launched by other organisations and there is limited culture of knowledge transfer and structured exchange in the region. This may limit the transferability of the pilot's achievements, but the LCI may become a good channel for communication, sharing good practices, or co-creation of solutions.

An important limitation of transferability is the difference in the organisation and structure of the education systems and vocational education in different countries. This means that in other countries the target group might be different in age and have different experiences in the education system and in the labour market.

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13. Timeline and workplan

13.1. Milestone-based workplan

	Milestone	Key activities covered	Timeframe (month/year & project month)	Actor(s)
1	Involvement of secondary school pupils in the programme is completed	Recruitment and information of secondary schools and pupils	June 2026 (M15)	HRCA HETFA 5 secondary schools (staff and homeroom teachers)
2	Initial assessment of participants is completed	Completion and joint evaluation of individual tests Implementing group-based methods to assess societal and transversal competences Assessment of individual socio-cultural situations Assessment of areas of interest Preparation of individual development plans	July 2026 (M16)	HRCA staff
3	Workshops and study trips are implemented	Co-creation workshop about study trips 7 study trips implemented	June 2026 – March 2027 (M15-M24)	HRCA staff and volunteers Professionals and experts State employment agency

4	Comprehensive individual mentorship program completed	Based on the individual development plan, the mentorship process successfully addresses the obstacles that are in the way of individual development Individual development plans are implemented and completed	June 2026 – March 2027 (M15-M24)	HRCA staff and volunteers
5	Completion of the programme with the closing co-creation workshop	Career-lab: Co-creation workshop about the future of labour market	March 2027 (M24)	HÉTFA Research Institute HRCA Labour market stakeholders LCI members

13.2. Gantt-chart

		M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
		April 26	May 26	June 26	July 26	Aug 26	Sept 26	Oct 26	Nov 26	Dec 26	Jan 27	Feb 27	Mar 27
M1	Recruitment and informing of schools												
M1	Involvement of secondary school pupils in the programme												
M2	Initial assessment of participants and setting up the framework of the mentorship program												
M3	Co-creation workshop about workshops and study trips												
M3	Workshops and study trips												
M4	Comprehensive Individual mentorship												
M5	Career-lab: Co-creation workshop about the future of labour market												

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8. Pilot design: Romania

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ROMANIA

Cooperation-based pilot design

Project partner: SAPIENTIA University

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1. Basic information

1.1. Pilot title:

SAPStep - Near-peer mentoring and career guidance to prevent Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET)

1.2. Region / country:

[RO124] Harghita county/ /[RO12] Centru / [RO1] Macroregiunea Unu / [RO] Romania

1.3. Implementing organisation(s):

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Romania

1.4. Contact details:

Dr. Bálint Blanka, balintblanka@uni.sapientia.ro
Universitatea Sapientia, Facultatea de Științe Economice, Socio-Umane şi Inginerești

1.5. Collaborating organisation(s) / initiative(s) involved:

- Harghita County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance
- ”Apáczai Csere János” Teacher Training Center
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry Harghita
- Entrepreneurs' Association of Ciuc
- AJOFM Harghita
- Csíkszereda Faculty Student Council
- Federation of Youth Organization of Ciuc Region
- Technological High School "Kós Károly"
- Technological High School "Venczel József"
- Technological High School "Székely Károly"

1.6. Period of implementation:

15.06.2026 – 31.03.2027

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2. Problem statement (local challenge)

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) refers to young people who have completed at most a lower secondary education and are no longer participating in education or training. As an upper secondary qualification has become a minimum requirement for stable labour market participation and access to higher education, increasing the proportion of students who successfully complete their final exams is a key preventive strategy. Without an upper secondary diploma, young people face significantly reduced employment prospects and long-term socioeconomic vulnerability (OECD, 2024). Romania recorded the highest ELET rate in the EU in 2024 (16.8%). Although progress was made after 2015, trends have stagnated in recent years (Eurostat, 2025). Participation in education among 15-19-year-olds in Romania is notably lower than both the EU average and the figures for the other countries in the project (Eurostat, 2025). In line with low educational participation, Romania's out-of-school rate among upper secondary school-age individuals is among the highest in the project countries. The situation is particularly concerning at the county level. In Harghita County, the upper secondary dropout rate (1.8%) is almost twice the national average (INS, 2025). Examination outcomes further illustrate systemic challenges: in 2024, 2.8% of registered students did not attend the final exams, and 38% failed, resulting in a 61% success rate, 17 percentage points below the national average (CJH, 2024). These data point to structural barriers affecting students' academic progression and highlight the need for targeted, locally- tailored interventions that strengthen motivation, persistence, and successful completion of upper secondary education.

3. Underlying needs

- Need for strengthened confidence among final-year students in their ability to complete upper secondary education and sit the baccalaureate exam.
- Need for focused career guidance support in the final year of upper secondary education to help students make timely and informed decisions about their next steps.
- Need for increased awareness of the long-term personal and economic benefits of obtaining a formal upper secondary qualification.
- Need for more visible and realistic pathways from school to further education, vocational training or employment,
- Need to raise awareness of the long-term negative effects of lacking a formal diploma.
- Need for relatable role models who can demonstrate realistic and attainable post-graduation pathways.
- Need for inclusive, class-based support approaches that avoid labelling students and ensure equal access to guidance and mentoring.

4. Target group

4.1. Description of the target group

The pilot targets final-year students (18–19-year-olds) enrolled in secondary education in three schools of Harghita County.
The selected schools serve a significant number of students from surrounding rural areas and show comparatively high rates of failed final exams and non-attendance at the baccalaureate exam, even among students who formally complete their studies. In this context, students may face several challenges that influence their decision to sit the final exams and successfully complete upper secondary education. These include limited awareness of realistic post-graduation pathways, lower confidence in their ability to pass the exam, and limited access to relatable role models demonstrating achievable education-to-work transitions.

The schools planned for the pilot program are:

- Technological High School "Kós Károly"
- Technological High School "Venczel József"
- Technological High School "Székely Károly"

4.2. Barriers to participation and inclusion and equity considerations

Some students may be hesitant to engage in a new pilot initiative at first. As a solution, we are organising a well-structured, engaging opening event to attract a large number of students and raise interest in the programme. Students and teachers face heavy workloads and tight schedules, which may limit participation in additional activities. Therefore, career guidance activities are delivered within an existing guidance-related time slot in the weekly school timetable (typically the class teacher/counselling period), allowing the activities to be implemented without reducing time allocated to academic subjects. Some students may lack confidence or feel uncertain about their post-graduation options and may not actively seek additional support if it is perceived as targeted only at those who are struggling. To ensure equal access, the first stage of activities targets entire classes, providing all students with the opportunity to participate. The second stage, near-peer mentoring, is offered on a voluntary basis to students who would benefit from more personalised support. In this component, trained university students act as mentors, providing guidance and encouragement to final-year secondary school students. This structure ensures that no student is excluded, while allowing additional tailored support for those who need it.

5. Pilot objectives

Participant-level objectives:

- Strengthened understanding of the value of obtaining an upper secondary qualification and increased learning motivation among final-year students.
- Reduced risk of dropout in the final year and increased participation in the final secondary examinations, reflected in a higher proportion of students registering for and attending the exams, including students who might otherwise choose not to sit them. The pilot also aims to strengthen students' persistence in pursuing their qualification even if initial exam attempts are unsuccessful.

Cooperation-level objectives:

- Strengthened structured cooperation between schools, local business sector actors and civil organisations to support students' transition from school to post-graduation pathways.

Sustainability-oriented objectives:

- The pilot establishes and documents a structured mentoring and local cooperation model designed for continuation within participating schools and potential adaptation to earlier grades.

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6. Theory of change (core logic model)

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes (within the pilot period)	Medium-term outcomes / contribution to impact	Key assumptions and contextual factors
Project team time and expertise; employer and civil organisations' involvement; school facilities	School-based Career Inspiration and Information Events (1 event at all five pilot schools)	Number of events delivered Number of participating final-year students Number of external stakeholders involved	Increased awareness of post-graduation pathways and qualifications Increased interest in career guidance activities	Strengthened structured cooperation between schools, business and civil actors	Schools allocate time and ensure student participation; the business sector representatives stay committed
Project team time and expertise; educational materials, online feedback form, digital tools; school facilities	Class-Based Career Guidance Programme (6 sessions)	Number of classes completing the full session cycle Number of students completing the full session cycle	Strengthened understanding of the value of completing secondary education Clearer personal action plans for exam and transition Reduced dropout risk in the final year Increased exam attendance among final-year students Documented career guidance model	Contribution to improved employability through Increased learning motivation and self-efficacy Availability of an adaptable career guidance model that can be reused or adapted by schools beyond the pilot period	Students attend regularly and engage actively

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			developed during the pilot.		
Project team coordination and supervision; trained mentors; mentoring guidelines; online communication tools	Voluntary Near-Peer Mentoring (4–5 sessions	Number of students enrolled in mentoring Number of mentoring sessions delivered Proportion of mentored students registering for final exams	Stronger sense of belonging and perceived support Stronger commitment to sit the final exams	Greater persistence if the first exam attempt is unsuccessful (retake intention Contribution to improved employability through increased secondary completion	University students are willing to serve as mentors and perceive the role as professionally valuable when appropriately incentivised and recognised. Effective matching between mentors and mentees can be established. Mentors have sufficient time and commitment to maintain regular contact with mentees during the mentoring period. Mentees remain engaged and open to interaction with mentors.

7. Key activities

7.1. Activity title: Opening Events: School-based Career Inspiration and Information

7.1.1. Objective:

To increase students' motivation to engage in career guidance activities, strengthen their understanding of the value of completing secondary education, and initiate structured cooperation between schools and stakeholders (business and civil sector actors).

7.1.2. Target group:

Primary target group: Final-year students of participating schools (typically aged 18–19), who will take part in mentoring and career guidance activities aimed at supporting exam participation and successful completion of upper secondary education. Optionally open to students in grades 10–11, who in Romania are typically aged 15 or above, ensuring compliance with the project's 15–30 target group while broadening outreach and enabling future adaptability.

Secondary target group: Parents and guardians of participating students who will be informed about the pilot's objectives and activities. Their involvement will primarily focus on awareness-raising and encouraging family support for students' educational decisions. Participation in information sessions will be optional.

7.1.3. Detailed description:

7.1.3.1. Sequence of steps

Pre-event communication: students are informed directly about the programme and participation opportunities through school-based communication, while parents/guardians receive information about the programme, its objectives, and opportunities for their children through accessible communication channels

Preparation meeting between school leadership and project team

Identification and invitation of the local business sector and civil society representatives

Structured programme design (short talks + moderated discussion + Q&A)

Promotion within the school (posters, announcements, digital platforms)

Implementation of the event

Short feedback collection from students

7.1.3.2. Timing and duration

One event per participating school

Ideally scheduled at the beginning of the school year (September 2026)

Duration: 1,5 – 2 hours

7.1.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

Project team: coordination, moderation, documentation.

"Apáczai Csere János" Teacher Training Center: supports coordination with teachers and contributes methodological input to ensure that the activities are appropriate for the school context.

Csíkszereda Faculty Student Council: identification and mobilisation of university students to share personal education and career pathways as near-peer role models.

Federation of Youth Organisation of Ciuc Region: outreach support and contribution to youth-friendly communication and moderation.

Entrepreneurs' Association of Ciuc: mobilisation of local entrepreneurs to provide real-life examples of career pathways and labour market expectations.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Harghita: engagement of business representatives and contribution to the discussion on local labour market opportunities.

AJOFM Harghita: provision of labour market perspectives and information on employment trends and opportunities for young people.

School leadership: logistical organisation and student mobilisation.

Teachers: supervision and support during the event.

7.1.3.4. Methods

- Short inspirational talks
- Real-life examples
- Moderated discussion
- Interactive Q&A session

7.1.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Presentation slides
- Event agenda and programme leaflet
- Short online feedback form
- School communication platforms for promotion

7.1.4. Expected engagement:

Primary target group (final-year students of participating schools): Reach; Secondary target group (parents and guardians of participating students): Inform

7.1.5. Key indicators

- Number of schools involved: 3
- Number of participating students: at least 150-170
- Number of external stakeholders involved: 8-12
- Student feedback on relevance and usefulness: At least 70–80% of participating students report the activities as useful or relevant

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7.2. Activity title: Class-Based Career Guidance Programmes

7.2.1. Objective:

To strengthen final-year students' career awareness, decision-making skills, and commitment to completing secondary education through structured, class-based guidance sessions.

7.2.2. Target group:

Entire final-year classes in the participating schools.

7.2.3. Detailed description:

7.2.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Introductory session – reflection on the opening event, discussion of expectations, pre-intervention survey (e.g. career clarity)
2. Self-assessment session – interests, abilities, values, and learning style
3. Information session – realistic post-graduation pathways
4. Decision-making and goal-setting workshop
5. Exam preparation and coping strategies session (managing stress, planning next steps)
6. Closing session – personal action planning and introduction to mentoring opportunity, post-intervention survey

7.2.3.2. Timing and duration

6 sessions; 50 minutes each; Delivered during regular school hours

Ideally implemented over 6–7 weeks

7.2.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

Project team: development of the career guidance model, coordination of the pilot, and overall monitoring of implementation.

Harghita County Center for Resurces and Educational Assistance: facilitation of career guidance sessions.

School leadership: scheduling of activities within the school timetable and coordination with participating classes.

Teachers: provide logistical and classroom support during sessions and help facilitate communication with students where appropriate

7.2.3.4. Methods

- Guided group discussions
- Individual reflection exercises
- Small-group activities
- Practical planning worksheets
- Short- structured presentations
- Survey

7.2.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Presentation slides
- Self-assessment tests (Interest, skills, values, learning styles)
- Reflection worksheets
- Goal-setting templates
- Questionnaire
- Short online feedback form

7.2.4. Expected engagement

Involvement

7.2.5. Key indicators

- Number of classes completing the full session cycle: 7-8 classes
- Student participation rate in all scheduled sessions: 70–80% participation rate
- Self-reported increase in clarity about their post-graduation options: 70–80%
- Number of students expressing commitment to sit the final exams: 80–90%
- Proportion of students registering for final exams: 60–70%
- Number of students applying for mentoring: 140-150
- Student feedback on usefulness: at least 70–80% of participating students report the activities as useful

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7.3. Activity title: Voluntary Near-Peer Mentoring Programme

7.3.1. Objective:

To provide personalised support for students who require deeper guidance, strengthening their persistence, motivation, and commitment to completing their final qualification.

7.3.2. Target group:

Final-year students in the participating schools who voluntarily apply or are recommended for additional support. (Participation is voluntary to ensure autonomy, a fair chance and avoid labelling.)

7.3.3. Detailed description:

7.3.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Announcement of the mentoring programme for potential mentors
2. Selecting mentors from among the students at SAPIENTIA University
3. Training of mentors (a one-day training session)
4. Voluntary student enrollment
5. Mentor-mentee matching
6. Structured meetings between mentors and mentees (4-5 sessions)
7. Closing reflection

7.3.3.2. Timing and duration

4-5 mentor-mentee meetings; 60 minutes each; Delivered over 2 months

Scheduled flexibly in agreement with the school activities and availabilities

7.3.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

Project team: coordination.

Harghita County Center for Resurces and Educational Assistance: training for mentors, supervision.

Csíkszereda Faculty Student Council: recruitment of university student mentors and support in mentor–mentee matching.

Mentors: delivery of mentoring sessions.

Pupils: active engagement in the mentoring process.

7.3.3.4. Methods

Mentor training methods:

- Interactive workshop introducing mentoring principles and roles
- Case study or role-playing exercises
- Presentation of tools and resources for mentoring
- Q&A and group discussion for clarifying questions

Methods of the mentoring sessions:

- One-to-one or small-group discussions
- Goal-setting and progress review
- Motivational techniques
- Practical planning support
- Exam preparation encouragement
- Reflection on alternative scenarios if exams are not passed on the first attempt

7.3.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Mentoring guidelines
- Session structure templates
- Personal action plan forms
- Reflection journals (optional)
- Online communication tools

7.3.4. Expected engagement

Engagement

7.3.5. Key indicators

- Number of students enrolled in mentoring: 150
- Completion rate of mentoring sessions: 80–90%
- Self-reported increase in motivation and understanding of the importance of completing secondary education: at least 70–80% of participating students report an increase in motivation
- Proportion of mentored students registering for final exams: 70–80%
- Number/proportion of students indicating willingness to continue efforts if first exam attempt is unsuccessful (e.g., planning to retake in autumn or following year): 80–90%

8. Cooperation model

The pilot brings together actors from the education sector, youth organisations, labour market stakeholders, and public educational support institutions.

8.1. Collaborating organisations/initiatives, roles and responsibilities

Sector	Actor	Role and responsibility across the pilot	Why this role is needed at pilot level
Civil society	Csíkszereda Faculty Student Council	Recruitment and mobilisation of university students to participate in inspiration events and the near-peer mentoring component.	University students serve as relatable role models and mentors for secondary school students.
	Federation of Youth Organisations of Ciuc Region	Support in youth engagement, outreach and communication; contribution to interactive and youth-friendly activity formats.	Youth organisations bring experience in working with young people and help ensure that activities are engaging and accessible.
Public	County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance	Professional facilitation of career guidance activities; involvement of school counsellors and psychologists; support in mentor preparation and supervision during the mentoring process.	Provides specialised expertise in career guidance and student counselling, ensuring quality and appropriateness of the activities for students.
	”Apáczai Csere János” Teacher Training Center	Methodological support for the design of career guidance activities; support in engaging teachers and ensuring that the activities are appropriate for the school context.	Provides pedagogical expertise and strengthens the link with teachers and the school system.
	AJOFM Harghita	Contribution of labour market information and perspectives on employment trends and opportunities.	Provides institutional expertise on labour market conditions and youth employment pathways.
Business	Entrepreneurs' Association of Ciuc	Mobilisation of local entrepreneurs to participate in inspirational events and share career experiences.	Employers provide first-hand insights into labour market realities and career opportunities.
	Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Facilitation of connections with businesses and contribution to discussions on labour market opportunities.	Strengthens cooperation between the education sector and the local labour market.
Academia / Education	Sapientia University	Overall coordination and management of the pilot; development of the career	Ensures coherent design and implementation of the pilot and

		guidance approach and materials; organisation of activities; monitoring implementation and collecting feedback.	provides methodological leadership across all activities.
	Technological High School "Kós Károly"	Identification and mobilisation of participating students; scheduling pilot activities within the school timetable; logistical and classroom support during the activities.	Schools provide direct access to the target group and ensure that the activities can be integrated into the school environment.
	Technological High School "Venczel József"	Identification and mobilisation of participating students; scheduling pilot activities within the school timetable; logistical and classroom support during the activities.	Schools provide direct access to the target group and ensure that the activities can be integrated into the school environment.
	Technological High School "Székely Károly"	Identification and mobilisation of participating students; scheduling pilot activities within the school timetable; logistical and classroom support during the activities.	Schools provide direct access to the target group and ensure that the activities can be integrated into the school environment.

8.2. Governance and communication structure

Overall governance structure: The pilot is coordinated by the project team, which oversees implementation and convenes cooperation meetings with participating schools and collaborating organisations.

Coordination roles and routines: The project team organises and facilitates coordination meetings, ensures alignment across pilot activities, and monitors implementation progress.

Communication channels and frequency: Partners communicate through regular email exchanges, shared online documents and monthly coordination meetings, with additional meetings organised when needed before key activities.

Decision-making and escalation pathways: Operational decisions are made by the project team in consultation with the relevant partners for specific activities. Implementation challenges are addressed through joint discussions during coordination meetings or ad hoc consultations as needed.

8.3. How cooperation contributes to youth outcomes

The pilot relies on cooperation between schools, public educational support services, youth organisations and labour market actors. This cooperation structure ensures that students receive complementary forms of support that address different barriers identified in the needs assessment.

The cooperation model applied in the pilot can be described as an **education-oriented mode**l, where educational institutions provide the primary structural environment for the intervention. The pilot focuses on supporting students' progression towards completion of secondary education, while other

actors – such as youth organisations, university students and labour market stakeholders – contribute through mentoring, outreach and exposure to career pathways.

- School–career guidance cooperation → career guidance activities are embedded in the school environment and supported by specialised counselling institutions → improved accessibility and quality of guidance for students.
- Involvement of public educational support services → professional facilitation of guidance activities and mentor supervision → higher quality and consistency of support provided to students.
- Near-peer mentoring by university students → relatable role models and personalised encouragement → increased motivation and confidence among final-year students facing examination challenges.
- Employer and labour market engagement→ exposure to real-life career pathways and labour market expectations → stronger understanding of the practical value of completing secondary education.
- Coordination between education, youth and labour market actors → complementary perspectives and support mechanisms → more holistic responses to students' motivational and informational needs compared to single-actor approaches.

9. Outreach strategy

9.1. Shared COOPOWER baseline definitions

At the pilot co-creation meeting in November 2025 in Austria, all partners agreed that there are different engagement levels of the target group (see Table below). In the sections below, please describe what these engagement levels mean bases on your pilot's activities, cooperation model and local youth realities.

Level	Description	Examples in practice
Inform	Young people **receive information** about opportunities, services, or rights. **Communication is one-way.**	Flyers, school visits, or social-media posts announce a new training or mentoring offer.
Reach	Young people are contacted and **take part once or briefly**, usually as participants or beneficiaries. **Their role is mainly passive.**	They join a single job-skills workshop or attend an event run by partners.
Involve	Young people **participate more than once in activities** and can **express opinions or preferences**, with potential to shape design.	They attend several mentoring sessions, share feedback, or help spread the word.
Engage	Young people take **part actively and continuously**, showing **commitment** and initiative within the activities. They help keep momentum and **bring their perspective** into planning, outreach, or implementation.	They participate throughout a full training cycle, mentor peers informally, or help sustain a youth group.

9.2. Pilot-specific definition

Level	Related activity / steps	Expected number of young people
Inform	Students receive information about the Career Inspiration event through school announcements, teacher communication and programme introduction materials. Information is primarily directed at final-year students but may also reach students from lower grades (e.g. grade 10–11) within participating schools.	approx. 250 students
Reach	Students attend the school-based career inspiration and information event, where they are exposed to real-life career stories and labour market perspectives. Participation is open primarily to final-year students, with optional participation from lower grades.	approx. 180–200 students

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Involve	Final-year students participate in structured career guidance sessions delivered during school hours and may provide feedback or express preferences during the activities.	approx. 150–170 students
Engage	A smaller group of final-year students voluntarily joins the near-peer mentoring component and participates in multiple mentoring interactions with university student mentors.	approx. 140-150 students

9.3. Barriers to engagement and mitigation measures

Barrier	Mitigation measure
Low motivation or uncertainty about the value of completing secondary education	Career inspiration events featuring relatable speakers and real-life examples to demonstrate the practical value of completing secondary education.
Low self-confidence and fear of failure related to the final exams	Near-peer mentoring by university students who share their own educational experiences and provide encouragement and informal guidance.
Limited awareness of education and career pathways	Structured career guidance sessions providing information about educational options, labour market opportunities and possible career paths.
Reluctance to participate in additional activities due to academic workload	Activities are integrated into regular school hours to reduce the additional time burden for students.
Low initial engagement with mentoring activities	Voluntary participation combined with clear information about the benefits of mentoring.

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10. Incentive model

Engagement level	Incentive	Needs addressed	Barrier addressed	Purpose / expected effect
Inform	Clear and relatable communication about opportunities through teachers and school channels	Need for accessible information	Limited awareness of available support	Ensure students understand the opportunity and feel encouraged to participate
Reach	Exposure to real-life career stories and local employer perspectives during programme introduction	Need for orientation and relevance of education	Low awareness of career pathways and perceived irrelevance of education	Capture students' interest and motivate them to participate in further activities
Involve	Structured career guidance sessions and interactive discussions	Need for information about education and career options	Limited awareness of pathways	Encourage repeated participation and strengthen the understanding of the value of completing secondary education
	Supportive peer environment during activities	Need for belonging and social support	Low confidence or reluctance to participate	Create a safe and engaging environment for participation.
Engage	Near-peer mentoring by university students	Need for role models and personalised guidance	Low motivation and fear of failure	Strengthen commitment and sustain participation in the mentoring process
	Informal mentoring meetings (e.g. refreshments or informal	Need for trust and informal interaction	Lack of trust in formal institutional support	Foster stronger mentor–mentee relationships

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	meeting settings)			
	Participation certificate recognising involvement in mentoring	Need for recognition and future progression	Unclear benefits of participation	Acknowledge participation and provide a useful reference for future education or employment opportunities
	Small mentor stipend supporting the participation of university students	Recognition of time and effort	Limited availability of student mentors	Ensure sufficient number of mentors and support sustained engagement in mentoring

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11. Risks and mitigation

Risk category	Description of risk	Likelihood [Low / medium / high]	Potential impact	Mitigation strategy	Responsible actor
Cooperation	Limited engagement of external stakeholders (e.g. employers or organisations) in the inspiration event	Medium	Reduced diversity of perspectives presented to students	Early confirmation of participation; maintain a list of alternative speakers; flexible programme design	Project team
	Limited teacher engagement in supporting pilot activities	Low–Medium	Lower student participation and weaker integration into the school environment	Early communication with teachers; involvement of class teachers; clear explanation of benefits for students	Schools
Operational	Scheduling constraints within schools (timetable pressure, exam periods)	Medium	Activities postponed or shortened	Early agreement with school leadership; flexible scheduling; integration into existing school time, where possible	Schools + Project team
	Insufficient number of university students volunteering as mentors	Medium	Reduced mentoring capacity and fewer mentor–mentee pairs	Early recruitment campaign; cooperation with university student organisations; possibility of providing a small stipend for mentors	Project team
Ethical & safeguarding	Mismatch between	Low–Medium	Reduced trust or	Mentor training; supervision;	County Center for

	mentors and mentees or challenges in mentor–mentee relationships		disengagement from the mentoring process	possibility to adjust mentor–mentee pairs if needed	Resources and Educational Assistance
Data & M&E	Incomplete feedback data from participants	Medium	Limited ability to assess pilot outcomes and improve the model	Use short and simple feedback tools; collect feedback immediately after activities	Project team

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12. Sustainability and transferability

12.1. Sustainability at local level

The pilot is designed as a structured, low-cost intervention model that can realistically be continued beyond the project period in participating schools. The most sustainable elements are the class-based career guidance sessions and the structured cooperation format established between schools, youth organisations, local business actors, and public educational support institutions.

The career inspiration events and career guidance activities could be repeated by participating schools as part of their existing career guidance or class teacher activities. The materials, session formats and cooperation practices developed during the pilot will remain available for teachers and school counsellors, allowing them to replicate or adapt the activities with limited additional resources.

The mentoring component could also continue in a simplified form through voluntary cooperation between schools and university students. Student organisations and local youth organisations could help facilitate this connection, while schools and counsellors could support coordination at a basic level.

The ”Apáczai Csere János” Teacher Training Center and the County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance could further use the developed tools, mentoring guidelines and training materials in their ongoing work with schools and school counsellors.

An additional sustainability element lies in the capacity-building effect for schools and teachers. Through their involvement in pilot activities, teachers and class mentors will become familiar with the formats and methods used in the career inspiration sessions. This experience may enable them to replicate or adapt similar activities in their own classes or school programmes in the future. In this way, the pilot not only delivers one-off activities but also helps strengthen the schools’ capacity to support students’ career orientation over the longer term.

The minimum conditions for continuation would include the willingness of schools to integrate selected elements into their educational activities, the availability of staff time from school counsellors or teachers, and continued informal cooperation with local youth organisations and student volunteers.

12.2. Transferable elements

Several components of the pilot may be applicable to other geographic areas or institutional settings.

Several elements of the pilot are designed to allow adaptation in other regions or educational contexts.

Transferable elements include:

- the school-based career inspiration event format, combining inspirational talks, real-life examples and moderated discussion;
- the near-peer mentoring approach, where university students mentor secondary school students;
- the cooperation model linking schools, youth organisations, labour market actors and public educational support institutions;
- the engagement funnel logic used to structure participation from initial information to sustained involvement;
- the tools and materials developed for career guidance and mentoring activities.

These elements are transferable because they rely primarily on cooperation mechanisms and activity formats rather than on specialised infrastructure or highly specific institutional arrangements. In other regions, adaptation would mainly involve identifying equivalent partner organisations (e.g. youth organisations, student groups, career guidance services) and adjusting activities to the local educational and labour-market context.

12.3. Limits to transferability

Transferability may be influenced by contextual factors. The availability of motivated university student mentors may vary depending on the presence of higher education institutions in the region. In areas without nearby universities, alternative mentoring approaches (e.g. involving young professionals or alumni) may be needed. Differences in school governance structures or staff workload may also influence how easily schools can integrate career guidance activities into their schedules.

Finally, the level of engagement from local employers and community organisations may vary across regions depending on local labour market structures and the existing culture of cooperation between schools and external stakeholders.

Recognising these contextual factors allows other regions to adapt the core elements of the pilot while adjusting implementation to their own institutional and socio-economic environment.

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13. Timeline and workplan

13.1. Milestone-based workplan

	Milestone	Key activities covered	Timeframe (month/year & project month)	Actor(s)
1	Pilot preparation completed	Agreements with participating schools and partners; detailed planning of pilot activities; development of career guidance and mentoring materials	May 2026 (M14)	Project team, schools, ASPs
2	Outreach and information activities launched	Communication with schools, students and parents; promotion of pilot activities; recruitment of mentors	June 2026 (M15)	Project team, schools, student organisations
3	School-based career inspiration events implemented	Organisation and delivery of inspiration events involving external stakeholders and labour-market actors	September 2026 (M18)	Project team, schools, employers, Chamber of Commerce
4	Career guidance activities completed	Delivery of structured career guidance sessions in participating schools	November 2026 (M20)	Project team, ”Apáczai Csere János” Teacher Training Center, County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance
5	Mentoring programme implemented	Mentor training, mentor–mentee matching and implementation of mentoring sessions	February 2027 (M23)	Project team, student mentors, ASP partners

6	Pilot review and documentation completed	Collection of feedback, evaluation of pilot results and documentation of lessons learned	March 2027 (M24)	Project team
7	Preparing session	Preparing the selected schools Preparing the career guidance activities Preparing the mentoring activities	April – august 2026 (M13-M17)	School directors, ASPs, career guidance experts, mentors, experts in mentoring
8	Information Session	Students receive information about opportunities. Communication is one-way	September 2026 (M18)	
9	School-based career inspiration and information event	The selected classes (100+ students) participate in the meeting. The career guidance opportunity is presented. ASPs are present	September 2026 (M18)	Students, teachers, ASPs, NGOs, institutions, entrepreneurs
10	Class-based career guidance programme	5 sessions of career guidance with 5 classed (100+ students)	October 2026 – February 2027 (M19-M23)	Students, career guidance consultants
11	Programme closing meeting	Post-test	March 2027 (M24)	Students, teachers, career guidance consultants, ASPs, NGOs, institutions, entrepreneurs
12	Near-peer mentoring programme	Near-peer mentoring for those who need deeper support	November 2026 – February 2027 (M20-M23)	Students, mentors

13.2. Gantt-chart

		M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
		April 26	May 26	June 26	July 26	Aug 26	Sept 26	Oct 26	Nov 26	Dec 26	Jan 27	Feb 27	Mar 27
M1	Pilot planning												
M1	Agreements with schools and partners												
M2	Development of career guidance materials												
M2	Communication and outreach preparation												
M3	Information to students and parents												
M4	Mentor recruitment												
M4	Mentor training and preparation												
M5	Confirmation of speakers for the inspiration events												
M6	School-based career inspiration events												
M 7-8	Career guidance sessions in schools												
M9	Mentor–mentee matching												
M 10-11	Mentoring sessions												
M11	Monitoring and feedback collection												
M12	Final evaluation and documentation												

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9. Pilot design: Serbia

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SERBIA

Cooperation-based pilot design

Project partner: Pulse Balkans

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1. Basic information

1.1. Pilot title

Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) and TEAME-like programme in Niš

1.2. Region / country

Niš region, Serbia

1.3. Implementing organisation(s)

ENECA

1.4. Contact detail

Milivoje Jovanović, office@eneca.org.rs

1.5. Collaborating organisation(s) / initiative(s) involved

- Pulse Balkans (Lead coordinator);
- National Employment Service (NES) – Niš Branch;
- City of Niš / local municipal services;
- Local SMEs/employers

1.6. Period of implementation

April 2026 - March 2027 (M13 - M24)

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2. Problem statement (local challenge)

Young people in the Niš region (Southern & Eastern Serbia) face persistent difficulties transitioning from education or inactivity into stable employment pathways. The NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate for the 15-24 age group has reached 19.4%, substantially higher than the national Serbian average of 12.9%. Similarly, the youth unemployment rate in the region stands at 25%, exceeding the national figure of 22.72%.

Furthermore, the GDP per capita in Southern & Eastern Serbia is only €5,595, significantly lower than the national average of €9,420, leading to limited high-value job opportunities and a reliance on low-value manufacturing.

A significant share of youth classified as NEET experience prolonged disengagement linked not only to labour-market conditions but also to fragmented support structures. Although various institutions and organisations provide employment, social or youth services, cooperation among them remains limited and inconsistent, resulting in delayed referrals and missed opportunities for early engagement.

The education system often fails to equip youth with soft skills, digital competences, and practical work experience. The Early School Leaver rate in the region is 8.2%, higher than the national 6.2%, reflecting difficulties in retaining students within formal structures. Young people with lower educational attainment, limited work experience or weaker social support networks often struggle to access existing programmes or maintain participation. Stakeholders report that services frequently operate in parallel rather than through coordinated pathways, which reduces effectiveness and contributes to recurring disengagement cycles.

Finally, while national internet connectivity is high, rural areas in the Nišava District (NUTS 3 level) suffer from lower digital literacy and infrastructure gaps. This digital divide ensures that existing "real-life" socio-economic disparities are replicated online, hindering access to digital learning and remote work for rural youth.

As a result, local actors lack tested cooperation mechanisms - such as the proposed Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) - that would allow early intervention and continuous support for vulnerable youth to prevent disengagement.

3. Underlying needs

To address this situation, several underlying conditions need to be strengthened within the local ecosystem:

a. Young people need trust-based, safe engagement environments that rebuild motivation and confidence before employment-oriented interventions can be effective. For instance, small-groups settings are key to rebuild soft skills through experiential methods (like the TEAME block), before they can navigate formal institutional requirements.

b. The local support system requires clearer cooperation mechanisms and shared understanding among employment, youth and civil society actors. It should take the form of a centralized coordinator (the Local Cooperation Incubator), functioning as a core operational structure, synchronizing the currently fragmented efforts of the NES and other actors. It will ensure youth do not drop out between referral stages.

c. Stakeholders need practical formats that enable coordinated outreach, referral and follow-up rather than isolated interventions.

d. Young people need decentralized, accessible and flexible entry points into support activities adapted to different readiness levels. Youth need one-stop guidance formats located in local municipal youth offices or community centers rather than centralized and hard-to-reach city offices.

e. The ecosystem requires tested cooperation models demonstrating how local actors can jointly support transitions toward education, training or employment

4. Target group

4.1. Description of the target group

The pilot targets young people aged **16–24** years old living in the Niš region who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), or who are at high risk of disengagement from education or the labour market. Participants are expected to include young people with limited work experience, interrupted educational pathways, low confidence in institutional support systems, or weak connections to employers.

Priority will be given to youth facing socio-economic disadvantage, long-term inactivity, or limited access to structured career guidance and mentoring. Participants will be identified through cooperation with local stakeholders, including employment services, civil society organisations and community-based actors.

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4.2. Barriers to participation and inclusion and equity considerations

Young people in the target group may face multiple participation barriers, including transport constraints, limited financial resources, low motivation following repeated unsuccessful transitions, and mistrust toward formal institutions. Some participants may also encounter literacy or communication barriers, mental-health challenges, or limited family support.

To ensure inclusive participation, the pilot will:

- organise activities in accessible locations
- use informal and low-threshold engagement formats,
- cooperate with trusted local organisations for outreach,
- ensure safeguarding procedures, informed consent, and clear confidentiality rules,
- provide referral pathways to youth-friendly support services when additional needs are identified.

5. Pilot objectives

General goal

The pilot will establish a Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) in Niš that strengthens the capacity of local CSOs and municipal youth services to deliver entrepreneurship-driven remobilisation and employability support for vulnerable NEET youth aged 16-24. Specific goals

Participant-level objectives

- Participating young people demonstrate increased engagement with education, training or employment pathways by the end of the pilot. Progress will be demonstrated through a structured pre and post-assessment of soft skills using monitoring tools and reported through individual progress logs and trainer evaluations.
- Participants report improved confidence, motivation and readiness for labour-market participation.

Organisational / cooperation-level objectives

- Local stakeholders (among which Pulse Balkans, ENECA, NES, City of Niš, Science and Technology Park, local SMEs and employers, local CSOs and youth organisations, and education/training providers) establish more consistent cooperation practices for outreach, referral and support of NEET youth.
- Participating organisations strengthen their capacity to jointly engage vulnerable young people.

System / sustainability-oriented objective

- A tested Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) model is documented and prepared for continuation or adaptation within local youth-support structures beyond the pilot period.
- To establish a Local Cooperation Incubator that strengthens local CSO capacity to deliver entrepreneurship-driven learning for vulnerable youth

6. Theory of change (core logic model)

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes (within the pilot period)	Medium-term outcomes / contribution to impact	Key assumptions and contextual factors
LCI Setup (7.1)					
Pulse Balkans coordination; local partner's capacity; pilot funding; meeting spaces	Activity 7.1: Establish Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI); 4 coordination meetings; mapping skills gaps with employers	5–8 local employers signed letters of intent; 3–5 public/CSO partners (NES, City of Niš) formally engaged in LCI	Improved trust between 4+ local sectors; clearer referral pathways for youth from NES to the pilot	More consistent cooperation practices among local actors; CSO capacity strengthened to deliver joint youth support	Stakeholders remain willing to cooperate; limited institutional turnover
Outreach & recruitment (7.2)					
Local CSO networks; social media tools; registration forms; meeting spaces, facilitation tools	Activity 7.2: Decentralised outreach; info sessions; individual intake and profiling interviews	700 youth informed; 100 youth reached via sessions; 40 youth profiled/needs assessed	100 youth have improved awareness of local support services and career opportunities	Re-engagement of vulnerable youth with local support systems; reduced "hidden" NEET population	Outreach channels effectively reach "hidden" or mistrustful youth
Training Delivery and Work Readiness (7.3/7.4)					

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TEAME methodology; Mentor training guides; local trainers; business guest speakers	Activity 7.3/7.4: Training for local mentors; delivery of 60h TEAME learning block; 12h employer exposure	20–24 youth enrolled; 5+ local mentors/staff trained; 3 training modules delivered	Increased motivation, confidence, and soft skills in 20+ participants; sense of belonging established	Improved readiness for education or employment; 12–16 youth better prepared for work-based learning	Youth remain reachable; participation barriers mitigated
Transition & Continuity (7.5)					
Local ecosystem actors; referral partners; monitoring tools	Activity 7.5: Individual transition counselling; establishment of follow-up pathways beyond the pilot	12–16 participants successfully complete the programme; cooperation practices documented	Young people maintain engagement and access structured support	Tested LCI model documented for replication; sustainable coordination routines embedded locally	Local services continue engagement beyond pilot period

7. Key activities

7.1. Activity title: Local labour-market validation and partnership setup

7.1.1. Objective(s)

- Strengthen cooperation between local stakeholders supporting youth transitions into employment.
- Align pilot training (60-hour intensive TEAME like learning block) and activation measures with identified local labour-market needs.

This activity on labour-market validation is a prerequisite for Activity 7.3 (Delivery of job-focused training modules) to ensure the curriculum developed there responds to the skills gaps identified. It contributes to Specific Goal 2 (Organisational Level) by formalising the LCI partnership, and Goal 1 (Participant Level) by ensuring training content is labour-market relevant".

7.1.2. Target group

Local SMEs and employers relevant for entry-level employment opportunities, local development actors, training providers, and partner organisations involved in youth employment support.

7.1.3. Detailed description

This activity establishes the operational foundation of the pilot by validating labour-market needs and formalising cooperation among local stakeholders. Building on findings from the territorial diagnosis and existing local cooperation networks, Pulse Balkans, in cooperation with ENECA and local partners (among which Pulse Balkans, ENECA, NES, City of Niš, Science and Technology Park, local SMEs and employers, local CSOs and youth organisations, and education/training providers), will organise structured consultations with employers and support organisations to ensure that pilot activities respond to real employment opportunities.

The activity aims to translate existing knowledge about local employment barriers into practical cooperation arrangements and clearly defined skill priorities relevant for vulnerable young people. Particular attention will be given to identifying entry-level roles suitable for youth with limited work experience and to understanding employer expectations regarding both technical and transversal competences.

7.1.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Pulse Balkans and ENECA will map relevant local employers and local stakeholders, specifically targeting the National Employment Service (NES) – Niš Branch, the City of Niš (local municipal services), and local youth-focused NGOs *(Engagement level: Inform)*
2. The implementing paterner will conduct semi-structured consultations and interviews with 8-10 selected local SMEs/employers to identify specific skills gaps and determine their capacity for hosting youth visits or providing guest speakers. *(Engagement level: Reach)*
3. Pulse Balkans & ENECA will facilitate the organisation of a 4-hour in-person workshop in Niš for all mapped stakeholders to prioritise competence areas and define the practical coordination routines of the Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI). *(Engagement level: Involve)*
4. Pulse Balkans will define the priority competence areas to adapt the 60-hour TEAME-like training block design and youth pathways to local market needs. *(Internal step)*
5. Pulse Balkans will secure formal commitment from 5-8 local employers and the public sector partners through cooperation agreements or letters of intent. *(Engagement level: Involve)*

7.1.3.2. Timing and duration

This activity is scheduled to take place between M13 and M16 (April 2026 – July 2026), allowing for a thorough recruitment and profiling phase before the training block begins in M17.

7.1.2.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **Pulse Balkans:** coordination, facilitation, synthesis of findings.
- **ENECA and local partners (NES, city of Nis, local youth-focused NGOs):** mobilisation of employers and local actors.
- **Local SMEs/employers:** provision of labour-market input and participation in pilot cooperation.

7.1.3.4. Methods

Consultative meetings, structured interviews, participatory validation workshop.

7.1.4. Materials and tools

Consultation guides, meeting facilitation tools, stakeholder mapping templates.

7.1.5. Key indicators

1. Priority skills areas validated for further intensive training.
2. Minimum 5–8 local employers signed letters of intent.
3. Cooperation arrangements, eg. 3–5 public/CSO partners (NES, City of Niš) formally engaged in LCI.

7.2. Activity title: Outreach, recruitment and profiling of NEET youth

7.2.1. Objective(s)

Activate vulnerable young people and facilitate access to structured employability pathways. This activity contributes to Specific Objective 1 (Participant-level), which aims to increase youth engagement with employment and training pathways by the end of the pilot. It also supports the General Goal of the pilot to provide an "entrepreneurship-driven remobilisation" experience.

7.2.2. Target group:

Young people aged 16–24 in NEET status or at risk of disengagement from education or employment.

7.2.3. Detailed description

This activity ensures inclusive access to the pilot through decentralised outreach and individual profiling. Recruitment will prioritise young people facing barriers to labour-market participation, including low confidence, limited work experience or weak institutional support networks.

Outreach actions will be implemented in cooperation with local institutions and civil society organisations to ensure trust-based engagement and accessibility. Individual profiling will allow tailoring participation pathways according to each participant's needs and readiness level.

7.2.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Outreach planning with local partners and referral institutions. ENECA and Pulse Balkans will coordinate a joint outreach calendar with established partners, specifically the National Employment Service (NES) Niš Branch, the City of Niš (local youth offices), and local youth-focused CSOs. *(Inform)*
2. Organisation of information sessions and local promotion activities. The implementing partner (ENECA) will deliver local promotion activities and info sessions specifically for young people to achieve the target of 100 youth reached as defined in the Theory of Change. *(Reach)*
3. ENECA and Pulse Balkans will produce materials (e.g., flyers, social media posts, registration forms) for dissemination through NES offices and municipal network. *(Inform)*
4. ENECA trainers and profilers will conduct 40 individual interviews to assess the needs and readiness of candidates. *(Involve)*
5. Pulse Balkans and ENECA will select 20 participants for the 60-hour TEAME-like training block and define individual participation pathways. They will serve as personal development plans mapping specific training modules, mentoring needs and local SMEs exposure for each youth. *(Involve)*

7.2.3.2. Timing and duration

This activity is scheduled to take place between M16 and M17 (July 2026 - August 2026), to ensure the training block begins in M17.

7.2.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **Pulse Balkans:** coordination, profiling methodology, participant selection.
- **Local partners:** outreach support and referrals.

7.2.3.4. Methods

Information sessions, one-to-one interviews, participatory engagement activities.

7.2.4. Materials and tools

Outreach materials, registration forms, profiling templates, consent forms.

7.2.4. Key indicators

- 700 youth informed through outreach.
- 100 youth reached.
- 20participants enrolled in pilot activities.

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7.3. Activity title: Delivery of job-focused training modules - Pedagogical Foundation

7.3.1. Objective(s):

Improve participants' employability skills aligned with local labour-market needs. This activity contributes to Specific Objective 1 (Participant-level), which aims to increase youth engagement with employment and training pathways by the end of the pilot. By building work-readiness and technical competences, the training directly addresses the need to improve participants' confidence, motivation, and readiness for labor-market participation. It also supports the General Goal of the pilot to provide an "entrepreneurship-driven remobilisation" experience.

7.3.2. Target group:

This activity is delivered exclusively to the 20 selected youth participants who successfully completed the profiling and intake process from Activity 7.2.

7.3.2. Detailed description

This activity delivers short, modular training combining vocational and transversal skills development, being the first part of the 60-hour TEAME-like training block. Training content is based on validated employer needs and adapted to participants with diverse educational backgrounds and learning confidence levels. It consists of 48 cumulative hours per participant, structured as 36 hours of collective learning (delivered through an intensive 6-day cycle of workshops and applied work), and 12 hours of case-study based group assignments. These 12 hours are an unifying practical framework that prepares youth for the site visits in Activity 7.4.

The modules emphasise practical learning, experiential exercises and real-life workplace situations. Training aims not only to build competences but also to strengthen motivation and engagement with employment pathways. Training modules include key thematics areas such as:

- Innovation and entrepreneurship in business.
- Business planning and project design.
- Communication skills (internal and external).
- Marketing and sales fundamentals.
- Digital skills relevant to employability.
- Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC), including CV creation and job interview preparation.

7.3.2.1. Sequence of steps

1. Adaptation of training curricula based on identified skills priorities. *(Internal step)*
2. Selection and preparation of trainers. *(Internal step)*

3. Delivery of modular training sessions, in-person by a team of expert facilitators and training providers. The process relies on active and participatory methods (simulations, group exercises, experiential learning), more than traditional passive lecturing. Participants engage in an intensive cycle (part of the 48-hour collective learning block) focusing on communication, teamwork, and business planning. KPI: 6 workshops delivered to 20 participants. A case study–based group assignment, lasting approximately 12 hours, runs across the programme and serves as a unifying practical framework through which participants apply the acquired skills collaboratively. *(Engage)*
4. Continuous feedback collection and adaptation of delivery methods. Notably, self-reported and observed improvements in job readiness, via structured pre- and post-assessment questionnaires. Regular coaching exchanges between participant and facilitator will be key to track individual milestones and barriers during this intensive adaptation of the TEAME model. *(Engage)*
5. Completion assessment and certification of participation. *(Engage)*

7.3.2.2. Timing and duration

This activity is scheduled to take place in M17 - M18 (September to beginning of October 2026), to ensure participants are ready for the employer interaction phase beginning in M19.

7.3.2.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **Pulse Balkans:** coordination and monitoring, providing the methodological guidance, supervision and quality assurance for training delivery.
- **Training providers/experts from ENECA:** delivery of training modules and responsible for direct engagement with youth and the organization of workshops.
- **Local SMEs/employers:** occasional guest inputs or practical examples, and labour-market validation to ensure the curriculum responds to real employment opportunities, based on the identified needs in Activity 7.1.

7.3.2.4. Methods

Interactive workshops, simulations, group exercises, experiential learning.

7.3.3. Materials and tools

Training curricula based on the TEAME methodology and adapted to match the 6-day delivery window, presentations, practical exercises, attendance tracking tools, certificates.

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7.3.4. Key indicators

1. Minimum 6 workshops delivered to the 20 participants.
2. ≥70% participant completion rate. Final completion assessments will be used to validate the acquisition of the four key TEAME competences: critical thinking, teamwork, communication, and resilience.
3. Participant self-reported improvement in job readiness. Structured pre- and post-assessment questionnaires to quantify shifts in soft skills and confidence.
4. Daily/per session narrative progress logs and regular coaching exchanges between the participant and the facilitator to track individual milestones and barriers.

7.4. Activity title: Work-readiness support and employer interaction - Professional Contextualization

7.4.1. Objective

Strengthen confidence, workplace understanding and transition readiness.

7.4.2. Target group

Youth participating in training activities.

7.4.3. Detailed description

This activity complements technical training (Activity 7.3) by strengthening soft skills and familiarising participants with workplace expectations. While Activity 7.3 focuses on the acquisition of competences within a 48-hour collective learning block, Activity 7.4 builds on this by providing 12 hours of direct professional exposure, allowing participants to apply their newly developed project ideas and communication skills in real-world contexts through company visits and guest-speaker interactions.

Activities include workshops, employer encounters through company visits and mentoring-style interactions that bridge the gap between training and employment environments.

Participants will gain understanding of workplace communication, teamwork, responsibilities and employment norms, reducing risks of early disengagement.

7.4.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Employer guest sessions or workplace exposure activities. All 20 participants take part in 3 workplace visits (Science and Technology Park Niš, one international company, and one local company) and attend sessions with 3 guest business speakers to gain direct exposure to a professional environment. *(Engage)*
2. Reflection sessions and feedback collection. ENECA's facilitators collect feedback via weekly progress logs and final questionnaires. *(Engage)*
3. Identification of suitable next-step pathways for participants. Definition of individual plans for each participant, such as formal referrals to the NES, enrollment in further vocational training, or applications for the "My First Salary" internship program. *(Internal step)*

7.4.3.2. Timing and duration

This activity is scheduled to take place in M19 - M21 (November 2026 to January 2027), after the training phase.

7.4.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **Pulse Balkans:** coordination and facilitation.
- **Employers:** participation in interaction sessions.

7.4.3.4. Methods

Role-playing, case discussions, mentoring-oriented facilitation.

7.4.4. Materials and tools

Workshop materials, reflection tools, feedback questionnaires.

7.4.5. Key indicators

- ≥80% participant attendance. This rate will be calculated as the cumulative percentage of hours attended by each individual participant across the total 12-hour exposure block. Ie. Total hours attended by the participant / 12 possible exposure hours to work environment.
- Increased participant confidence reported in post-assessment. Participants will complete a standardized questionnaire at the start of Activity 7.2 (profiling) and at the end of Activity 7.4 to quantify shifts in self-perceived employability and self-efficacy.

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7.5. Activity title: Transition support and follow-up pathways

7.5.1. Objective

Support participants' transition toward employment, training or further engagement.

This activity contributes to Specific Objective 1 (Participant-level), which aims to increase youth engagement with employment and training pathways by the end of the pilot. It also contributes to Specific Objective 3 (system/sustainability level), since it implies testing and documenting the coordination routines that will be integrated into municipal youth-support structures, beyond the project period.

7.5.2. Target group

Participants completing pilot activities.

7.5.3. Detailed description

This activity provides individual follow-up support to help participants transition beyond the pilot. Rather than direct job placement, the activity focuses on guidance, referrals and cooperation with local actors supporting youth employment. The transition phase relies on a "progressive engagement pathway" where the Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) partners provide distinct exit routes for participants:

- Public sector level: the NES is the primary actor for connecting youth with formal employment support mechanisms and state-led schemes like the "My First Salary" internship program.
- Municipal level: the City of Niš and local municipal services provide access to youth offices and local information channels to support integration into municipal youth policy structures.
- Business sector level: the 5–8 local SMEs and employers engaged in the pilot provide potential vacancies or continued mentoring opportunities based on the needs identified during their interactions in Activity 7.4.
- Education level: local education or training providers support transitions for youth wishing to re-enter formal schooling or pursue further vocational training.

The aim is to test cooperation mechanisms enabling smoother transitions and continued support after pilot completion. These mechanisms will be documented and assessed through several formats, to ensure the model is transferable and reproducible:

- Each participant will have a "Documented Transition Pathway" established, which acts as a tracking template to monitor their progress and formalize referrals to LCI partners

- All eight in-person LCI meetings (including the monthly routines between Pulse Balkans and ENECA) are systematically documented via minutes and action logs to track how coordination helps resolve participation barriers
- A shared digital repository is used for real-time documentation and participant tracking, allowing partners to assess the efficiency of the referral mechanism
- The pilot concludes with an LCI consolidation and pilot evaluation (Milestone 6), where the effectiveness of the cooperation model is reviewed by all stakeholders to prepare for its sustainable integration into local structures beyond the project period?

7.5.3.1. Sequence of steps

Consolidation of participant profiles and readiness assessment: ENECA's facilitators will review individual progress logs and pre/post-assessment data to finalize each participant's skill profile.)*(Internal step)*

Mapping available opportunities with partner organisations and employers. This step builds directly on the 5–8 local employer relationships and letters of intent established in Activity 7.1 and the professional encounters in Activity 7.4 to identify concrete vacancies or training slots. *(Internal step)*

Individual counselling and referral support. Each participant receives one face-to-face transition session (approx. 60–90 minutes) during M23–M24 to finalize their "Individualized Transition Plan" and receive a mediated referral to a partner organization (e.g., National Employment Service). *(Engage)*

Follow-up monitoring of participant pathways. ENECA will conduct monthly follow-up calls or digital surveys for three months following the training completion and coordinate directly with LCI partners to verify the participant's status in their new pathway. *(Engage)*

7.5.3.2. Timing and duration

This activity is scheduled to take place across M13-M24 to ensure continuous follow-up monitoring and mediated referrals.

7.5.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **Pulse Balkans:** Provides the methodology for the "participation pathways" and supervises the quality of documentation for the final consolidation report through coordination, counselling and monitoring.
- **ENECA**: leads the operational delivery by conducting individual transition counselling sessions and maintaining the participant progress logs.
- **National Employment Service (NES) – Niš Branch**: acts as the primary "referral destination", formalising the registration of participants into national schemes like the "My First Salary" programme.

- **City of Niš**: facilitates access to local municipal youth office resources and ensures the transition pathways align with local youth policy.

7.5.3.4. Methods

Individual guidance, mediation, follow-up communication.

7.5.4. Materials and tools

Participant profiles, tracking templates, feedback forms.

7.5.5. Key indicators

- At least 12 participants (representing successful completions from the 20 enrolled) will receive structured follow-up support
- 100% of completing participants will have a "Documented Transition Pathway" established before the pilot closure. These are defined and measured as Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs). An ITP is considered "established" and "measured" when it contains (a) A validated skill profile derived from the 60-hour TEAME-like block, (b) A specified next-step destination (e.g., specific vocational training, an internship, or a job vacancy), (c) A signed agreement between the participant and ENECA's mentor outlining the specific support required from the NES or other LCI partners to reach that destination.

8. Cooperation model

8.1. Collaborating organisations/initiatives, roles and responsibilities

Sector	Actor	Role and responsibility across the pilot	Why this role is needed at pilot level
Civil society	Pulse Balkans	• Overall pilot coordination and reporting • Governance and stakeholder coordination through the Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) • Methodological guidance and quality assurance • Monitoring, documentation and contribution to COOPOWER outputs	Provides neutral coordination platform linking public institutions, CSOs and employers; ensures coherence of activities and alignment with COOPOWER methodology
Civil society	ENECA	• Local implementation of pilot activities in Niš • Organisation of outreach, workshops and stakeholder meetings • Direct engagement with youth participants and local actors	Strong local presence and experience in entrepreneurship and employment support ensures operational delivery and trust with local stakeholders
Public	City of Niš / local municipal services	• Support outreach and identification of young people • Participation in coordination meetings • Provision of local information channels and venues where possible	Municipal actors ensure access to vulnerable youth and connect pilot activities with local policy and youth support structures
Public	National Employment Service (NES) – local branch	• Referral of NEET youth • Labour-market information and guidance • Contribution to transition pathways toward employment or training	Connects pilot participants with formal employment support mechanisms and increases sustainability of outcomes
Civil society	Local CSOs (Protecta, Proaktiv) and youth	• Outreach support and trust-building with young people • Participation in engagement activities and referrals	Help reach disengaged youth who are not connected to institutions

	organisations (KOM018)		
Business	Local SMEs and employers (NISTRUCT Rižoto i pasta bar TIMACUM Blockchain technology ZG Lightening Tridonic SRB Stivadent Santos Santorini doo Niš ProMedia Creative Naissuss Tehnologije doo Niš Syncit Group doo Advertise design doo Spintech technology Hirequarters Kredium)	• Participation in stakeholder dialogue • Input on skills expectations and workplace realities • Exposure opportunities for youth (visits, mentoring, insights)	Provide labour-market relevance and realistic understanding of employment pathways
Academia / Education	Local education or training providers (Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economy - University of Niš)	• Contribution to workshops or learning activities • Support transition toward further education or training	Strengthens links between youth activation and education pathways

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8.2. Governance and communication structure

The pilot is coordinated through a **Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI)** acting as a practical coordination platform between civil society, public institutions and labour-market actors.

Coordination routines

- Monthly coordination meetings between Pulse Balkans, ENECA and key stakeholders (employment services, municipality representatives, local CSOs and local employers).
- Operational coordination led by ENECA for local implementation, on a monthly basis between ENECA's representatives.
- On demand meetings between Pulse and ENECA to review progress and adjust activities.

Communication channels

- Shared online workspace for documentation and participant tracking.
- Email and messaging channels for day-to-day coordination.
- Regular updates shared with COOPOWER consortium partners.

Decision-making and escalation

- Operational decisions taken jointly by Pulse Balkans and ENECA.
- Strategic or methodological issues discussed within the LCI.
- Escalation to COOPOWER coordination where alignment or compliance clarification is needed.

8.3. How cooperation contributes to youth outcomes

Cooperation between actors is central to achieving pilot results:

- **Joint outreach by municipalities, CSOs and employment services → wider access to NEET youth:** Combining institutional and community channels improves identification of young people who are otherwise disengaged.
- **Coordination between civil society and employers → more realistic understanding of work pathways:** Employer participation ensures activities reflect real labour-market expectations.
- **Cross-sector (private and public) coordination → continuity of support:** Linking engagement activities, mentoring and referrals prevents drop-out between stages.
- **Shared monitoring and case discussions → faster response to participation barriers:** Partners can adapt support measures when motivation, access or practical barriers arise.
- **Local cooperation platform (LCI) → transferable cooperation model:** The pilot tests structured collaboration practices that can be replicated in other Serbian local contexts.

9. Outreach strategy

Meaningful engagement of young people is a central condition for the effectiveness of the Niš pilot. In the local context, many young people classified as NEETs experience low trust in institutions, weak motivation, and fragmented contact with support services. Traditional recruitment approaches relying on formal calls or passive registration mechanisms are therefore insufficient.

The outreach strategy is designed as a **progressive engagement pathway**, moving young people from initial awareness toward sustained participation through trusted intermediaries and repeated contact points. Outreach combines institutional channels (employment services, municipalities, schools) with community-based actors to ensure accessibility and credibility. Particular attention is given to low-threshold communication, personal contact, and gradual trust-building.

The strategy aligns with the Local Cooperation (LCI) approach by ensuring that outreach is coordinated among partners and embedded within existing local youth support structures rather than implemented as a standalone recruitment campaign.

9.1. Shared COOPOWER baseline definitions

At the pilot co-creation meeting in November 2025 in Austria, all partners agreed that there are different engagement levels of the target group (see Table below). In the sections below, please describe what these engagement levels mean bases on your pilot's activities, cooperation model and local youth realities.

Level	Description	Examples in practice
Inform	Young people **receive information** about opportunities, services, or rights. **Communication is one-way.**	Flyers, school visits, or social-media posts announce a new training or mentoring offer.
Reach	Young people are contacted and **take part once or briefly**, usually as participants or beneficiaries. **Their role is mainly passive.**	They join a single job-skills workshop or attend an event run by partners.
Involve	Young people **participate more than once in activities** and can **express opinions or preferences**, with potential to shape design.	They attend several mentoring sessions, share feedback, or help spread the word.
Engage	Young people take **part actively and continuously**, showing **commitment** and initiative within the activities. They help keep momentum and **bring their perspective** into planning, outreach, or implementation.	They participate throughout a full training cycle, mentor peers informally, or help sustain a youth group.

9.2. Pilot-specific definition

Level	Related activity / steps	Expected number of young people
Inform	**Activity 7.2 – Outreach phase**: • Online announcements and social media campaigns • Dissemination through NES Niš, City of Niš, CSOs and youth organisations • Distribution of outreach materials (flyers, posts, registration forms)	approx. **700 youth informed**
Reach	**Activity 7.2 – Information sessions**: • Organisation of info sessions and local promotion events • Open meetings with partners (NES, CSOs, municipality) • Initial contact and expression of interest by participants	approx. **100 youth reached**
Involve	**Activity 7.2 – Profiling and selection**: • Individual intake interviews (approx. 40 youth) • Needs and readiness assessment • Selection of participants and definition of individual participation pathways	approx. **40 youth involved in profiling**, leading to **20 selected participants**
Engage	**Activities 7.3 & 7.4 – Core pilot participation**: • Participation in 60-hour TEAME-like training block • Workshops, group assignments and mentoring interactions • Employer exposure (company visits, guest speakers)	20 participants actively engaged
Sustained engagement	**Activity 7.5 – Transition and follow-up**: • Individual counselling and referral to NES, employers or training providers • Development of Individualised Transition Plans • Follow-up monitoring and support	at least **12 participants complete** the programme and continue into employment, training or further support pathways

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9.3. Barriers to engagement and mitigation measures

Barrier	Mitigation measure
Low motivation and lack of confidence	Gradual engagement through informal info sessions; experiential learning methods focused on strengths
Mistrust toward institutions	Outreach through trusted local actors and NGOs; small-group settings; transparent communication about expectations
Limited access to information	Proactive, mediated outreach through trusted intermediaries (NES counsellors, youth workers, CSOs), combined with targeted communication via social media and peer networks
Financial or transport constraints	Activities organised in accessible locations; scheduling adapted to participants' circumstances
Fear of failure or stigma	Non-formal learning environment; supportive facilitation; emphasis on personal progress rather than evaluation
Irregular routines or competing obligations	Flexible participation structure and continuous individual follow-up

10. Incentive model

Sustained participation of young people in the Niš pilot is supported through a combination of practical, social and learning-oriented incentives rather than financial rewards. Many participants face low motivation, weak trust in institutions and fragmented engagement with education or employment services. Incentives are therefore designed as **enabling mechanisms** that reduce participation barriers and strengthen progression through the engagement pathway (Reach → Involve → Engage).

In line with COOPOWER principles, incentives are non-coercive, inclusive and proportionate to the pilot scope. They aim to create a supportive learning environment, reinforce participants' sense of belonging and make participation meaningful for future personal and professional development.

Engagement level	Incentive	Needs addressed	Barrier addressed	Purpose / expected effect
Reach	Accessible information sessions and informal introductory meetings	Need for clear guidance and safe first contact	Mistrust toward institutions; low motivation	Reduces psychological barriers and encourages first participation
Reach	Activities organised in accessible local venues	Need for practical accessibility	Transport and logistical constraints	Enables participation without additional burden
Involve	Small-group workshops and peer interaction	Need for belonging and social support	Low motivation and lack of confidence	Builds trust, peer connection and regular attendance
Involve	Provision of learning materials during sessions	Need for structured learning support	Financial and organisational barriers	Ensures equal participation conditions for all participants
Involve	Continuous facilitator support and mentoring conversations	Need for personalised guidance	Fear of failure or stigma; irregular routines or competing obligations	Strengthens commitment and supports transition toward active engagement
Involve	Structured mentoring and coaching within the TEAME programme	Need for personal development and self-efficacy	Low motivation and lack of confidence	Improves motivation, resilience and readiness for next steps
Engage	Certificates of participation	Need for recognition and	Mistrust toward institutions; low	Makes achievements visible and increases

	and documented skills gained	employability signalling	motivation and lack of confidence	perceived usefulness of participation
Engage	Public presentation or closing event showcasing participant progress	Need for recognition and validation	Low motivation and lack of confidence; mistrust toward institutions	Reinforces achievement and strengthens motivation to continue engagement
Completion stage	Follow-up support and referrals through LCI partners	Need for continuity after programme end	Irregular routines or competing obligations; low motivation and lack of confidence	Supports transition toward education, employment or further support services

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11. Risks and mitigation

Risk category	Description of risk	Likelihood [Low / medium / high]	Potential impact	Mitigation strategy	Responsible actor
Cooperation	Limited or inconsistent engagement of local stakeholders in the LCI process (municipalities, NES, CSOs)	Medium	Reduced effectiveness of coordination and weaker sustainability of cooperation model	• Early clarification of roles and expectations within LCI • Structured agenda and documentation of each meeting	Pulse Balkans
Cooperation	LCI perceived as a one-off consultation rather than ongoing cooperation mechanism	Low–Medium	Reduced ownership and limited long-term impact	• Clear communication that LCI is process-oriented • Integration of pilot monitoring discussions into LCI meetings • Documented follow-up actions	Pulse Balkans
Operational	Lower-than-expected recruitment (fewer than 20 participants selected)	Medium	Difficulty achieving pilot engagement targets	• Close coordination with National Employment Service during outreach • Multiple recruitment channels (municipal, CSO, peer networks) • Slight over-selection at intake stage to compensate for early drop-out	ENECA with NES support

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Operational	Participant drop-out during programme implementation	Medium	Fewer than 12 successful completions	• Gradual engagement model (profiling before full enrolment) • Continuous mentoring and facilitator follow-up • Flexible scheduling where feasible	ENECA with Pulse Balkans support
Operational	Staff overload or coordination delays	Low - Medium	Delays in delivery or reporting	• Clear division of roles between Pulse Balkans and ENECA • Standardised tools and templates • Regular internal coordination meetings	ENECA with Pulse Balkans support
Ethical / safeguarding	Safeguarding or consent issues involving participants under 18	Low	Reputational and ethical consequences	• Parental/ guardian consent procedures • Clear safeguarding guidelines for facilitators • Defined escalation pathway through LCI partners	ENECA with Pulse Balkans support
Ethical / safeguarding	Risk of stigma toward vulnerable youth	Low	Reduced trust and engagement	•Non-stigmatising communication • Inclusive language in outreach materials • Group facilitation methods	ENECA

				promoting equal participation	
Data & M&E	Incomplete data collection or inconsistent reporting	Medium	Weak evidence for pilot evaluation and learning	• Standardised monitoring templates • Clear indicator definitions aligned with ToR • Periodic data checks by Pulse Balkans	Pulse Balkans

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12. Sustainability and transferability

12.1. Sustainability at local level

The sustainability of the Niš pilot is based on embedding selected elements of the Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) and the TEAME-based methodology into existing local structures (Liga 33, ENECA, National Employment Service Branch Niš), rather than on the continuation of the full pilot model with external funding.

The most sustainable outcome at the local level is the **LCI cooperation mechanism**. The pilot establishes regular coordination routines between civil society actors, the National Employment Service, municipalities and other relevant stakeholders. These routines do not require the creation of new institutions but rely on clearer role definition, structured meeting formats and shared follow-up practices. After the formal project period, coordination can realistically continue in a lighter format through periodic meetings integrated into existing institutional planning cycles.

The TEAME-like programme itself is designed as a modular, adaptable methodology rather than a one-time intervention. Elements that can continue locally include:

- entrepreneurship-driven, project-based learning sessions;
- structured intake and profiling conversations;
- mentoring and follow-up formats; documentation of participant progress.

Local actors, municipal youth services or employment support providers already operate within mandates related to youth activation and employability. With modest staff time and limited operational resources, selected programme components (e.g. short intensive workshops or mentoring formats) could be integrated into existing activation measures.

Sustainability does not depend on maintaining the full 60-hour programme at identical scale, but on institutional learning and the adoption of structured cooperation and engagement practices. The pilot contributes practical tools and tested coordination routines that can remain in use beyond the project timeframe.

Minimum conditions for continuation include:

- allocation of limited staff time for coordination within existing organisations;
- institutional recognition of cooperation benefits among partners;
- continued willingness of actors to share information and coordinate referrals.

No dedicated long-term external funding is assumed as a prerequisite for partial continuation.

12.2. Transferable elements

The Niš pilot generates several elements that are transferable to other regions within Serbia or the Danube region, particularly in contexts where youth disengagement is linked to weak coordination among local actors.
Key transferable elements include:

1. The Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) format: A structured yet lightweight coordination mechanism linking civil society, public institutions and employment services. This format can be replicated without creating new governance bodies, relying instead on clarified roles and regular coordination routines.

To support replication, the pilot will develop practical guidance materials, including a basic coordination model (roles and responsibilities) which can be adapted by other regions.

2. The engagement funnel logic (Inform → Reach → Involve → Engage): The pilot operationalises a clear progression model for youth participation. This helps regions allocate resources efficiently and define sustained participation criteria rather than focusing solely on recruitment numbers.

3. The TEAME-based remobilisation methodology: The entrepreneurship-driven, experiential learning approach focused on confidence-building, transversal skills and positive exposure to the world of work is adaptable to different economic sectors. The methodology can be adjusted to local labour-market conditions while maintaining its core pedagogical principles.

4. Structured intake and profiling tools: Simple intake interviews, participation tracking and narrative monitoring tools provide a replicable framework for documenting youth progression without requiring complex data systems.

5. Non-stigmatising engagement and incentive approach: The pilot demonstrates how practical, social and learning incentives can be combined to support participation without reliance on financial compensation.

These elements are transferable because they rely on governance arrangements, facilitation methods and process design rather than sector-specific employment structures.

12.3. Limits to transferability

While several elements are adaptable, transfer requires consideration of context-specific factors.

First, labour-market structure varies across regions. The Niš pilot focuses primarily on remobilisation and transversal skills development rather than sector-specific placements. Regions seeking direct employment integration may need additional employer engagement mechanisms.

Second, institutional capacity differs. Successful transfer depends on the presence of at least one coordinating actor capable of facilitating cooperation between institutions. In regions without a neutral intermediary, additional leadership or coordination arrangements may be necessary.

Third, legal and safeguarding frameworks, particularly regarding participation of minors, may influence implementation details and consent procedures.

Finally, transfer depends on basic resource availability, including staff time for coordination and facilitation. In lower-capacity contexts, activities may need to be simplified or implemented gradually. For example, simplified implementation could include fewer coordination meetings (e.g. quarterly instead of monthly), shorter or modular training formats instead of a full 60-hour programme, reduced mentoring intensity (group mentoring instead of individual follow-up).

Recognising these limits strengthens the pilot's learning value and clarifies that successful adaptation requires contextualisation rather than direct replication.

13. Timeline and workplan

13.1. Milestone-based workplan

Milestone	Key activities covered	Timeframe (month/year & project month)	Actor(s)
1. Contracting finalised and LCI formally launched	Contract signature; stakeholder confirmation; first LCI meeting; agreement on outreach roles and referral pathways	April 2026	Pulse Balkans (lead), ENECA, key local stakeholders
2. Outreach and information phase completed	Dissemination to approx. 700 youth; delivery of info sessions for approx. 100 candidates; registration of interested youth	May-August 2026	ENECA (lead), NES, CSOs
3. Selection and intake of 20 participants confirmed	Profiling interviews; safeguarding procedures; final participant list validated	August-September 2026	ENECA, Pulse Balkans
4. TEAME-like programme cycle completed (60h delivery)	Delivery of 60-hour training block; workshops; group work; company visits and guest sessions	September-November 2026	ENECA, invited facilitators, company partners
5. Transition support and follow-up initiated	Individual counselling; referrals to NES and partners; development of transition pathways; Ongoing monitoring of participant pathways	December - January 2026	ENECA, NES
6. LCI consolidation and pilot evaluation finalised	Final LCI meeting; review of cooperation model; reporting inputs; sustainability discussion	February - March 2027	Pulse Balkans (lead), Partner, LCI members

13.2. Gantt–chart

		M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
		April 26	May 26	June 26	July 26	Aug 26	Sept 26	Oct 26	Nov 26	Dec 26	Jan 27	Feb 27	Mar 27
M1	**1. LCI Setup & Validation**												
M1	1.1 Stakeholder mapping												
M1	1.2 SME consultations												
M1	1.3 LCI Validation workshop												
M1	1.4 Formal LOIs & adaptation of Curricula												
M2	**2. Outreach & Profiling**												
M2	2..1 Outreach materials & planning												
M2	2.2 Info Sessions (100 Reached)												
M3	2.3 Intake interviews (40 Involve)												
M4	**3. 48h training delivery**												
M4	3.1 6-Day intensive block (48h)												
M4	3.2 12h Case-study Group work												
M4	**4. Employer exposure (12h)**												
M4	4.1 3 Workplace visits												
M4	4.2 Guest speakers & feedback												
M5	**5. Transition & follow-up**												
M5	5.1 Individual counselling & ITPs												
M5	5.2 Mediated referrals (NES/SMEs)												
M6	5.3 Follow-up monitoring & closure												

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10. Pilot design: Slovakia

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SLOVAKIA

Cooperation-based pilot design

Project partner: SBA

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1. Basic information

1.1. Pilot title

Stay & Grow: From School to Opportunity – Building Future Pathways in the Prešov Region

1.2. Region / country

Prešov Region / Slovakia

1.3. Implementing organisation(s)

- Slovak Business Agency (SBA)
- Lower secondary schools in Prešov Region

1.4. Contact details

Veronika Blizman Servilová, project manager, blizman-servilova@sbagency.sk

1.5. Collaborating organisation(s) / initiative(s) involved

- Junior Achievement Slovensko (Junior Achievement Slovakia – JA SK)
- SVDM, s.r.o. - Baterkáreň Trnava
- DASATO
- Daybyme Media House s. r. o.
- Involved local entrepreneurs/role models

1.6. Period of implementation

June 2026 – March 2027 [M15– M24]

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2. Problem statement (local challenge)

In the Prešov Region (Prešovský kraj), employment indicators remain persistently lower compared to other regions in Slovakia. According to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR), the region recorded 10.4% unemployment rate in Q3 2025, which was the highest among Slovak regions and nearly double the national average of 5.5%[1]. This regional disparity is particularly acute among young people, as Eastern Slovakia, where Prešov is located, experiences some of the highest youth exclusion rates (NEET) in the country[2]. These indicators suggest that young people in the region face significant barriers in accessing stable employment or training opportunities locally.

In the Prešov Region, particularly in smaller municipalities such as Plaveč, migration is a problematic factor. From a regional perspective, in Q3 2025, one in four people employed abroad from Slovakia came from the Prešov Region (SOSR)[3]. Also, a persistent pattern of youth out-migration affects young people during the transition from lower and upper secondary education into employment as many graduates leave the region in search of better education or job opportunities in other Slovak regions or abroad. As a result, local employers face difficulties attracting young talent and the link between education pathways and local labour market opportunities becomes weaker. Territorial data indicate that the region continues to experience negative net migration balances, with young people disproportionately represented among those leaving for other Slovak regions, especially the Bratislava area, or abroad.

Young people in rural municipalities such as Plaveč encounter limited local employment opportunities, insufficient business mentors/role models, and weak entrepreneurship ecosystems providing no pathways from education to self-employment. While formal education is accessible locally, stakeholders report weak linkages between schools, local employers, municipalities and business support actors, resulting in limited exposure of young people to local economic opportunities and pathways.

[1] More information available HERE
[2] More information available HERE
[3] More information available HERE

3. Underlying needs

- Need for visible and accessible local economic opportunities and pathways that allow young people to envision a realistic future in their home region, rather than viewing migration as the only viable option.
- Need for early and practical exposure to entrepreneurship and self-employment as possible career pathways, integrated into the educational experience before transition points where migration decisions are typically made.
- Need for trusted mentorship relationships connecting young people with local entrepreneurs, business owners, and self-employed individuals who can provide practical guidance, role modelling, and encouragement.
- Need for recognition and activation of young people's potential and existing strengths.
- Need for greater continuity in support across education, youth work and employment-related services, particularly in smaller rural municipalities.

4. Target group

4.1. Description of the target group

The pilot targets young people aged 15 attending the final year of lower secondary education (Grade 9) in the Prešov Region (Plaveč and the surrounding municipalities) who are approaching the critical transition to upper secondary education, with the aim of supporting them to prevent early school leaving and disengagement.

The pilot will develop materials for pupils and guidance for teachers, who represent a secondary target group, to ensure replicability and scalability in other schools and regions.

Participation in the pilot training takes place during regular school hours as part of the school timetable, while pupils' active engagement in the activities is encouraged through the training design.

The target group is characterised by rural isolation, with limited access to career guidance services, educational possibilities, and employment opportunities beyond their immediate communities. The pilot also includes a Roma youth, who face additional barriers related to educational discontinuity and discrimination.

Complementary workshops and webinars are also offered to upper secondary school students (high school students) aged approximately 16–19 in the Prešov Region to ensure continuity of entrepreneurship orientation across educational transitions. These students represent an additional primary target group of the pilot activities.

4.2. Barriers to participation and inclusion and equity considerations

Some young people within the target group may face barriers related to limited access to information, lower literacy levels, and reduced parental capacity to support decision-making at the end of compulsory education, for example due to lower parental education levels, economic stress, or limited time availability at the end of compulsory education. In a rural setting, transport constraints and distance to secondary schools or guidance services may further limit engagement. In addition, stigma or low self-confidence may discourage active participation, particularly among pupils with weaker academic performance or Roma youth. Some students may face a fear of public speaking and expressing themselves in group settings, which could limit their engagement in presentation and communication activities that are part of the entrepreneurship training.

To mitigate these barriers, the pilot will use clear, age-appropriate and low-literacy-friendly materials delivered directly in the school environment, ensuring that participation does not depend on digital access or parental mediation. Activities will be integrated as part of the school timetable, so that student attendance does not depend on additional travel, extra time commitments or parental mediation, ensuring inclusive access for students from different socio-economic backgrounds.

5. Pilot objectives

- Participating young people demonstrate improved self-awareness of their strengths, interests and competencies relevant for educational and career decision-making.
- Participating young people show increased confidence and observable improvement in communication, presentation, and teamwork skills through active engagement in training activities.
- Participating young people learn basic entrepreneurial thinking, financial literacy concepts, and awareness of sustainable and responsible business practices applicable to educational transitions and future employment.
- A structured progression pathway is established, enabling selected students to continue entrepreneurial development through Junior Achievement Slovakia (JA SK) programmes and competitions beyond the pilot period.
- The training materials and teacher methodological handbook are finalised, tested, prepared, and uploaded on SBA's and project website in a replicable format for implementation in (rural) schools facing similar transition challenges.
- Teachers involved in the pilot develop the capacity to deliver structured transition-related guidance via entrepreneurship and career orientation training independently using the pilot materials and methodology.

6. Theory of change (core logic model)

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes (within the pilot period)	Medium-term outcomes / contribution to impact	Key assumptions and contextual factors
Expertise & Materials Expertise and staff from SBA and JA SK Cooperation with at least 2 lower secondary schools 16 hours of school time (3 days) delivered within the regular school timetable as part of the compulsory education process	Student Training Three-day structured training (16 hours delivered within the regular school timetable as part of the compulsory education process) for Grade 9 students covering self-awareness, entrepreneurial thinking, communication, presentation skills and teamwork.	Three-day training delivered within the regular school timetable as part of the compulsory education process in at least 2 schools for 50-70 Grade 9 students (aged 15).	Improved self-awareness of strengths, interests, and competencies relevant for educational and career decision-making. Improved confidence and observable improvement in communication, presentation and teamwork skills.	Other rural schools adopt and implement the developed materials. Students apply skills in school/community projects. Sustained entrepreneurial mindset. Better-informed career decisions including awareness of local employment opportunities. Reduced early school leaving.	Schools provide time within the regular schedule. Students actively engage in training activities. Students show openness and willingness to engage with entrepreneurship-related learning. Participation does not create an additional workload burden for teachers and can be integrated into existing school activities.

					Teachers support reinforcement of learning beyond the training days and integrate elements of the methodology into existing school activities...
Expertise and staff from SBA and JA SK Teacher feedback during pilot	Developing a methodological guide/handbook for teachers on using student training materials and collecting structured feedback.	Teacher feedback collected and integrated during the pilot period. 1 Completed teacher methodological handbook with instructions on how to use training materials independently.	Materials in ready-to-use and replicable format. Teachers are able to use the methodological guide/handbook to deliver the training with pilot support.	Replication of the developed program in other rural schools. Teachers adopt the methodology and deliver the training independently.	Teachers provide constructive and sufficiently detailed feedback The handbook is clear for independent use. School leadership supports future implementation.
Expertise and staff - Local entrepreneurs and practitioners	Involvement of local entrepreneurs and practitioners as role models, possibly as mentors during training sessions.	Local role models/ mentors participation during the pilot training.	Students exposed to local role models and real business context. Enhanced relevance of training to local	Stronger connection between students and local economy. Increased consideration of local	Local role models/ mentors are available and willing to participate.

		Role models/mentor feedback on training and student ideas collected.	economic opportunities.	employment and entrepreneurship pathways.	Role models/mentors provide constructive and age-appropriate guidance. School supports external role model/mentor involvement.
JA SK, SBA and teachers coordination, competition frameworks	Selection and support for high-performing students to participate in entrepreneurship competitions	Students from the winning team – at least 1 winning team (1-2 students) from each pilot testing school invited to participate in JA SK competitions; Structured progression pathway established and communicated.	Top-performing students/teams from pilot schools gain the opportunity to continue entrepreneurial development Progression pathway beyond pilot (progression pathway for selected students to continue entrepreneurial learning through follow-up	Increased motivation for future entrepreneurship among participating students. Enhanced student engagement in external entrepreneurship programmes beyond the pilot.	Students are willing to participate. Competitions are accessible and relevant. Guidance and role models/mentors´ support are available. Selection criteria are transparent and perceived as fair.

			programmes offered by JA SK)		
Expertise and staff - SBA Expert speakers from collaborating organisations Online platform promotion channels.	Online webinars or workshops in schools for teachers and students with experts on entrepreneurship-related topics and talent identification, including the promotion of pilot materials and encouraging schools to adopt the methodology.	2-3 webinars or workshops in schools delivered 30 – 50 participants (students) in total Recorded online sessions available Materials promoted and shared with participating schools. Information provided on how to implement the methodology.	Increased awareness of entrepreneurship topics and labour market trends. Access to expert knowledge beyond the local context Schools are aware of available materials and implementation support.	Broader dissemination of pilot themes. Strengthened teacher capacity to support students in entrepreneurship-related and career guidance activities. Increased adoption of methodology by schools in the Prešov Region and beyond. School-to-school knowledge exchange and peer support.	Participants have digital access. Content is relevant and engaging. Recorded sessions are promoted and used. Schools are receptive to adopting new materials. Webinars or workshops effectively showcase the value of the methodology.

7. Key activities

7.1. Activity title: Development & preparation of training materials for students and the teacher methodological handbook

7.1.1. Objective

- The training materials and teacher methodological handbook are finalised, tested, and prepared in a replicable format for implementation in (rural) schools facing similar transition challenges.
- Teachers involved in the pilot develop the capacity to deliver structured transition-related guidance via entrepreneurship and career orientation training independently using the pilot materials and methodology.

7.1.2. Target group

- 9th grade students (age 15) in rural schools in the Prešov Region, including Roma youth and students with different academic achievement levels, learning needs and different social backgrounds.
- Secondary target group: Teachers using the materials.

7.1.3. Detailed description

7.1.3.1. Sequence of steps

- **Curriculum mapping & content design:** SBA maps learning objectives and identifies content priorities for the training materials, consulting with JA SK and pilot schoolteachers and using regional data and good practice examples. Findings are incorporated into the training design before delivery. → Engagement level: Inform (schools) / N/A. (internal).
- **Preparing materials/training program for students:** SBA prepares materials, step-by-step activities, materials, exercises, worksheets and other resources for students while JA SK provides consultations. → Engagement level: N/A.
- **Consultation and validation of draft materials:** Taining materials prepared by SBA are consulted with involved external experts and members of the Local Cooperation Incubator (LCI) community created within the COOPOWER project. JA SK provides methodological consultations during this process. The consultation focuses on clarity, age-appropriateness,

coherence with learning objectives and practical feasibility. Feedback is incorporated into the revised version of the materials before their finalisation. → Engagement level: N/A.

- **Finalisation of materials for training delivery in pilot schools:** SBA integrates feedback and prepares the training materials for pilot delivery. Materials will be finalised after the pilot implementation based on feedback from students and teachers. → Engagement level: Involve.
- **Preparing handbook (methodology) for teachers:** SBA supported by JA SK consultations prepare a structured methodological guide/handbook for teachers on how to use the training materials to ensure replicability, which will be finalised following the training delivery in pilot schools based on teachers' feedback → Engagement level: N/A (internal).
- **Finalisation of materials -** SBA finalises the training materials and handbook (methodology) for teachers incorporating feedback from the pilot implementation.
- **Organization of online/onsite sessions for teachers** - SBA will organize sessions for teachers to introduce and explain developed pilot programme and methodology for teachers and encourage them to use it independently within their school. This activity aims to ensure replicability and sustainability of developed programmes. → Engagement level: participating teachers are not considered as primary target group.

7.1.3.2. Timing and duration

April 2026 – March 2027 (M13–M24) – 12 months

- April 2026 – August 2026 (M13–M17) - 5 months: Preparation and development of training materials and the teacher methodological handbook
- February 2027 – March 2027 (M23–M24) - 2 months: Finalisation of materials based on pilot feedback

7.1.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **SBA:** Leads the design and development of the training programme and teacher methodological handbook, coordinates consultations with stakeholders, integrates feedback, and finalises the materials.
- **JA SK:** Provides methodological consultations related to entrepreneurship education and the structure of the training programme and may support interpretation of feedback and further methodological refinement.
- **LCI members, pilot school pupils and teachers:** Provide feedback on usability, clarity, and applicability of materials.

7.1.3.4. Methods

- Consultative needs assessment with schoolteachers and regional data review
- Competency-based curriculum mapping
- Step-by-step co-design and review with stakeholders (LCI members, pilot schoolteachers)
- Age-appropriate and low-literacy-friendly materials development

7.1.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Student worksheets and activity sheets
- Reflection tools
- Methodological guide for teachers

7.1.4. Expected engagement

- **Inform**: Pilot school students and teachers are informed about the upcoming training programme and its objectives (approximately 50–70 pupils in participating schools - the same pupils as in the act. 7.2)
- **Involve** – LCI members, pilot school pupils and teachers provide feedback on draft materials during consultation and review sessions

7.1.5. Key indicators

- Number of student materials/training program completed: 1
- Number of feedback sessions within LCI group including pilot school: 1
- Number of teachers handbooks developed: 1
- Number of pupils: Not applicable for this activity, as it focuses on the preparation and development of training materials rather than direct implementation with pupils.

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7.2. Activity title: Delivery of a 3-day student training programme

7.2.1. Objective

- Participating young people demonstrate improved self-awareness of their strengths, interests, and competencies relevant for educational and career decision-making through a structured reflection and assessment tool through active engagement in training activities.
- Participating young people show increased confidence and observable improvement in communication, presentation, and teamwork skills through active engagement in training activities.
- Participating young people learn basic entrepreneurial thinking, financial literacy concepts, and awareness of sustainable and responsible business practices applicable to educational transitions and future employment.
- Teachers involved in the pilot develop the capacity to deliver structured transition-related guidance via entrepreneurship and career orientation training independently using the pilot materials and methodology.

7.2.2. Target group

- 9th-grade pupils (age 15) from lower secondary schools in the Prešov Region, including Roma youth and students with different academic achievement levels, learning needs and different social backgrounds (e.g. those supported by teaching assistants), and different social backgrounds.

7.2.3. Detailed description

7.2.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Pre-training coordination with schools:** SBA contacts school leadership to confirm dates, classroom availability, integration of the training into the regular school timetable, and student participation; schools inform parents about the training programme and obtain required consent → *Engagement level: Inform.*
2. **Facilitator and local role models preparation:** SBA identifies, contacts and engages at least two local entrepreneurs and practitioners from the Prešov Region to participate in the training sessions as guest speakers and role models, agrees on the schedule and format of training delivery with the pilot schools in consultation with JA SK on methodological aspects of the programme, and reviews the training materials and prepares all tools and resources needed for delivery. → Engagement level: N/A (internal).

3. **Training delivery:** The training takes place in the school premises during 3 days within regular school hours as part of the school timetable. Day 1 focuses on self-awareness, entrepreneurial mindset, and creative thinking; day 2 guides students through team formation, business idea development, basic entrepreneurship and financial literacy concepts, and responsible and sustainable business practices, including the use of AI tools. Day 3 is dedicated to communication skills, marketing, project presentations, and reflection, including discussion of possible education, employment and entrepreneurship pathways and opportunities available within the region, while local entrepreneurs contribute to the sessions presenting their experiences and illustrating local career and business opportunities as guest speakers and idea coaches. At the end of Day 3, the best project/team is announced and recognised, and all participating students receive a certificate of participation.

   In one pilot school, the training is delivered by SBA facilitators with JA SK support without teachers present, to create an open and comfortable learning environment for students. However, teachers in this school will still have access to JA SK and SBA staff for consultations and explanation of the methodology. In the other pilot school(s), teachers deliver the training with SBA facilitators providing support and guidance (and JA SK providing consultations), allowing teachers to experience the methodology and provide informed feedback for the methodological handbook and training. Teachers from all pilot schools may also access accredited training and professional development programmes offered by JA SK, potentially under preferential conditions following consultation with JA SK and subject to availability within its regular programme offer. → Engagement level: Engage.

4. **Post-training feedback collection:** SBA collects feedback from students and teachers via short, written, anonymous questionnaires. → *Engagement level: Engage.*

7.2.3.2. Timing and duration

September 2026 – January 2027/February (M18- M22/M23) - (5/6 months)

Total: 16 hours/3 days (delivered during regular school hours in each school separately). The training is organised in 90-minute teaching blocks, with 3 blocks per day or, in one case, 2.5 blocks, depending on the school timetable and training content.

- Day 1: 5 hours
- Day 2: 6 hours
- Day 3: 5 hours

7.2.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **SBA supported by JA SK consultation:** Design the training content, and deliver the training in one pilot school; in the other pilot school(s) provide guidance and facilitation support to teachers delivering the training.
- **SBA:** Coordinates logistics, school communication, and involvement of local entrepreneurs; collects and documents feedback.

- **Lower secondary schools:** Provide classroom space and schedule coordination; ensure student attendance; designate a teacher contact person for coordination. In one pilot school, the training is delivered by JA SK and SBA facilitators without teachers present; however, teachers review the methodology and provide feedback on the training materials and the teacher methodological handbook. In the other pilot school(s), teachers deliver the training with support from JA SK and SBA. In both pilot schools, feedback from teachers and students is collected after the training through a post-training evaluation survey and anonymous feedback forms.
- **Local entrepreneurs/practitioners:** Participate in Day 2 and/or Day 3 sessions; share practical insights and experience; provide feedback on student ideas.

7.2.3.4. Methods

- Experiential learning
- Group and team-based work
- Discussion and reflection
- Role plays and simulations
- Presentations and peer feedback

7.2.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Training curriculum and session plans
- Self-assessment tools and worksheets
- Business plan templates (age appropriate)
- Presentation materials (flipcharts, markers, projector)
- Student workbooks/materials
- Post-training evaluation survey for students and teachers including anonymous feedback forms (students, teachers)
- Certificates of participation for participating students

7.2.4. Expected engagement

- **Inform:** Schools, pupils and parents are informed about the training programme; consent is obtained before delivery (50-70 pupils are informed and potentially enrolled)
- **Reach:** Students attend at least one part of the training programme (for example one training day or specific sessions) - cca 50 pupils
- **Involve:** Students participate in most of the training activities but may not complete the full programme (e.g., absence during one training day) cca 45 pupils
- **Engage:** Pupils complete the full 3-day training programme and actively participate in team work, project development and final presentations. Post-training feedback forms are collected from participating students to support pilot evaluation - cca 40 pupils

7.2.5. Key indicators

- At least 50 9th-grade students in the Prešov Region are enrolled in a three-day training
- At least 80% of enrolled students complete all three days of training
- At least 75% of participating students report in the post-training survey that they have improved at least one of the following areas: self-awareness of strengths, interests, and competencies for educational and career decision-making, confidence in communication, presentation, and teamwork skills, understanding of basic entrepreneurial thinking, financial literacy, and sustainable/responsible business practices
- At least 2 local entrepreneurs participate as a guest speakers or role models during the whole pilot
- 2 teachers per pilot school provide feedback on training materials and the methodological handbook
- At least 75% of participating teachers report that they feel confident using the pilot materials to deliver entrepreneurship/career guidance

7.3. Activity title: Online webinars or in-person workshops in schools on entrepreneurship topics

7.3.1. Objective

- Participating young people demonstrate improved self-awareness of their strengths, interests and competencies relevant for educational and career decision-making through a structured reflection and assessment tool.
- Participating young people show increased confidence and observable improvement in communication, presentation and teamwork skills through active engagement in training activities.
- Participating young people learn basic entrepreneurial thinking, financial literacy concepts, and awareness of sustainable and responsible business practices applicable to educational transitions and future employment.
- Teachers involved in the pilot develop the capacity to deliver structured transition-related guidance via entrepreneurship and career orientation training independently using the pilot materials and methodology.

7.3.2. Target group

- Grade 9 pupils from lower secondary schools in the Prešov Region
- Upper secondary schools (high schools) students in the Prešov Region
- Secondary target group: Teachers from lower secondary and high schools in the Prešov Region who are interested in entrepreneurship education and talent identification

7.3.3. Detailed description

7.3.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Webinar or workshops planning and speaker recruitment**: SBA identifies 2 - 3 topics for online webinars or in-person workshops based on pilot themes and identifies needs (e.g., labour market trends, entrepreneurship pathways, career guidance) and recruit expert speakers. → Engagement level: N/A.
2. **Promotion and registration:** SBA promotes events through its networks, website, partners, and LCI stakeholders – particularly organisations working with the target group (young people from 15 to 19 years and teachers). Registration link for webinars is shared (free participation); in case of in-person workshops - dates for workshops are agreed and communicated. → Engagement level: Inform.
3. **Webinars or workshops delivery:** Each webinar lasts approx. 60 minutes, including: expert presentation, Q&A session, and/or information about pilot materials and implementation

support. Webinars are delivered via an online platform (Webex) and recorded. Workshops are delivered in participating schools. → Engagement level: Reach.

4. **Post-webinar and workshop follow-up:** Recorded webinars are made available on the SBA website. A follow-up email is sent to participants with a link to the materials repository and contact information for implementation support. → Engagement level: Inform.

7.3.3.2. Timing and duration

- June 2026 – March 2027 (M19–M24) – 10 months: Plan and delivery of online webinars/workshops.

7.3.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- **SBA**: Coordinates webinar and workshop planning and scheduling; manages promotion and registration; provides technical platform support; moderates Q&A sessions; identifies and recruits expert speakers; presents during webinars, prepares content on pilot materials and implementation support; presents methodology during webinars; responds to technical questions about materials
- **Expert speakers:** Deliver webinar/workshop content on assigned topics; respond to participant questions; provide insights relevant to the regional context
- **Lower secondary schools / upper secondary schools (high schools)**: Encourage teacher participation; facilitate student participation where appropriate

7.3.3.4. Methods

- Online presentation and lecture format
- Interactive Q&A and discussion
- Rerecorded sessions made available after the events (in case of online workshops)
- Workshops and demonstrations – practical exercises, group work, and hands-on activities to apply concepts (in case of in-person workshops)
- Material showcase and demonstration

7.3.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Online meeting platform (Webex)
- Webinar presentation slides
- Teacher handbook and training materials
- Online materials repository (hosted on the SBA and project website)
- Workshop materials: printed worksheets, exercises, and hands-on activity resources
- Registration forms (Google Forms)
- Promotional materials (flyers, social media graphics, emails)

7.3.4. Expected engagement

- **Inform**: Potential participants (teachers, students) are informed about webinar or workshop opportunities, entrepreneurship topics, career guidance, labour market trends, and the pilot through promotion, and follow-up materials; teachers and students attend webinars and workshops, receive information about the webinar´s topic, and access recorded content or shared materials (100 students are reached through promotion and information sharing and school official communication channels - informed)
- **Reach:** Young people/students attend one organized webinar or workshop session related to entrepreneurship, talents identification or career orientation - ca 50 students
- **Involve:** Young people actively participate in webinar/workshop discussions, exercises or Q&A sessions more than once and engage with invited experts or facilitators - ca 10 students

7.3.5. Key indicators

- 2 – 3 online webinars or workshops in schools delivered
- At least 50 participants (students) attend the events in total
- At least 2 schools outside the pilot formally express interest in adopting materials

7.4. Activity title: Beyond the pilot: JA SK competitions

7.4.1. Objective

- Top-performing students from the pilot training will be offered the opportunity to participate in JA SK's entrepreneurship competitions and programmes, creating a progression pathway beyond the pilot period.

7.4.2. Target group

- Grade 9 pupils from lower secondary schools in Prešov Region, aged 15 - one winning team (or 1–2 outstanding students) per pilot school selected based on pre-defined performance criteria applied during project presentations.

7.4.3. Detailed description

7.4.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. **Project presentations (Day 3 of training course) and internal announcement:** During Day 3 of the training, student teams present their business ideas/projects. Based on pre-defined criteria, one winning team (or 1–2 outstanding students) per school is selected. (at least 2 schools in total) → Engagement level: Engage
2. **Information session:** Selected students/winners and their parents receive information about the opportunity to participate in relevant JA SK competitions → Engagement level: Inform
3. **Participation in JA SK competition/program (beyond pilot)**: Selected students/winners participate in an external JA SK competition or programme and develop their project → Engagement level: it relates to the activity beyond the pilot; SBA will encourage selected students/winners to participate in JA SK competition but can not assure their willingness or ability to participate.

7.4.3.2. Timing and duration

- Project presentations and selection/winner announcement: During Day 3 of training (September 2026 – January 2027: M18 - 22)
- Information session: Immediately after the final reflection (Day 3) (September 2026 – January 2027: M18 - 22)
- Competition participation: According to JA SK calendar, likely occurring after the pilot implementation period)

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7.4.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

SBA supported by JA SK

- Defines transparent evaluation criteria
- Participates in project assessment, winners in both pilot schools
- Informs selected students about progression opportunities
- Note: In one pilot school, the training is delivered by SBA facilitators supported by JA SK consultations without teachers present; teachers receive methodological explanations and consultation support if needed. In the other pilot school, the training is delivered by teachers with support and guidance from SBA facilitators (supported by JA SK), allowing teachers to experience the methodology and provide feedback

SBA

- Ensures documentation of the selection process
- Monitors the continuation pathway as part of pilot reporting

JA SK:

- Provides information about relevant JA SK entrepreneurship competitions and programmes available to selected students
- Supports the registration process and provides guidance to students who decide to participate in these programmes

Lower secondary schools (teachers)

- Participate in project assessment, (co)announces winners
- Inform about progression opportunities
- Support communication with parents
- Facilitate student participation and support registration and preparation where needed
- Note: In one pilot school, the training is delivered by SBA facilitators (supported by JA SK) without teachers present; teachers receive methodological explanations and consultation support if needed. In the other pilot school, the training is delivered by teachers with support and guidance from SBA facilitators (supported by JA SK), allowing teachers to experience the methodology and provide feedback.

Students

- Present final project
- Decide voluntarily on further participation

7.4.3.4. Methods

- Competition-based selection with transparent evaluation criteria
- Information and orientation sessions for students and parents
- Preparation support
- Experiential learning through competition participation

7.4.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

- Project/competition evaluation criteria
- Presentation materials (posters, slides)
- Information materials for students and parents about JA SK opportunities (parents are only informed)

7.4.4. Expected engagement

- **Reach**: Students are offered and decide voluntarily on further participation in external JA SK competitions or programmes (at least 2-4 students are offered to participate in JA SK competitions/programmes within the pilot)
- **Engage:** A small number of highly motivated students continue their engagement beyond the pilot by participating in JA SK competitions or entrepreneurship programmes

7.4.5. Key indicators

- 1 winning team or 1–2 outstanding students selected per pilot school (approx. 2–4 students in total)

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8. Cooperation model

8.1. Collaborating organisations/initiatives, roles and responsibilities

Sector	Actor	Role and responsibility across the pilot	Why this role is needed at pilot level
Civil society	Junior Achievement Slovakia (JA SK)	Methodological consultations on entrepreneurship education and the structure of the three-day training programme; technical expertise on youth entrepreneurship education; support for the continuation pathway through JA SK competitions and programmes; dissemination of pilot materials through the JA SK website and teacher communication channels, including newsletters and teacher networks (currently reaching approximately 800 teachers involved in JA SK programmes).	Provides recognised expertise in entrepreneurship education and ensures alignment with the national education framework through its established educational programmes; teacher training related to JA SK programmes is accredited by the Ministry of Education, supporting quality, sustainability and replicability of entrepreneurship education approaches across schools.
Public	Slovak Business Agency (SBA)	Design and development of the training programme and teacher methodological handbook; pilot implementation and training delivery; overall pilot coordination; coordination with schools, local entrepreneurs and collaborating organisations; organisation of webinars and workshops; logistics coordination; monitoring, documentation, reporting and compliance.	Ensures the design, preparation and practical implementation of the training programme and related materials, and coordinates the coherent delivery of pilot activities across participating schools. Connects schools, local entrepreneurs and civil society actors, facilitates the involvement of external experts and role models, and ensures proper documentation, monitoring and evaluation of pilot results, supporting the further use and

			replication of the methodology in other schools.
Civil society	Parents / legal guardians	Provide consent for student participation; receive information about the training programme and progression opportunities; support students' participation and engagement where appropriate.	Parental awareness and consent help ensure transparency, trust and acceptance of the programme and may encourage students' continued participation in entrepreneurship activities beyond the pilot.
Civil society/ Business	SVDM, s.r.o. - Baterkáreň Trnava (community reuse and sustainability education centre)	External expert providing thematic input on sustainability, circular economy and socially responsible entrepreneurship; guest lecture contribution; consultative input to training content.	Enriches entrepreneurship training with real-life sustainable business practice and strengthens the integration of sustainability principles within entrepreneurial thinking.
Civil society	DASDATO - youth talent development and career orientation initiative	External expert input on talent development, self-awareness and career orientation; contribution to selected modules; active involvement in workshops for high school students organised within the pilot (Activity 7.4 – webinars/workshops) focused on strengths identification and future pathways.	Strengthens structured reflection and talent-focused approach; provides additional expertise, particularly valuable for high school students considering further education and career decisions.
Business	Local entrepreneurs and practitioners (Prešov Region - Plaveč/Stará Ľubovňa area)	Guest speakers; role models; idea coaches sharing relatable stories from the regional context and illustrating viable career and entrepreneurial pathways within the region; feedback on student projects (at least two local entrepreneurs will be actively involved in the pilot training sessions) .	Provide real labour market relevance, authentic local business context, and inspire students to consider regional opportunities.
Business	OV MEDIA s.r.o.	Local entrepreneur providing practical business insights, guest contributions to selected modules (particularly communication and marketing); supports coaching	Adds authentic local business perspective to training, increasing relevance for students from the region and strengthening connection to

		on real-world entrepreneurship examples and local market context.	possible local entrepreneurial pathways.
Business	Daybyme Media House s. r. o.	External expert providing practical insights into digital marketing, content creation and personal branding; guest contributor to selected training modules relevant to entrepreneurship and communication skills; shares real-world experience of building and running a digital-first business.	Brings an authentic business perspective from a digital agency; strengthens the relevance of the entrepreneurship training by demonstrating practical applications of communication, marketing and creative skills valued in today's labour market.
Academia / Education	Pilot schools leadership (pilot schools- Lower secondary schools in Prešov Region: Lower Secondary School with Kindergarten Plaveč, Lower Secondary School with Kindergarten Plavnica)	Approve and schedule the training within the regular school timetable; facilitate coordination with teachers and ensure institutional support for pilot implementation.	School leadership enables integration of the training into the regular school schedule and supports sustainability of the methodology beyond the pilot period.
Academia / Education	Pilot school teachers (Lower secondary schools in Prešov Region: Lower Secondary School with Kindergarten Plaveč, Lower Secondary School with Kindergarten Plavnica)	Deliver the training in the teacher-led pilot school with support from JA SK and SBA; provide feedback on training materials and the teacher methodological handbook in both pilot schools; support student engagement and reflection during the training activities.	Enable access to the target group, provide a testing environment, validate materials, and support integration with the school curriculum.

8.2. Governance and communication structure

Overall coordination: SBA acts as pilot lead and coordinates all pilot activities, communication with participating schools and stakeholders, and reporting obligations. SBA is responsible for the design and preparation of the training programme and the teacher methodological handbook, with methodological consultations provided by JA SK.

Coordination routines: Regular coordination meetings between SBA and JA SK ensure methodological consultation and alignment of the training approach. Meetings take place at least monthly during the preparation and training delivery period and more frequently when needed. Additional coordination meetings or online calls are organised with pilot schools prior to training delivery to confirm organisational arrangements.

Communication channels: Email, online meetings (Webex), shared document repository (Google Drive), and LCI meetings for broader stakeholder engagement

8.3. How cooperation contributes to youth outcomes

School + SBA + JA SK cooperation → structured experiential curriculum → improved entrepreneurial and self-awareness competencies

Civil society (JA SK) + public education partnership (schools) → JA SK's and SBA's specialised curriculum combined with school access → ensures age-appropriate, pedagogically sound content reaches target group in familiar setting → increased student engagement and trust

Local business involvement → real local role models → increased relevance and motivation to consider local opportunities

Teacher involvement + methodological handbook development → sustainable capacity within schools → continued guidance beyond pilot period

Intersectoral model (education + civil society + business) → exposure to multiple perspectives → stronger confidence and informed career decision-making

Multi-stakeholder validation through LCI → materials reviewed by education, business, and civil society actors → ensures relevant, practical content aligned with regional labour market realities → higher quality and credibility of outputs

Dual delivery model (SBA-led vs. teacher-led) → comparative testing enables identification of best practices for different contexts → informs scalability and replication strategy → supports long-term sustainability and potential impact

9. Outreach strategy

9.1. Shared COOPOWER baseline definitions

At the pilot co-creation meeting in November 2025 in Austria, all partners agreed that there are different engagement levels of the target group (see Table below). In the sections below, please describe what these engagement levels mean based on your pilot's activities, cooperation model and local youth realities.

Level	Description	Examples in practice
Inform	Young people **receive information** about opportunities, services, or rights. **Communication is one-way.**	Flyers, school visits, or social-media posts announce a new training or mentoring offer.
Reach	Young people are contacted and **take part once or briefly**, usually as participants or beneficiaries. **Their role is mainly passive.**	They join a single job-skills workshop or attend an event run by partners.
Involve	Young people **participate more than once in activities** and can **express opinions or preferences**, with potential to shape design.	They attend several mentoring sessions, share feedback, or help spread the word.
Engage	Young people take **part actively and continuously**, showing **commitment** and initiative within the activities. They help keep momentum and **bring their perspective** into planning, outreach, or implementation.	They participate throughout a full training cycle, mentor peers informally, or help sustain a youth group.

9.2. Pilot-specific definition

Level	Related activity / steps	Expected number of young people
Inform	Young people receive information about the pilot activities through school communication channels, teachers, parents and SBA communication networks. Information includes the upcoming entrepreneurship training programme, complementary webinars/workshops and possible follow-up opportunities for students interested in entrepreneurship.	170
Reach	Young people take part in at least one pilot-related activity but do not necessarily participate repeatedly or complete the full training cycle. In practice, this may include students who attend a webinar or workshop organised within the pilot, or students who participate in only part of the three-day entrepreneurship training programme delivered during school hours but are absent for some sessions (for example due to illness or other school-related reasons). At this stage, young people are exposed to the pilot activities but their participation remains limited or occasional.	100
Involve	Young people participate repeatedly in pilot activities and actively engage in the learning process. It includes students/pupils who attend most parts of the three-day entrepreneurship training programme, participate in group work and team discussions. They may also participate in discussions during webinars or workshops and share feedback during the pilot implementation.	55
Engage	Young people demonstrate sustained participation and commitment by completing the full three-day training programme. Young people actively collaborate in teams, develop and present their project ideas during the final presentations, and take part in the full training cycle including reflection activities and feedback.	40

9.3. Barriers to engagement and mitigation measures

Barrier	Mitigation measure
Lack of trust in institutions	Day 1 begins with informal icebreakers, trust-building, and self-awareness activities in a safe and supportive learning environment.
Low motivation, low self-confidence and fear of public speaking	Start with small, achievable exercises (self-assessment, reflection tools); provide positive feedback and recognition during team activities; teachers/facilitators emphasise strengths and progress rather than failures. Final presentations are team-based allowing students to support each other.
Language barriers / different academic achievement levels and learning needs	Materials and worksheets are designed to be age-appropriate and low-literacy friendly; peer support and group work encourage understanding through collaboration; facilitators explain key concepts clearly and verbally.
Fear of judgment/ failure	Training is delivered during regular school hours in familiar classroom settings; a non-judgmental environment is created by facilitators and teachers; group activities emphasize collaboration over competition.
Competing academic obligations / concern about falling behind in school	Training is integrated into regular school hours and coordinated with school leadership so that it replaces part of regular lessons and does not create additional workload for students.
Limited prior exposure to entrepreneurship concepts	Local entrepreneurs participate as guest speakers and role models sharing relatable stories from the same regional context. Content uses age-appropriate language.
Transport, financial and time constraints	The training is delivered directly at school premises during regular school hours, eliminating the need for additional travel or out-of-school time commitment. Participation is free of charge for schools and students.
Limited school capacity / lack of external mentors/experts and school financial resources	The training model is designed to be low-cost and replicable. Training and all materials are provided free of charge and will remain openly accessible after the pilot. The teacher methodological handbook is designed with instructions enabling teachers to deliver training independently without external facilitators.

10. Incentive model

Engagement level	Incentive	Needs addressed	Barrier addressed	Purpose / expected effect
Reach	Training delivered during regular school hours in familiar school setting free of charge, no travel, no extra time required).	Need for visible and accessible local economic opportunities and pathways; Need for greater continuity in support across education; need for early and practical exposure to entrepreneurship and self-employment as viable career pathways, integrated into the educational experience before transition points where migration decisions are typically made.	Transport, financial and time constraints; fear of judgment or unfamiliar environments.	Ensure equal access and remove structural and emotional barriers to initial participation.
Reach	Free participation and open-access materials (provided free of charge).	Need for greater continuity in support across education, particularly in smaller rural municipalities.	Financial constraints; limited school capacity and lack of financial resources .	Remove financial barriers and ensure equity of access for all students and schools; enable sustainable implementation beyond the pilot period without financial burden.
Engage	Day 1 focus on self-awareness and personal strengths with	Need for recognition and activation of young people's	Lack of trust, low motivation, low self-confidence.	Help students recognise their strengths and build confidence

	structured positive feedback.	potential and existing strengths.		for career decision-making.
Involve	Local entrepreneurs as relatable role models and guest contributors during training sessions.	Need for trusted mentorship relationships connecting young people with local entrepreneurs, business owners, and self-employed individuals who can provide practical guidance, role modelling, and encouragement.	Limited exposure to entrepreneurship; low self-confidence; fear of failure.	Increase relevance of entrepreneurship within regional context; make entrepreneurship more relatable and accessible while providing students with symbolic access to real-world entrepreneurial networks and role models.
Engage	Team project presentations (Day 3 showcase within the training programme).	Need for recognition and activation of young people's potential and existing strengths.	Low self-confidence; fear of public speaking; language barriers and mixed academic abilities.	Reduce individual pressure; enable peer support and collaborative learning; build communication skills and and confidence while providing public visibility and recognition of students' ideas in front of peers, teachers and entrepreneurs; strengthening motivation and sense of achievement.
Engage	Announcement of the best-performing teams.	Need for recognition and activation of young people's potential and existing strengths.	Low motivation, low self-confidence.	Celebrate and highlight excellence through recognition of the best-performing team while encouraging motivation and

				continued engagement among all students.
Engage	Certificate of completion for all participants.	Need for recognition and activation of young people's potential and existing strengths.	Low motivation, low self-confidence.	Provide formal acknowledgement of acquired skills and signal participation in a structured programme delivered by recognised organisations (SBA and JA SK) supporting future educational and career transitions.
Engage (beyond the pilot)	Opportunity to participate in JA SK entrepreneurship competitions and programmes.	Need for recognition and activation of young people's potential and existing strengths; need for visible and accessible local economic opportunities and pathways that allow young people to envision a realistic future in their home region rather than viewing migration as the only viable option.	Low motivation; limited prior exposure to entrepreneurship concepts.	Create a structured continuation pathway and sustain entrepreneurial engagement; demonstrate continuity beyond the pilot; introduce achievement-based progression and competitive motivation through opportunities to participate in JA SK competitions.
Involve	Age-appropriate materials and peer learning approaches.	Need for early and practical exposure to entrepreneurship and self-	Language barriers / different academic achievement	Ensure all students can engage meaningfully regardless of

		employment as viable career pathways, integrated into the educational experience before transition points where migration decisions are typically made.	levels and learning needs.	literacy level or learning style or prior academic performance.
Inform	Parents informed about programme's benefits and career orientation focus.	Need for greater continuity in support across education, youth work and employment-related services, particularly in smaller rural municipalities.	Lack of trust in institutions.	Build parental trust and buy-in; reduce potential resistance to student participation.

11. Risks and mitigation

Risk category	Description of risk	Likelihood [Low / medium / high]	Potential impact	Mitigation strategy	Responsible actor
Cooperation	Reduced engagement of pilot school(s) (e.g. leadership change, teacher overload, competing curricular priorities)	Low-Medium	Cancellation, delay, or reduced quality of pilot implementation – training delivery and feedback; loss of access to the target group; incomplete pilot testing.	▪ Early engagement with school leadership and teachers ▪ Formal written confirmation of cooperation ▪ Regular coordination meetings before and during delivery ▪ Clear alignment of pilot activities with school curriculum objectives.	*SBA*
Cooperation	Limited availability / willingness of local entrepreneurs for participation	Medium	Reduced authenticity and local relevance of training; weaker connection to regional economy, reduced mentoring and role model value.	▪ Identification of a broader pool of potential entrepreneurs (min. 4–5) ▪ Early recruitment ▪ Flexible engagement options ▪ Clear communicatio n of time expectations and role description	*SBA*
Operational	Low student attendance or engagement during 3-day	Low-Medium	Incomplete training for some students;	▪ Training delivered during regular	SBA

	training (absence, disinterest)		disrupted team dynamics.	school hours (mandatory attendance) ▪ Engaging activities from Day 1 ▪ Local entrepreneurs increase relevance and interest ▪ Certificates for all participants ▪ Close coordination with class teachers to monitor attendance and address emerging disengagement early.	
Operational	Potential scheduling conflicts with school curriculum or timetable	Low	Minor adjustments to training timing may be required.	▪ Pilot schools were consulted during the design phase and confirmed availability within the school timetable. Training is integrated into regular school hours and coordinated in advance with school leadership and teachers.	SBA
Operational	Teachers may feel insufficiently confident to use the methodology	Medium	Limited use of the training materials and methodological handbook	▪ Teacher methodological handbook with clear step-by-step guidance	SBA

	independently after the pilot		beyond the pilot.	▪ Opportunity for consultation with SBA and JA SK during organised sessions ▪ Testing of the methodology during the pilot	
Ethical / safeguarding	Perceived unfairness in selecting the "best project/team" at the end of training	Low-Medium	Negative participant experience, reduced motivational impact.	▪ Transparent evaluation criteria communicated in advance ▪ Evaluation by a mixed panel (e.g SBA, JA SK, teachers and local entrepreneurs) ▪ Recognition for all participants through certificates	All actors (SBA, JA SK, Teachers, Local Entrepreneurs)
Data & M&E	Incomplete feedback collection from students and teachers	Medium	Incomplete evidence on pilot results and student outcomes; reduced learning for improving the methodology and supporting replication of the pilot.	▪ Short, simple evaluation tools ▪ Clear responsibility for data collection ▪ Immediate post-training feedback collection	SBA + JA SK

12. Sustainability and transferability

12.1. Sustainability at local level

The pilot is designed with long-term sustainability as a core objective. After the pilot period ends (March 2027), the following elements can realistically continue without COOPOWER funding:

- Teachers participating in the pilot activities can continue delivering the 3-day entrepreneurship training annually to Grade 9 students using the finalised self-explanatory teacher handbook, provided that the school leadership allocates time within the annual and that participating teachers feel sufficiently prepared, confident and motivated to deliver the training independently. This requires no external facilitators or additional materials costs beyond basic classroom supplies, as the training is limited to three school days per year and can be delivered within teachers' regular contractual working time. The training can support the development of financial literacy and entrepreneurial competencies in line with the National Standard of Financial Literacy. Schools implementing the methodology may consult SBA and JA SK for methodological clarification during the first cycles of implementation.
- Teachers from pilot schools will have the opportunity to access accredited training courses and professional development programmes offered by JA SK under preferential conditions, helping them further develop their skills in entrepreneurship education and related topics, subject to availability within JA SK's regular programme offer.
- The teacher methodological handbook and training materials for students will remain freely accessible online via the SBA and project websites for a minimum of 3 years after pilot completion, enabling any school in Slovakia to download and use them independently.
- The involvement of local entrepreneurs as guest speakers or idea coaches can continue once initial relationships are established. Schools can invite them annually to participate in training sessions. This requires minimal coordination and assumed continued voluntary engagement without financial compensation.
- The connection to follow-up entrepreneurship competitions and programmes offered by JA SK can be maintained through existing JA SK programme structures.
- Recorded webinars and a repository with materials will remain accessible online, supporting ongoing teacher professional development and school adoption beyond the pilot, subject to SBA's ability to maintain the digital infrastructure.

Actors who could potentially take ownership:

- Pilot schools can integrate the 3-day training into their regular Grade 9 curriculum as part of career orientation and entrepreneurship education using the handbook and the

materials, while teachers will deliver the training independently, following initial capacity building during the pilot phase .

- JA SK can offer continued methodological support and integration into existing programmes, including offering the training programme, progression pathways (competitions, programmes), and promotional support as part of its regular services to schools.
- Regional and national education authorities (Prešov Self-Governing Region, regional education authorities, or national bodies, e.g., National Institute of Education and Youth, Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic) can promote the handbook to schools through teacher networks, professional development events, and regional/national youth and education initiatives.
- NGOs and education organizations can adopt and promote the methodology as part of their entrepreneurship education or youth development programs.

Minimum conditions required:

- Allocation of three school days per academic year within the official timetable
- Support from school leadership to integrate the training into career guidance or civic education
- At least 1-2 teachers per school willing and confident to deliver training
- Basic resources as classroom space, flipcharts, markers, projector, which are all standard school equipment
- At least 1-2 local entrepreneurs willing to participate annually on a voluntary basis motivated by opportunities for community engagement, visibility and sharing practical experience with young people
- No additional funding required as all materials are freely accessible; no external facilitators needed; no special equipment required, provided that teacher time is covered within regular employment contracts.

12.2. Transferable elements

The following elements are considered transferable to other rural contexts in Slovakia and beyond:

- Teacher handbook with step-by-step methodology designed for independent use by teachers
- The structured 3-day methodology combining self-awareness, entrepreneurial mindset, financial literacy, sustainability and presentation skills, integrated into regular school schedule and delivered during school hours, eliminating transport and time barriers while ensuring universal access for all students
- Local entrepreneur involvement as role models and guest contributors

- Certificates for all participants as a learning and recognition tool
- Materials will be available also in English to enable international transferability and use

These elements are transferable because they rely on procedural and methodological approaches rather than on the continuous presence of a specific organisation, specialised expertise, or temporary funding. The model is designed to function with basic school infrastructure (classrooms, flipcharts, markers) and standard teacher capacity, making it adaptable to diverse rural and resource-constrained contexts, provided that minimum institutional support and timetable allocation are ensured.

12.3. Limits to transferability

Transfer of the pilot model may be limited in schools with high teacher workload, staff turnover, or lack of institutional support. Cultural norms around entrepreneurship (e.g., stigma, risk aversion) and pedagogical traditions (lecture-based vs. student-centered/ experiential learning) may affect teacher and parent acceptance of the methodology. Its transfer may therefore depend on teachers' access to training or methodological guidance, particularly in schools where teachers have limited experience with experiential or entrepreneurship education approaches.

In addition, in regions with very weak local economies or limited private sector presence, finding local entrepreneurs willing to participate may be challenging. However, there are alternative models possible to use, e.g., online guest speakers, alumni entrepreneurs.

13. Timeline and workplan

13.1. Milestone-based workplan

	Milestone	Key activities covered	Timeframe (month/year & project month)	Actor(s)
1.	Pilot preparation and development of pilot materials for testing	Curriculum mapping with schools; student materials and teacher handbook drafted; LCI validation session held; materials finalised for pilot testing.	April (M13)-August 2026 (M17)	SBA; JA SK consultation; validation by LCI members
2	Pre-training coordination and local entrepreneurs' engagement	Confirm school schedules and student participation; recruit local entrepreneurs and role models for training sessions; facilitator preparation	September 2026 (M18)	SBA, pilot schools, local entrepreneurs
3	Delivery of 3-day student training in pilot schools	3-day training delivered in pilot schools (JA-led and teacher-led models); local entrepreneurs participate; student and teacher feedback collected	September 2026 (M18) – January 2027 (M22)	SBA, pilot school teachers, local entrepreneurs, JA SK consultation
4	Online webinars/in-	2 - 3 online webinars or in-	June 2026 (M15) – March 2027 (M24)	SBA (lead), JA SK and expert

	person workshops in schools delivered	person workshops in schools delivered; materials promoted; schools outside the pilot express interest; recordings made available online		speakers, participating schools – teachers, students, local entrepreneurs
5	Training materials and teacher handbook finalised, collected feedback incorporated	Final version of training materials and handbook prepared and published	February (M23) - March 2027 (M24)	SBA, JA SK consultation
6	Pilot closure and documentation	Compilation of pilot results, lessons learned, recommendations for replication, submission of reports	March 2027 (M24)	SBA

13.2. Gantt-chart

		M13				M14				M15				M16				M17				M18				M19				M20				M21				M22				M23				M24			
		April 26				May 26				June 26				July 26				Aug 26				Sept 26				Oct 26				Nov 26				Dec 26				Jan 27				Feb 27				Mar 27			
M1	Pilot preparation and version of pilot materials for pilot testing development																																															
M2	Pre-training coordination and local entrepreneurs' engagement																																															
M3	Delivery of 3-day student training in pilot schools																																															
M4	Online webinars/in-person workshops in schools delivered																																															
M5	Training materials and teacher handbook finalised, collected feedback incorporated																																															
M6	Pilot closure and documentation																																															

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11. Pilot design Ukraine

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Ukraine

Cooperation-based pilot design

Project partner: Charitable Organization Platform for Social Change

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1. Basic information

1.1. Pilot title:

”Skills Future for Youth”

1.2. Region / country:

Ivano-Frankivsk region, Ukraine

1.3. Implementing organisation(s):

Charitable Organisation Platform for Social Change

1.4. Contact details:

Solomiia Boianovych, Managing Director, info@social-change.com.ua, s.boianovych@social-change.com.ua

Ihor Bazan, Communication manager, pr@social-change.com.ua

1.5. Collaborating organisation(s) / initiative(s) involved:

- State Employment Service (Ivano-Frankivsk regional office)
- Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State Administration (Department of Youth and Education)
- Anima Help (psychological support partner)
- Local VET institutions and universities (facilitators / content)
- Local SMEs and entrepreneurs (mentors, Career Talks)

1.6. Period of implementation:

June 2026 – March 2027 (Project months M15–M24 of COOPOWER)

2. Problem statement (local challenge)

In the Ivano-Frankivsk territorial community, young people aged 15–29 face persistent exclusion from education, employment, and social participation. In 2023, over 22% of youth were not in employment, education, or training (NEET), up from 14% before 2020 (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2024). Youth unemployment among 15–24-year-olds remains high at 18–20%, and the influx of internally displaced persons since 2022 has increased competition for scarce local jobs. Most registered enterprises are micro- or small-sized, providing unstable contracts and limited wages, especially in rural areas. Learning losses of 1–1.5 years have been recorded, while vocational and practical training is underfunded and reduced by 30–40% (UNICEF, 2023; PISA 2022). Early school leaving has risen, particularly among displaced youth and those from low-income households. Over one-third of young people report reduced motivation to pursue education or employment due to stress, relocation, or family responsibilities (UNICEF, 2024). Fragmentation between education, employment, and social-support services limits young people's ability to navigate these systems. Those with low social, financial, or informational capital—such as displaced youth, rural youth, or youth with disabilities—are most affected.

3. Underlying needs

The diagnostic country report about Ukraine (Activity 1.1) identifies three interconnected strategic needs that the pilot must address:

Need 1 — Early career guidance and personalised support pathways

Ukraine's youth face fragmented transitions from school to work, further aggravated by displacement, interrupted schooling and uneven access to guidance services. Early career guidance, individualised support pathways, and improved orientation mechanisms are essential to counter the rising risk of NEET status. Most young people in the target community have never had access to structured career counselling or practical profiling tools. There is a critical absence of coherent guidance services connecting education, training and the labour market.

Need 2 — Practical skill development aligned with labour-market demands

Many young people complete secondary or VET education without mastering practical competencies required by local employers. The reduction of practical training modules (30–40%), combined with the dominance of theoretical approaches, results in a severe mismatch between the skills young people possess and those the labour market requires. There is an urgent need for non-formal, practice-oriented learning that develops both hard and soft skills, entrepreneurial thinking, financial literacy and digital competencies — delivered in formats accessible despite war-related disruptions.

Need 3 — Psychosocial support and wellbeing to enable participation

Access to psychological support is a prerequisite for effective participation in any educational or employment initiative in the current Ukrainian context. Over one in three young people reports a significant loss of motivation due to stress, trauma and displacement (UNICEF, 2024). Without addressing wellbeing, participation rates in learning and employment programmes remain low and unsustainable. The pilot must integrate psychosocial support not as an add-on, but as a core component that enables meaningful engagement with all other activities.

Need 4 — Intersectoral cooperation for youth inclusion

The analysis demonstrates that the vulnerability of young people cannot be addressed by a single institution or sector alone. A coherent, multi-institutional and community-oriented intervention is necessary — bringing together civil society, public employment services, local authorities, education providers and the business community to create complementary and mutually reinforcing pathways for youth inclusion.

4. Target group

4.1. Description of the target group

The primary target group of the pilot is young people aged 15–29 residing in the Ivano-Frankivsk territorial community and surrounding municipalities of the Ivano-Frankivsk region. Priority is given to those facing the highest risk of labour-market exclusion:

Sub-group	Profile characteristics	Estimated share of participants
NEET youth	Not in employment, education or training; often discouraged or demotivated; at risk of long-term exclusion	~40%
Internally Displaced Youth (IDPs)	Arrived from conflict-affected regions since 2022; disrupted schooling; no local social network; limited local labour-market knowledge	~35%
Rural / peri-urban youth	Limited access to career guidance, digital infrastructure and quality training; high emigration pressure	~15%
Recent graduates (VET / secondary)	Completed education without practical work experience; skills mismatch with employer needs	~10%

Gender balance target: At least 50% female participants.

Selection criteria: Age 15–29; residing in Ivano-Frankivsk community or region; not in stable employment or full-time formal education; motivation to participate.

4.2. Barriers to participation and inclusion and equity considerations

The following barriers have been identified based on the Country Report analysis and local context:

#	Barrier	Who is most affected	Pilot mitigation measure
1	Psychosocial: war trauma, stress, anxiety, loss of motivation	IDPs, youth from conflict-affected areas	Integrated wellbeing component; psychological support from first day; safe learning environment
2	Financial: inability to cover learning materials	Low-income youth, IDPs, rural youth	Free participation; in-kind support (meals, materials)
3	Infrastructural: power outages, internet instability	All participants, especially rural	Hybrid format; venue with autonomous power supply; offline materials; recorded sessions
4	Informational: lack of awareness of opportunities; distrust of institutions	NEET youth, youth not connected to services	Outreach through trusted partners (NGOs, VET centres, employment service); peer ambassadors
5	Social: isolation; loss of social networks due to displacement	IDPs, rural youth	Community building within bootcamp; peer learning; mentorship; alumni network
6	Scheduling / time: caregiving responsibilities, informal employment	Young women, youth with children	Flexible scheduling; recorded sessions; individual catch-up pathways
7	Gender: lower female participation in entrepreneurship / leadership programmes	Young women	Targeted outreach; female role models and mentors; gender-responsive content

5. Pilot objectives

The pilot pursues the following SMART objectives within the implementation period (September 2026 – March 2027):

#	Objective	Key indicator / target
1	Increase employability and labour-market readiness of 4 groups at least 25 young people from the Ivano-Frankivsk region through completion of a structured 5-module skills bootcamp.	≥25 participants of groups complete the bootcamp; ≥80% report improved labour-market readiness (exit survey)
2	Develop practical skills in social entrepreneurship, communication, business modelling, financial literacy, digital tools and marketing through five themed learning modules.	5 modules delivered; ≥80% of completers achieve their personal learning goals (self-assessment)
3	Provide career guidance and coaching to all participants through individual and group sessions, profiling tools and employer connections.	100% of participants receive at least 2 individual career counselling sessions; ≥15 complete a personal development plan (IDP)
4	Deliver integrated psychological support (wellbeing) throughout the bootcamp to reduce barriers caused by war-related stress and trauma, increasing sustained participation.	Wellbeing sessions delivered throughout programme; ≥70% of participants report improved sense of motivation and confidence
5	Strengthen intersectoral cooperation between civil society, public employment services, education and business for sustained youth support in Ivano-Frankivsk.	At least 3 partner organisations formally engaged

6. Theory of change (core logic model)

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes (within the pilot period)	Medium-term outcomes / contribution to impact	Key assumptions and contextual factors
Platform for Social Change core team time and expertise; partner organisations (Employment Service, City Council, VET, business) involvement; pilot funding; meeting spaces; social media tools; digital tools and offline materials; trainers, coaches, career counsellors, psychologist	Stakeholder engagement & recruitment Outreach campaign and intake interviews; cohort selection	Outreach campaign reaches ≥400 young people across ≥3 channels 5 full module facilitation guides, artefact templates, coaching framework and wellbeing components developed and finalised.	Strengthened intersectoral coordination: at least 3 partner organisations formally cooperating Validated, reusable curriculum: all 5 module guides and facilitation tools developed and tested	The intersectoral cooperation model (civil society + employment service + business + education) is embedded in routine local practice, reducing fragmentation in youth support beyond the pilot period Strengthened local institutional capacity for youth support	Security situation in Ivano-Frankivsk region remains manageable; All key partner organisations maintain agreed commitment and capacity throughout the implementation period; The State Employment Service actively refers NEET youth and supports post-programme employment tracking
Platform for Social Change core team,	5-Module Skills Bootcamp	Number of participants	Improved labour-market readiness	Participants transition to employment, self-	Students actively engage in activities

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partner organisations, trainers, coaches, mentors, meeting spaces, digital tools and offline materials, venue with autonomous power supply	Practical artefact production per module (BMC, Social Impact Canvas, IDP, etc.)	completing modules Number of artefacts produced per participant	Practical hard and soft skills acquired: achieve stated personal learning goals	employment, traineeship or further VET/education, contributing to a measurable reduction in NEET status in the target community Increased earnings potential and job quality for graduates who apply entrepreneurial, digital and financial skills acquired during the bootcamp	Participants have minimum digital access (mobile device) Partner organisations maintain commitment; Local labour market offers sufficient entry-level opportunities or pathways to absorb bootcamp graduates
Platform for Social Change core team, partner organisations, coaches, mentors, employers and VET representatives, digital tools and offline materials	Coaching, Career Guidance & Mentorship Individual career profiling and coaching sessions Career Talks with local employers and VET representatives	Number of Career Talks organised Number of participants Number of coaching sessions	Clearer career direction: each completer holds a finalised IDP with next-step action plan Expanded professional network: connections to local employers, mentors and peers established Clearer career direction and personal plan	Transition to employment, entrepreneurship or further education/VET At least a proportion of participants sustain active participation in community life, civic initiatives or informal peer-support networks	Students actively engage in activities. Mentors, coaches have sufficient time and commitment to maintain regular contact with mentees during the mentoring period. Students remain engaged and open to interaction with mentors, coaches/

			Expanded professional networks		
Platform for Social Change core team time and expertise; meeting spaces; digital tools and offline materials; psychologist involvement;	Psychological Support & Wellbeing Entry/exit anonymous wellbeing screening Group wellbeing sessions Individual consultations on request	Number group wellbeing sessions Number of consultations	Reduced psychosocial barriers and reduced anxiety	Strengthened institutional capacity: psychologists remain active in the region, improving sustained quality of youth services Sustained participation in community life	Young people are willing to engage offline given appropriate psychological and wellbeing support.

7. Key activities

The pilot begins with Activity 7.1 Stakeholder Engagement, Validation and Participant Recruitment, which lays the foundation for all subsequent activities. Following this, the pilot comprises three main activity streams that run in parallel throughout the implementation period: (Activity 7.2) the 5-module Skills Bootcamp, (Activity 7.2) the cross-cutting Coaching & Career Guidance track, and (Activity 7.4) the integrated Wellbeing Support component.

7.1. Activity title: Stakeholder engagement, validation and participant recruitment

7.1.1. Objective:

This activity is a prerequisite for all implementation-phase activities (7.2 - 7.4): it establishes the operational foundation, ensures training content is labour-market relevant, and secures the participant cohort before the bootcamp launch in September 2026.

7.1.2. Target group:

Local employers and SMEs, public employment service (State Employment Service Ivano-Frankivsk), Regional State Administration (Department of Youth and Education), VET institutions, local NGOs, psychological support partner, partner organisations involved in youth employment support, and young people aged 16–29 who are NEET, displaced (IDP), or at risk of labour-market exclusion.

7.1.3. Detailed description:

This activity establishes the operational foundation of the pilot by validating, formalising cooperation among local stakeholders, developing programme materials and recruiting the cohorts. Building on findings from the Country Report Ukraine and existing local networks, Platform for Social Change - in cooperation with the Employment Service, City Council, psychological support partner and local employers - will conduct structured consultations and information webinars.

7.1.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Stakeholder mapping and initial outreach: Platform for Social Change maps relevant local employers, VET providers and support organisations. The State Employment Service Ivano-Frankivsk, City Council and local youth-focused NGOs are briefed about the pilot. Cooperation interest is confirmed informally.

2. Semi-structured employer consultations: The implementing organisation conducts interviews with 8–10 selected local SMEs and employers to identify specific skills gaps, validate the 5-module curriculum structure, and assess capacity for hosting Career Talks, providing mentors.
3. Programme material development: Platform for Social Change with invited trainers and sector experts, mentors prepare all 5 module facilitation guides, artefact templates, the coaching framework and the wellbeing. Printed workbooks and digital tool setups (Google Workspace, Canva/Figma templates) are prepared.
4. Trainer and team onboarding: Module trainers, the career counsellor and the psychologist are contracted. An internal team onboarding session aligns on methodology, safeguarding protocol and coordination tools.
5. Participant outreach and recruitment campaign: A targeted campaign is launched via social media (Instagram, Telegram, Facebook), partner channels (Employment Service, youth centres, VET schools) and printed flyers. An interactive and motivating information webinars are held to spark interest in the programme. Applications are collected via Google Form.
6. Intake interviews and cohort selection (M18, September 2026): Individual intake interviews are conducted by coordinator with all applicants. Participants are selected based on eligibility criteria (age 16–29, NEET or at risk, residing in Ivano-Frankivsk region). The selected cohorts are notified, onboarded and complete the initial screening.

7.1.3.2. Timing and duration

This activity is scheduled to take place between M15 and M18 (June 2026 - September 2026), allowing for a thorough recruitment and profiling phase before the training block begins in M17.

7.1.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

Platform for Social Change (COPSC) - overall pilot coordination, stakeholder outreach, facilitation, material development, and trainer/mentor onboarding.
Trainers, mentors, SMEs - deliver five-module content, support participant learning, and provide feedback on artefacts.
Psychologist - provide wellbeing support and ensure a safe, inclusive learning environment.
Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State Administration, Employment Service, VET Institutions, NGOs - support outreach, validation workshops, promotion, and participant intake logistics.

7.1.3.4. Methods

Semi-structured employer interviews; participatory validation workshop; social media campaign; individual intake interviews; interactive webinars, Q&A session.

7.1.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

Stakeholder mapping template; employer consultation guide; workshop facilitation agenda and printed canvases; Google Form (applications and intake screening); social media content kit (Canva/Figma); partner contact database (Google Sheets, restricted access).

7.1.4. Expected engagement

Vulnerable young people (NEET, displaced or at risk of exclusion) are successfully recruited and onboarded for the programme.

The outreach and engagement process ensures that young people are reached across three or more channels (social media, Employment Service, VET institutions).

Local SMEs/employers engage in consultations, validation activities and early collaboration planning.

Key institutional partners — the State Employment Service, City Council, VET institutions in Ivano-Frankivsk region, NGOs and the psychological support partner — actively participate in coordination and validation processes.

7.1.5. Key indicators

- ≥5 small and medium-sized enterprises/employers invited to participate in consultations, validation and career-related activities.
- 1 validation workshop held with local stakeholders (City Council, Employment Service, VET institutions, NGOs).
- 5 full module facilitation guides, artefact templates, coaching framework and wellbeing components developed and finalised.
- 1 internal onboarding session conducted for trainers, mentors, the career counsellor and the psychologist.
- 4 cohorts of 25–30 vulnerable young people selected.
- ≥1 interactive information webinar delivered to spark interest and motivate participation.
- Outreach campaign reaches ≥400 young people across ≥3 channels (social media, Employment Service, VET schools).

7.2. Activity title: 5-Module Skills Bootcamp

7.2.1. Objective

To develop practical, labour-market-relevant skills among 4 groups of 25–30 vulnerable young people through five structured thematic modules.

7.2.2. Target group

Young people aged 15–29 from the Ivano-Frankivsk community; priority to IDPs, NEET youth, rural youth and recent graduates.

7.2.3. Detailed description

M	Module title	Key topics & skills	Format
1	Social Entrepreneurship. Labour market. Self-analysis.	Introduction to social entrepreneurship. Ukrainian labour market & regional context. Skills self-assessment (personal SWOT). Career profiling. Personal Development Plan (IDP).	Hybrid 5 days
2	Communication, teamwork and leadership.	Effective communication & active listening. Team roles. Conflict resolution. Motivation & self-regulation. Leadership styles. Networking.	Hybrid 5 days
3	Entrepreneurial thinking and business modelling.	Entrepreneurial & design thinking. Idea generation and ideation (Problem tree). Mission & vision formation. Business Model Canvas. Social Impact Canvas.	Hybrid 5 days
4	Financial and legal literacy.	Financial modelling basics & unit economics. Personal financial planning and budgeting. Legal forms of entrepreneurship in Ukraine (FOP, LLC, NGO). Employee rights and obligations.	Hybrid 5 days
5	Marketing, social media and digital skills.	Marketing strategy & 4P model. Branding and value proposition. SMM and social media for business/employment. Digital tools (Canva, Google Workspace, AI tools).	Hybrid 5 days

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7.2.3.1. Sequence of steps

The bootcamp runs across 7 months (September 2026 – March 2027). Each module is delivered across 5 days. Between modules, participants complete practical homework assignments and meet with their mentors.

7.2.3.2. Timing and duration

- Module 1: September - October 2026
- Module 2: November 2026
- Module 3: November - December 2026
- Module 4: January - February 2027
- Module 5: February - March 2027

7.2.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

- Platform for Social Change — overall coordination, facilitation, module delivery
- Invited trainers and sector experts — content delivery for specialist topics
- Mentors (from local business community) — feedback on artefacts;
- Career Talks, Career counsellor — profiling in Module 1.

7.2.3.4. Methods

Participatory workshops; design-thinking exercises; peer learning; individual coaching; group reflection; masterclasses.

7.2.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

Printed workbooks and artefact templates; Miro/online whiteboards (offline alternative: printed canvases); Google Workspace (Docs, Slides); Canva; AI tools (ChatGPT, Gemini basics); offline copies for power outage scenarios.

7.2.4. Expected engagement

4 groups of 25–30 young people complete at least 4 modules (Engage level). Additionally, up to 10 participants may complete 2–4 modules (Involve level).

7.2.5. Key indicators

- Number of participants completing at least 4 modules
- Module completion rate per module (target: ≥85%)
- % of participants achieving their stated learning goals (self-assessment, target: ≥80%)
- Number of artefacts produced per participant (target: full set per module)
- % of participants with a completed IDP by end of programme (target: ≥80%)

7.3. Activity title: Coaching, Career Guidance and Mentorship Track

7.3.1. Objective:

To provide each participant with personalised career guidance, coaching and employer connections throughout the bootcamp.

7.3.2. Target group:

Young people aged 15–29 from the Ivano-Frankivsk community; priority to IDPs, NEET youth, rural youth and recent graduates.

7.3.3. Detailed description:

7.3.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Intake profiling: career counsellor conducts individual assessment (Module 1) — skills, interests, barriers, goals
2. Group coaching sessions: between modules — reflection, planning, peer support
3. Individual coaching sessions: minimum 2 per participant per programme
4. Career Talks: minimum 2 online/offline sessions with local employers, entrepreneurs and VET representatives
5. Exit profiling: individual career counselling session (Module 5) — update IDP, map next steps

7.3.3.2. Timing and duration

Ongoing throughout September 2026 – March 2027. Group coaching sessions after each module. Individual sessions scheduled flexibly.

7.3.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

Career counsellor; Mentors from business community (minimum 5); Invited speakers for Career Talks.

7.3.3.4. Methods

Active listening; strengths-based coaching; portfolio review; peer mentoring circles; structured networking at Career Talks.

7.3.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

Individual coaching record sheets (printed and digital); career profiling questionnaire; competency self-assessment tool (Skills Wheel); Google Meet / Zoom for online coaching sessions; shared Google

Drive folder per participant (restricted access) for portfolio and artefact storage; Telegram chat for sessions.

7.3.4. Expected engagement

≥80% of participants (Engage level) receive career and coaching support throughout the programme.

7.3.5. Key indicators

- % of participants receiving ≥2 individual career counselling sessions (target: 100%)
- Number of Career Talks organised (target: ≥2)
- % of participants with completed IDP at programme end (target: ≥80%)

7.4. Activity title: Psychological Support and Wellbeing Component

7.4.1. Objective:

To reduce psychosocial barriers to participation and sustain motivation throughout the bootcamp through integrated wellbeing support.

7.4.2. Target group:

All bootcamp participants; individual consultations available on request for those with acute needs.

7.4.3. Detailed description:

7.4.3.1. Sequence of steps

1. Entry psychological assessment: anonymous wellbeing screening (standardised scale) at programme start.
2. 2 wellbeing sessions: mindfulness, stress management, resilience building, group reflection.
3. Individual psychological consultations: available on request; minimum 1 per participant if needed (Anima Help or partner psychologist).
4. Crisis protocol: referral pathway for participants with acute psychological needs (coordination with Anima Help).
5. Exit assessment: anonymous wellbeing screening at programme end (comparison with baseline).

7.4.3.2. Timing and duration

Integrated throughout the programme, September 2026 – March 2027. 2 group sessions. Individual consultations are flexible.

7.4.3.3. Roles and responsibilities

Psychologist / wellbeing facilitator (partner organisation — Anima Help or equivalent); crisis referral network.

7.4.3.4. Methods

Mindfulness practices; group reflection; narrative approaches; psychoeducation; strengths-based methods; anonymous digital check-ins between sessions.

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7.4.3.5. Materials and tools (incl. digital tools)

Standardised wellbeing screening tool; entry/exit wellbeing assessment form; session facilitation guides for group wellbeing sessions.

7.4.4. Expected engagement

100% of participants attend group wellbeing sessions (Engage level). Individual consultations available to all on request.

7.4.5. Key indicators

- Number of group wellbeing sessions delivered (target: ≥2 sessions across the programme)
- % of participants attending ≥70% of wellbeing sessions (target: ≥75%)
- Change in wellbeing score (pre/post, standardised scale; target: statistically meaningful improvement)
- % of participants reporting improved motivation and confidence at programme end (target: ≥70%)

8. Cooperation model

8.1. Collaborating organisations/initiatives, roles and responsibilities

Sector	Actor	Role and responsibility across the pilot	Why this role is needed at pilot level
Civil society	Platform for Social Change	Overall programme coordination; module design and delivery; participant recruitment and support; monitoring and reporting; knowledge management	Civil society has flexibility, community trust and methodology competence to run non-formal learning programmes
Civil society	Anima Help (psychological partner)	Wellbeing component design and delivery; individual psychological consultations; crisis referral coordination	Specialised mental health NGO with proven methodology and local presence; trust among youth
Public	State Employment Service (Ivano-Frankivsk)	Referral of NEET youth to the programme; co-facilitation of career guidance component; post-programme employment tracking	Institutional access to NEET registry; mandated to support youth employment; adds legitimacy and post-programme tracking capacity
Public	Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State Administration (Dept. of Youth / Education)	In-kind support (venue, communications); participant referral from schools and youth centres	Municipal authority enables scale, legitimacy and in-kind resource contribution; essential for sustainability post-project
Business	Local SMEs, entrepreneurs, individual entrepreneurs	Mentors for participants; Career Talks speakers	Real labour-market connection; provide practical perspective on skills demand; create post-programme pathways
Academia / Education	Local VET institutions and university departments	Content contribution to specialist modules; facilitation support; referral of potential participants; potential pathway for participants post-bootcamp	Methodological quality of content; connection to formal education pathways as exit route from bootcamp

8.2. Governance and communication structure

The pilot operates under a light coordination structure:

- Platform for Social Change manages planning, sequencing of modules, recruitment, partner coordination and evaluation.
- Coordination routines include:
    - Monthly coordination meetings to review progress and risks. Modular internal case reviews (coordinator, career counsellor, psychologist) to monitor attendance, wellbeing and coaching progress.
    - Module-level planning meetings with trainers and mentors, experts
    - Roles are clearly distributed to ensure coherent educational, psychosocial and labour-market support.
- Regular communication channels: email for formal coordination, shared Google Drive for documentation and monitoring, closed Telegram group for operational coordination and participant communication.
- Operational decisions are taken by Platform for Social Change in consultation with relevant partners. Safeguarding decisions are made jointly by the coordinator and psychologist under the agreed crisis protocol.

8.3. How cooperation contributes to youth outcomes

The cooperation model applied in the pilot can be described as an civil-society-oriented, programme centred on youth empowerment and support services delivered by civil-society actors.

Civil society + Employment Service → improved access → more NEET and at-risk youth engaged: COPSC brings community trust and youth outreach expertise, while the Employment Service provides institutional channels to reach young people who would otherwise be hard to contact.

Business community + VET institutions → continuity and real-world opportunities → smoother transition to employment or further education: Employers offer traineeships and mentorship; VET institutions provide pathways for further qualification; together they ensure learning does not end with the bootcamp.

Cross-sector coordination → higher quality and relevance of support → more effective skill development: Collaboration ensures curriculum matches labour-market needs, coaching is tailored, and wellbeing support is integrated.

Documented cooperation model → systemic learning → scalable impact and policy dialogue: Capturing processes and outcomes allows replication in other regions and informs youth employment policy.

9. Outreach strategy

9.1. Shared COOPOWER baseline definitions

At the pilot co-creation meeting in November 2025 in Austria, all partners agreed that there are different engagement levels of the target group (see Table below). In the sections below, please describe what these engagement levels mean bases on your pilot's activities, cooperation model and local youth realities.

Level	Description	Examples in practice
Inform	Young people **receive information** about opportunities, services, or rights. **Communication is one-way.**	Flyers, school visits, or social-media posts announce a new training or mentoring offer.
Reach	Young people are contacted and **take part once or briefly**, usually as participants or beneficiaries. **Their role is mainly passive.**	They join a single job-skills workshop or attend an event run by partners.
Involve	Young people **participate more than once in activities** and can **express opinions or preferences**, with potential to shape design.	They attend several mentoring sessions, share feedback, or help spread the word.
Engage	Young people take **part actively and continuously**, showing **commitment** and initiative within the activities. They help keep momentum and **bring their perspective** into planning, outreach, or implementation.	They participate throughout a full training cycle, mentor peers informally, or help sustain a youth group.

9.2. Pilot-specific definition

Level	Related activity / steps	Expected number of young people
Inform	Social media campaign; partner organisation outreach; distribution of flyers in VET schools, employment service, youth centres; information on COOPOWER website	300–500 young people
Reach	Participants express interest in the programme by attending the interactive information webinars/QA sessions and/or responding to the call for applications, participation in Module 1.	150-200 young people
Involve	Completion of intake interview; selected and enrolled in bootcamp; completion of 2–4 modules and wellbeing sessions	120–150 young people
Engage	Full completion of at least 4 modules, coaching sessions, wellbeing programme	100-120 young people

9.3. Barriers to engagement and mitigation measures

Key outreach barriers and how they will be addressed:

Barrier	Mitigation measure
Distrust of institutions after traumatic displacement	Outreach via trusted civil society partners and peer ambassadors; transparent communication about programme nature and expectations
Low visibility among most vulnerable youth (those not connected to any service)	Targeted outreach in collaboration with State Employment Service, IDP support organisations and community centres
Digital exclusion — no access to social media or internet	Printed materials; direct outreach at physical locations (VET schools, employment office, youth centres, community hubs)
Competition from other activities / reluctance to commit to a long programme	Flexible scheduling; clear incentive communication; peer ambassador testimonials; graduated participation option

10. Incentive model

Engagement level	Incentive	Needs addressed	Barrier addressed	Purpose / expected effect
INFORM	Attractive, informative social media content; peer testimonials	Awareness of opportunities	Informational exclusion	Lower threshold for first contact; generate interest
REACH	Free information webinars; clear explanation of all supports offered; participation in Module 1 as low-threshold engagement	Reduced financial risk of attending	Financial and logistical barriers	Convert interest into application
INVOLVE	Free participation; materials provided; module completion certificate	Financial access; recognition of effort	Financial barrier; motivation to continue	Enable sustained participation across modules
ENGAGE	Full programme certificate; completed portfolio; personal reference letter; networking; employer connections; mentorship; pathway to traineeship	Career advancement; professional recognition	Disbelief in programme value; lack of visible outcome	Tangible career pathway; real-world contacts; increased employability
ALL LEVELS (Wellbeing)	Integrated psychological support; safe group environment; peer community	Psychosocial wellbeing; sense of belonging	War trauma; isolation; demotivation	Sustained engagement; reduced dropout; improved mental health

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11. Risks and mitigation

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation measure
Escalation of military situation or increased frequency of air raid alerts disrupting in-person sessions	High	High	Hybrid delivery format; venue with shelter meeting safety standards; recorded session materials; flexible rescheduling protocol; online fallback for all sessions
Power outages interrupting sessions or homework completion	High	Medium	Venue with autonomous power supply (generator/UPS); printed workbooks/materials; offline-compatible tools; asynchronous homework options
High dropout rate among participants (war stress, relocation, employment)	Medium	High	Wellbeing component from day 1; flexible catch-up; peer support groups; early warning system (coach monitors attendance)
Insufficient recruitment of target group (especially IDPs and NEET youth)	Medium	High	Early outreach (2 months before start); partnerships with Employment Service (NEET referral); IDP support organisations; peer ambassador scheme
Partner organisation withdrawal or reduced capacity	Low	High	MoU agreements with all key partners before programme start; identification of backup partners for each role; Platform for Social Change retains core delivery capacity
Team burnout / coordinator fatigue in war context	Medium	Medium	Clear role distribution; built-in team wellbeing practices; regular supervision; realistic workload planning
Difficulty securing business partners for mentoring and Career Talks	Low-Medium	Medium	Early identification and engagement of employers; flexible formats for Career Talks (online option); local business associations as intermediaries

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12. Sustainability and transferability

12.1. Sustainability at local level

The pilot is designed with sustainability in mind from the outset:

- Embedded intersectoral cooperation model — The structured collaboration between Platform for Social Change, the State Employment Service, the City Council, VET institutions, business mentors builds on existing institutional mandates. The coordination format can continue in a lighter version after M24 without creating new permanent structures.
- Modular and reusable methodology — The 5-module bootcamp structure, career guidance tools, wellbeing protocol and mentoring framework can be delivered as a full programme or integrated into existing youth, employment or VET initiatives.
- Strengthened local human capital — Trainers, career counsellors and psychologists gain structured methodology and practical tools that remain available in the region beyond COOPOWER funding. Selected alumni can act as peer ambassadors or junior facilitators.

12.2. Transferable elements

The following elements of the pilot are considered highly transferable to other Ukrainian regions or COOPOWER partner countries:

- The 5-module bootcamp structure with clear learning objectives, artefacts and facilitation methodology
- The integrated wellbeing protocol adapted for youth in war-affected contexts
- The intersectoral cooperation model (civil society + public employment service + business + education)
- The hybrid delivery format designed to function in contexts with infrastructure instability
- The engagement and incentive framework (Inform → Reach → Involve → Engage)

12.3. Limits to transferability

Some elements require local adaptation:

- Labour-market content must reflect the specific regional context and employer landscape
- The psychological support component depends on availability of trained partner organisations (not universally available)
- The model assumes a minimum critical mass of vulnerable youth in the target location (approx. 300-400 in the outreach population)

13. Timeline and workplan

The pilot implementation covers project months M15–M24 (June 2026 – March 2027).

13.1. Milestone-based workplan

M	Milestone	Key activities covered	Timeframe (month/year & project month)	Actor(s)
1	Programme design finalised & partnerships confirmed	Finalise module content; recruit trainers, mentors, coach, psychologist; develop materials and artefact templates	Jun–Sep 2026 (M15–M18)	Platform for Social Change; all partners
2	Recruitment completed - participants enrolled	Outreach campaign launched; information webinars; intake interviews; participant selection; onboarding	Sep 2026 (M18)	Platform for Social Change; Employment Service; Regional State Administration
3	Module 1 delivered — Social Entrepreneurship, Labour Market, Self-Analysis, IDP (Draft)	5-day workshop (offline/online); career profiling; first wellbeing session; draft IDP; mentor assignment	Sep-Oct 2026 (M18–M19)	Trainers, Career counsellor, Psychologist
4	Module 2 delivered — Communication, Teamwork, Motivation, Leadership	5-day workshop (offline/online); group coaching; wellbeing sessions; Career Talk #1	Nov 2026 (M20)	Trainers, Coach, Psychologist, Business mentor
5	Module 3 delivered — Entrepreneurial Thinking, BMC, Social Impact Canvas	5-day workshop (offline/online); Customer Discovery fieldwork; BMC & Social Impact Canvas	Nov–Dec 2026 (M20–M21)	Trainers, Mentors, Career counsellor

6	Module 4 delivered — Financial & Legal Literacy	5-day workshop (offline/online); financial modelling; legal forms; vocational profiling session; Career Talk #2	Jan-Feb 2027 (M22-M23)	Trainers, VET partner, Employment Service
7	Module 5 delivered — Marketing, Digital Skills	5-day workshop (offline/online); masterclass; final project preparation; wellbeing closing session employer networking; certificates issued; exit wellbeing assessment; post-programme IDP completed	Feb-Mar 2027 (M23-M24)	Trainers, Coach, Psychologist, Business mentors
8	Pilot evaluation and reporting completed	Data collection and analysis; participant survey; partner debrief; pilot report; transferability documentation	Mar 2027 (M24)	Platform for Social Change

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13.2. Gantt–chart

		M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
		April 26	May 26	June 26	July 26	Aug 26	Sept 26	Oct 26	Nov 26	Dec 26	Jan 27	Feb 27	Mar 27
M1	Preparatory design & partnerships												
M2	Outreach & recruitment												
M3	Module 1. Social Entrepreneurship												
M4	Module 2. Communication & Leadership												
M5	Module 3. Entrepreneurial Thinking												
M6	Module 4. Financial & Legal Literacy												
M7	Module 5. Marketing & Digital Skills												
M4	Coaching & Career Guidance												
M3	Wellbeing support												
M8	Evaluation & reporting												

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