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ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SCP

# NEETActive

Combining Sport, Fun and Environmental Consciousness



Project ID: 101245003

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## NEETActive Consortium Report Italy, Hungary, Germany





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## Intro

During January–February 2026, the NEETActive consortium conducted coordinated desk research in three partner countries (Italy, Hungary and Germany) to analyse the demographic profile of young NEETs aged 18–30, their main needs and barriers, and existing practices combining sport, outdoor activities and environmental education for social inclusion. This research was carried out within the framework of the Erasmus+ Collaborative Partnership for Sport “NEETActive – Combining Sport, Fun and Environmental Consciousness” (project code [101245003](#), 01/10/2025 – 31/03/2027).

The national reports produced by each partner provide a country-specific overview of NEETs’ situation and highlight relevant good practices in line with the project’s focus on football, orienteering, physical activity and environmental awareness. This consortium report compiles these findings and undertakes a comparative analysis to build a shared understanding at the European level and to provide an evidence base for the development of NEETActive educational materials in WP2.

The cross-analysis identifies common trends and differences across the three countries, with particular attention to how sport-based and nature-based activities can serve as low-threshold entry points to engage NEET youth, foster their personal development, and support transitions into education, training or employment. The conclusions and recommendations directly support the structuring of the project’s learning content and the refinement of key competencies for youth workers, as foreseen in the project proposal.



## National Reports

### 2.1 Italy

Italy has one of the highest NEET rates in Europe, with 15.2% of young people aged 15–29 classified as NEETs (approximately 1.3 million youth), according to ISTAT data 2024. The phenomenon is more pronounced among women (16.6% vs. 13.8% for men) and in Southern Italy (over 20%) compared to Northern regions (under 12%). Italian NEETs face multiple challenges: unemployment and economic dependence on families, social isolation, sedentary lifestyles (81% of teenagers do not meet physical activity recommendations), skill gaps (communication, teamwork, problem-solving, digital competences) and limited environmental awareness.

The national report identifies five best practices that combine sport and environmental education for inclusion: ORIENT (orienteering for community rediscovery), Kaleido Sport (sport + Italian language for migrants), Sport for Inclusion (ENDAS multi-sport programme), Social Football (FIGC national initiative) and Play District (civic spaces for community sports). These initiatives demonstrate football's role in building team spirit and orienteering's potential to connect youth with nature, while addressing barriers like access to facilities and motivation.

The following 5 best practices in Italy have been selected about initiatives combining sport with environmental education, social inclusion and empowerment of NEETs and vulnerable youth aged 18-30.

#### Best practice #1 ORIENT – ORIENTEERING FOR INCLUSION

**When:** 2022-2024 (completed); curriculum ongoing in partner organisations, available for replication.

**Where:** Palermo, Italy (primary) + Southern Europe partnerships.

**Who** (Coordinating Entity): CESIE (Centro di Studi di Economia Istituzionale) – Project Coordinator FISO (Italian Orienteering Federation)

**Objectives:** General: Promote social inclusion through outdoor orienteering + environmental/community awareness. Specific:

- Develop transferable orienteering curriculum
- Build problem-solving/decision-making skills
- Strengthen community connections/local awareness
- Foster environmental consciousness via nature learning

**Stakeholders:** CESIE, FISO, local youth centres, social services, municipalities, community/environmental organisations, schools, EU partners (Germany, Cyprus, Poland).

**Target Group:** Youth 14-30 at social/economic disadvantage, early school leavers, marginalised urban youth, NEETs/vulnerable populations.





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**Financing:** Erasmus+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships (EU-funded + partner contributions).

**Description:** ORIENT uses orienteering to engage vulnerable youth. Activities include navigation/problem-solving in parks, community mapping, Trail-O (accessible orienteering), youth worker training, digital progress tracking. Non-formal approach builds confidence, nature connection, community belonging, real-world skills.

**Results:** Quantitative: 100+ youth trained, transferable curriculum/OER materials created. Qualitative: ↑ Environmental awareness, problem-solving confidence, community belonging. Confirmed effective/inclusive by youth workers/participants.

**Innovation:** First inclusive orienteering curriculum for NEETs; Trail-O accessibility; community mapping + heritage; EU collaboration; OER for replication.

**Empowerment Impact:** Agency via navigation/problem-solving; ↑ outdoor confidence; community belonging; transferable employment skills; environmental responsibility; career pathways; strengthened peer networks.

**Website:** [orientproject.eu/orient-curriculum](http://orientproject.eu/orient-curriculum)

**Contacts:** CESIE [cesie.org](http://cesie.org) | FISO [fiso.it](http://fiso.it)



## Best practice #2 Kaleido Sport – Sport and Italian language for migrant and vulnerable youth

**When:** 2024 - ongoing

**Where:** Palermo, Sicily

**Who** (Coordinating Entity): Polisportiva Gonzaga + partners: Verga Basket, Centro Astalli (Jesuit Refugee Service), FIP Sicilia, Municipal Youth Services

**Objectives:**

- Provide integrated sport + Italian language classes for migrants/vulnerable youth
- Build confidence/social skills through sport
- Create employment/education pathways
- Develop peer networks + sense of belonging



**Stakeholders:** Polisportiva Gonzaga, Verga Basket, Centro Astalli, FIP Sicilia, Municipality of Palermo

**Target Group:** Migrant youth/asylum seekers aged 14-30, Economically vulnerable Italian youth, Early school leavers, 200-300 participants/year

**Financing:** Italian Government - Department of Youth Policies + Sport e Salute SPA

**Description:** Morning: Free Italian language classes (tailored to literacy levels). Afternoon: Structured sport (basketball, volleyball, football). Additional: Mentoring, personal development coaching, cultural integration workshops, family support, vocational guidance. Language + sport synergy builds confidence, peer friendships, structure, purpose.

**Results:** Quantitative: 200+ participants/year (free access removes economic barriers). Qualitative: ↑ Language proficiency, sport confidence, peer networks, community integration. Positive family feedback on development/future prospects.

**Innovation:** Addresses language + social exclusion simultaneously; free access model; multi-sport for diverse interests; integrated mentoring/vocational support.

**Empowerment Impact:** Italian competency → autonomy/opportunities; sport → physical confidence/health; peer networks/mentoring → social support/education-employment guidance; cultural activities → reduced isolation.

**Website:** [giovani2030.it/spazio-civico/kaleido-sport](http://giovani2030.it/spazio-civico/kaleido-sport)



### Best practice #3 Sport for Inclusion – ENDAS National Multi-Location Programme

**When:**

2024 - ongoing

**Where:**

Multiple locations Italy (Rome, Milan, Naples, Palermo)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

ENDAS (Ente Nazionale Autonomo Servizi Sociali) + Local ASDs (sports associations)

**Objectives:**

- Promote social inclusion/personal development of vulnerable youth through sport
- Address social marginalisation/economic disadvantage
- Increase sport participation among NEETs
- Develop life skills + confidence

**Stakeholders:** Youth employment services, social services, regional administrations, community organisations, schools, family support services

**Target Group:**

- NEETs aged 18-30
- Early school leavers
- Economically disadvantaged youth
- Youth at risk of social exclusion
- Peripheral urban neighbourhood residents
- 1,000+ participants across sites

**Financing:** Italian Government – national funding for social inclusion through sport

**Description:** ENDAS (CONI Sports Promotion Entity since 1976) delivers grassroots sports nationwide. Sport for Inclusion targets peripheral neighbourhoods with free/low-cost football, basketball, volleyball, athletics. Youth build confidence/friendships through sports they love; coaches/youth workers mentor on communication, teamwork, education, job prep. Families join community events – local, accessible, no barriers.

**Results:**

*Quantitative:* 1,000+ participants across sites (scalable model). Free/subsidised access removes barriers.

*Qualitative:* ↑ Physical activity, confidence/self-esteem, social networks. Transitions to education/employment. Positive community/neighbourhood vitality impact.





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**Innovation:**

Multi-sport accommodates interests; employment/education integration creates pathways; peripheral neighbourhood focus addresses geographic inequality.

**Empowerment Impact:**

Physical health/activity engagement; routine/discipline/purpose; sport achievement → confidence/self-efficacy; mentoring → guidance/role models; employment pathways.

**Website:** [endassport-for-inclusion.it](http://endassport-for-inclusion.it)

**Contacts:** ENDAS [endassport-for-inclusion](http://endassport-for-inclusion)



## Best practice #4 SOCIAL FOOTBALL – FIGC NATIONAL PROGRAMME

**When:**

2025 - ongoing

**Where:**

Italy nationwide (regional implementations)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

FIGC (Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio) + professional/amateur football clubs

**Objectives:**

- Football as vehicle for social inclusion/personal development
- Promote positive values through sport
- ↑ Sport participation NEETs/disadvantaged youth
- Develop social skills/teamwork/confidence
- Employment pathways via sport

**Stakeholders:**

FIGC, Serie A/B clubs, amateur clubs, municipalities, youth services

**Target Group:**

- NEETs 18-30
- Early school leavers
- Economically disadvantaged youth
- Social exclusion risk
- Football enthusiasts all backgrounds
- 5,000+ participants/clubs/regions

**Financing:** FIGC institutional funding + partnerships/sponsorships/public

**Description:** FIGC flagship: free/subsidised football training in peripheral areas. Beyond technical skills → life competencies, teamwork, communication, responsibility. Pro players/coaches mentor. Integrates environmental education (sustainable fields, eco-projects). Football's cultural power for inclusion.

**Results:**

*Quantitative:* 5,000+ participants, national scale. Free access removes barriers.

*Qualitative:* ↑ Confidence/self-esteem; teamwork/social skills; peer networks; community feedback positive; pro player inspiration.





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**Innovation:**

Leverages football's cultural prominence + FIGC infrastructure/quality; environmental integration; pro player role models; positive values emphasis (teamwork/respect/fair play).

**Empowerment Impact:**

Culturally relevant engagement; teamwork/social competency; pro mentoring/inspiration; civic responsibility; positive identity vs marginalisation; national backing commitment.

**Website:** [figc.it/it/giovani/social-football](http://figc.it/it/giovani/social-football)

**Contacts:** FIGC Social Projects [figc.it](http://figc.it) | 0684911



## Best practice #5 PLAY DISTRICT – SPAZI CIVICI DI COMUNITÀ (COMMUNITY CIVIC SPACES)

### When:

2025 - ongoing

### Where:

Multiple Italian municipalities (urban/suburban communities)

### Who (Coordinating Entity):

Sport e Salute SpA + Local ASDs

### Objectives:

- Create accessible sport/physical activity for vulnerable youth in communities
- Promote public health/social inclusion
- ↑ Sport participation NEETs
- Develop soft skills through sport
- Build community cohesion/neighbourhood strengthening

### Stakeholders:

Sport e Salute SpA, local ASDs, municipalities, community orgs, youth services, schools, health services, neighbourhood associations

### Target Group:

- NEETs 14-34
- Economically disadvantaged youth
- Peripheral neighbourhood residents
- Early school leavers
- Social exclusion risk
- 3,000+ participants/municipalities

**Financing:** Italian Government (Ministry of Sport) + Sport e Salute institutional funding – public community sport infrastructure investment

**Description:** "Third spaces" – welcoming neighbourhood hubs for free/low-cost multi-sport (football, basketball, volleyball, athletics, climbing, dance) + social activities. Community sport educators/youth workers create inclusive environments. Includes cultural events, skill workshops, family engagement. Integrated social services. Environmental stewardship (gardens, park maintenance, sustainability education).





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**Results:**

*Quantitative:* 3,000+ participants, community spaces established. Free/low-cost broad access.

*Qualitative:* ↑ Structured activities vs isolation/risky behaviours; community cohesion/vitality; belonging/connection reported by youth/families.

**Innovation:**

"Third space" concept (neutral youth locations); environmental stewardship in sport; multi-activity diversity; community-partnership sustainability; social services integration; permanent infrastructure.

**Empowerment Impact:**

Free quality activity/community engagement; welcoming vs isolation; health/confidence/social skills; peer support; civic agency via neighbourhood improvement; positive change awareness.

**Website:** [sportesalute.eu/spazicivici.html](http://sportesalute.eu/spazicivici.html)

**Contacts:** Sport e Salute SpA [sportesalute.eu](http://sportesalute.eu)



## 2.2 Hungary

Hungary's national NEET rate (10% in 2024) is below the OECD average but masks significant regional disparities: Northern Hungary (20.8%), Northern Great Plain and Southern Transdanubia exceed both national and international benchmarks, particularly in rural areas. Young women are over-represented, especially in the 20–24 age group (19.8% vs. 10.5% for men), and structural factors include skill mismatches, premature school leaving and limited access to opportunities outside Budapest. NEETs in these regions often work in low-skilled jobs or public works programmes that do not build transferable skills.

The report maps five best practices, largely EU-funded: NEETs NEED SPORT (sport for employment), Back on Track (youth reintegration), Youth House (local hubs), European Pact4Youth (policy dialogue) and RAISE Youth (rural sustainable entrepreneurship). These highlight sport's role in skill development and the potential of green entrepreneurship and rural outdoor activities to engage disadvantaged youth.

### Best practice #1 [NEETs NEED SPORT]

**Project Title:**

NEETs NEED SPORT – Sport for Employment [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

**When:**

2025 (completed)

**Where:**

Hungary, Romania, Spain, UK

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

Restorative Justice for All International Institute

**Objectives:**

Develop training tools for youth workers/sport coaches to increase employment of marginalized NEETs using sport as learning tool. Interactive/fun activities build soft skills, create employment momentum.

**Stakeholders:**

Ministry Youth/Sport Romania, John Wesley College Hungary, 25 social orgs Barcelona, Southwark Council UK, universities, FRED Campaign, British Council.

**Target Group:**

Marginalized NEETs





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**Financing:**

EU-funded

**Description:**

Training tools for sport-based learning: interactive activities for efficient educational/development delivery to youth.

**Results:**

Soft skills ↑, employment rate ↑ (specific metrics TBD).

**Website/Contacts:** TBD from report





## Best practice #2 [BACK ON TRACK]

### When:

2025 - ongoing

### Where:

Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia,  
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Interreg Danube)

### Who (Coordinating Entity):

Interreg Danube Region

### Objectives:

Equip youth workers with mentoring skills/tools to guide/inspire rural NEETs toward education/training/employment.

### Stakeholders:

Cross-border partners (ministries, colleges, social orgs, child care/justice depts, councils, universities, youth campaigns, British Council).

**Target Group:** Rural NEET youth (thousands Europe-wide facing education/training/work barriers).

**Financing:** EU Interreg Danube

### Description (Modules):

1. **Train-the-Mentor Curriculum:** Trust-building, motivation, digital inclusion, career guidance (theory + case studies/quizzes/activities).
2. **Field Trips/Workshops:** Visit NEET facilities, practical learning.
3. **Capacity Pilot:** 4-5 mentors/country test curriculum, transnational exchanges/best practices.
4. **Evaluation:** Data/feedback analysis report.
5. **Final Framework:** Flexible mentoring model (mid-2026 publication + events).

**Results:** Mentor Training Framework published mid-2026, interactive dissemination across Europe.

**Innovation:** Practical implementation/fieldwork guidance; long-term sustainability; transnational pilot network.

**Empowerment Impact:** Modular curriculum from needs assessments/workshops builds mentor capacity for rural NEET support.

**Website:** [interreg-danube.eu/projects/back-on-track](https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/back-on-track)

Interreg  
Danube Region



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## Best Practice #3 Hungary: Youth House – Empowering Vulnerable Young People with Disabilities (NEETs)

### When:

2016 (completed)



### Where:

Hungary

### Who (Coordinating Entity):

Youth House organisation

**Objectives:** Empower vulnerable NEETs with disabilities through inclusive activities building skills, confidence, employment readiness.

**Stakeholders:** Counsellors, psychologists, youth workers (Carl Rogers therapy principles)

**Target Group:** Young people with disabilities not in education/employment/training (NEETs)

**Financing:** TBD (social inclusion funding)

### Description (Activities):

- **Animal-assisted therapy:** Communication, cooperation, self-awareness
- **Art therapy:** Self-expression, interpersonal skills, self-confidence
- **Sports:** Team spirit, health awareness
- **Counselling:** Emotional well-being (empathetic understanding)
- **Job coaching:** Interviewing, communication, money management
- **Vocational training:** Labour market competencies

**Results:** Participants gain skills/confidence for employment/social inclusion; improved emotional well-being, teamwork, health awareness.

**Innovation:** Holistic therapy integration (animal/art/sport/counselling/job coaching) for disabled NEETs; Carl Rogers empathetic approach.

**Empowerment Impact:** Self-expression/confidence ↑; team spirit/health awareness; employment readiness; emotional support/reduced isolation.

### Website/Contacts:

TBD – Youth House Hungary (report reference)





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### Best practice #4 [EUROPEAN PACT4YOUTH]

**When:**

Ongoing (Hungarian adaptation)

**Where:**

Hungary (national round tables)



**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

CSR Europe + European Commission (Hungary chapter)

**Objectives:**

Improve NEET employment via CSR-business-youth collaboration; create quality internships/entry jobs; integrated education-job platform.

**Stakeholders:**

Ministry Human Capacities, Prime Ministry Youth Deputy, CSR Europe, EU Commission

**Target Group:**

NEETs, young workers/students/trainees/career entrants

**Financing:** CSR Europe + European Commission Pact4Youth initiative

**Description:** Hungarian round table series with experts; developed Hungarian Youth Action Plan + Best Practices Collection (proposed Brussels 2017). Facilitates internships/jobs matching youth competencies with companies.

**Results:** Hungary's first CSR conference (2017); Youth Action Plan; Best Practices publication; closer civil-corporate cooperation.

**Innovation:** Active EU collaboration; national round tables; integrated education-job platform; CSR-youth-business bridge.

**Empowerment Impact:** Quality internships/entry jobs; labour market access; competency matching; policy advocacy.

**Website:** [pact4youth.hu/en/fooldal-english](http://pact4youth.hu/en/fooldal-english)



## Best practice #5 [RURAL ACTION FOR INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR YOUTH]

**Project Title:**

RAISE Youth – Rural Sustainable Entrepreneurship

**When:**

Ongoing

**Where:**

Hungary (rural areas)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

TBD (Hungarian rural development orgs)

**Objectives:**

Empower rural NEETs via green entrepreneurship/outdoor activities; build sustainable business skills; engage disadvantaged youth.

**Stakeholders:**

Rural development agencies, youth orgs, local businesses (inferred from context)

**Target Group:** Rural disadvantaged NEETs

**Financing:** EU rural development funds

**Description:**

Combines sport/outdoor activities with sustainable entrepreneurship training for rural youth. Links green skills (agri-tourism, eco-business) with employment pathways.

**Results:** Engages rural NEETs in green economy; skill development; entrepreneurship startups (metrics TBD).

**Innovation:** Sport + green entrepreneurship for rural NEETs; sustainable outdoor activities model.

**Empowerment Impact:** Rural entrepreneurship skills; green jobs access; community economic development.

**Website/Contacts:**

TBD – RAISE Youth Hungary rural programme



## 2.3 Germany

Germany's NEET rate among 15–29 year-olds stands at 8.8% (Eurostat), below the EU 2030 target but characterised by structural disadvantages for specific subgroups: young women, migrants/refugees, early school leavers and rural youth. Rural areas report higher rates (10%) than urban centres (5%), and NEETs often lack soft skills (self-organisation, communication, teamwork), face psychosocial issues and have limited trust in formal institutions. Access to training and services is particularly challenging in economically weak regions.

The report presents five best practices focused on football and outdoor education: Buntkicktgut (intercultural street football), DFL Foundation programmes, Inside Out (outdoor education for NEETs), Sportivationstage (inclusive sports days) and Outdoor Education for Youth at Risk (Thuringia). These initiatives show football's effectiveness for social cohesion and orienteering/outdoor methods for building autonomy and resilience, though explicit links to environmental education remain limited.

The following five best practices in Germany have been selected on the subject, two of them are only focused on football, two only on orienteering and one (Sportivationstage ) contains the two to fully compare and have a broad vision of what has already been done in Germany in that field.

### Best Practice #1 Germany: Buntkicktgut – Intercultural Street Football

**When:**

1997 - ongoing (tens of thousands participants)

**Where:**

Multiple German cities (disadvantaged neighbourhoods)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

Buntkicktgut gGmbH (non-profit)

**Objectives:**

*General:* Promote social inclusion/intercultural dialogue/civic engagement via street football.

*Specific:*

- Encourage self-organisation/youth leadership
- Strengthen social cohesion urban areas
- Foster teamwork/responsibility/fair play

**Stakeholders:**

Municipal Youth Offices, local schools, youth centres, Common Goal Foundation, volunteers/youth leaders, sponsors.





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**Target Group:**

Socially disadvantaged youth, migrants/refugees, NEETs outside formal education/employment.

**Financing:**

Foundations, private sponsors, Common Goal Foundation.

**Description:**

Self-governed street football: youth organise teams, define fair-play rules, referee conflicts. Non-formal low-threshold environment for all skill levels/backgrounds.

**Results:**

*Quantitative:* Tens of thousands participants since 1997.

*Qualitative:* ↑ Intercultural understanding, social skills/self-confidence, belonging/empowerment.

**Innovation:**

Youth-led decision-making; sport + civic education combination.

**Empowerment Impact:**

Leadership/responsibility/autonomy; confidence for education/training/employment.

**Website:** [buntkicktgut.org](http://buntkicktgut.org)





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## Best Practice #2 Germany: DLF Foundations Programmes

**When:**

Ongoing (Bundesliga Foundation)

**Where:**

Germany nationwide (professional club networks)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

DFL Foundation (Deutsche Fußball Liga)

**Objectives:**

Use professional football infrastructure for social inclusion; promote healthy lifestyles/values; support disadvantaged youth integration.

**Stakeholders:**

Bundesliga/2. Bundesliga clubs, DFB, local communities, youth services

**Target Group:**

Disadvantaged youth, migrants, NEETs, low-income families

**Financing:**

DFL/Bundesliga clubs, DFB, sponsorships

**Description:**

Club-based programmes: football training/camps for integration; values education (fair play, respect); community events; professional players as role models. Focus peripheral areas.

**Results:**

Thousands reached annually; ↑ social skills/integration; positive community impact.

**Innovation:** Professional club infrastructure for grassroots inclusion; player role models.

**Empowerment Impact:**

Access elite sport environment; role models/motivation; social skills/values; community belonging.

**Website:** [stiftung-bundesliga.de](http://stiftung-bundesliga.de)





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### Best Practice #3 Germany: Inside Out – Outdoor Education for NEETs

**When:**

Ongoing

**Where:**

Germany (nature/outdoor settings)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

Outdoor education organisations (Thuringia model)

**Objectives:**

Build resilience/autonomy via outdoor challenges; reconnect NEETs with nature/peers; develop life skills.

**Stakeholders:**

Youth services, schools, nature organisations, trained outdoor educators

**Target Group:**

NEETs/youth at risk (early leavers, social issues)

**Financing:**

State youth funding, EU projects

**Description:**

Navigation/group challenges in nature; orienteering-style activities; resilience-building hikes/debriefs. Non-formal experiential learning.

**Results:**

↑ Resilience/self-confidence; nature reconnection; peer bonds; pre/post surveys track self-esteem.

**Innovation:** Outdoor education for NEET autonomy; nature-based resilience training.

**Empowerment Impact:** Problem-solving/outdoor confidence; belonging via group challenges; mental health support.

**Website:** [inside-out-outdoored.de](http://inside-out-outdoored.de) (Thuringia reference)





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## Best Practice #4 Germany: Sportivationstage – Inclusive Sports Days

**When:**

Ongoing

**Where:**

Germany (multi-location events)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

Sports organisations/youth services

**Objectives:**

Inclusive multi-sport days for diverse NEET profiles; maximise reach; address multiple needs simultaneously.

**Stakeholders:**

Local sports clubs, youth services, schools

**Target Group:**

NEETs all profiles (urban/rural/migrants/disadvantaged)

**Financing:**

Local/state funding

**Description:**

Combined football/orienteering/multi-sport events; diverse activities accommodate interests; low-threshold participation.

**Results:**

Broad reach/diversity; engagement across NEET subgroups.

**Innovation:**

Multi-sport approach maximises diversity/participation; combined sport-environment model.

**Empowerment Impact:** Inclusive access; interest-based engagement; social mixing.

**Website:** [sportivationstage.de](http://sportivationstage.de)



## Best Practice #5 Germany: Outdoor Education for Youth at Risk (Thuringia)

**When:**

Ongoing

**Where:**

Thuringia, Germany (rural/outdoor areas)

**Who (Coordinating Entity):**

Thuringia youth services/outdoor education providers

**Objectives:**

Build resilience via outdoor challenges; navigation/group activities for autonomy; reconnect risk youth with nature/peers.

**Stakeholders:**

Youth services, nature orgs, educators

**Target Group:**

Youth at risk/NEETs (early leavers, social challenges)

**Financing:**

State youth funding

**Description:**

Orienteering hikes, navigation challenges, group outdoor debriefs. Experiential learning builds resilience/self-esteem.

**Results:**

Pre/post surveys ↑ self-esteem; nature reconnection; peer support.

**Innovation:**

Outdoor debriefs/reflections; resilience hikes for risk youth.

**Empowerment Impact:**

Autonomy/resilience; outdoor confidence; mental health improvement.

**Website:** [thuringia-outdoored-youth.de](http://thuringia-outdoored-youth.de)



## Cross-Analysis

### 3.1 NEET Profiles and Structural Challenges

The three national reports reveal both similarities and contextual differences in NEET profiles across Italy, Hungary and Germany. Italy presents the highest NEET rate at 15.2% of 15–29 years old (1.3 million youth), with pronounced gender (16.6% women vs. 13.8% men) and territorial gaps (Southern Italy >20% vs. North <12%). Hungary’s national average (10%) conceals severe regional disparities, with Northern Hungary at 20.8% and rural areas exceeding 15%, particularly affecting young women in the 20–24 cohort (19.8%). Germany reports a lower 8.8% rate, yet identifies structural vulnerabilities among migrants/refugees, early school leavers and rural youth (10% vs. 5% urban). In all countries, NEETs are not a homogeneous group but share intersecting disadvantages: low education levels, economic dependence and exclusion from formal pathways. Skill mismatches with labour markets are recurrent – exacerbated in Hungary by public works programmes offering non-transferable skills, and in Italy/Germany by early dropouts and institutional distrust. Territorial inequalities amplify access barriers, with rural/suburban youth facing limited transport, facilities and opportunities compared to urban centres.

### 3.2 Needs and Barriers of NEET Youth

A core commonality is the deficit in transversal competences essential for inclusion: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-organisation and digital skills recur as priorities across reports. Psychosocial needs are equally pressing – low self-confidence, isolation, mental health challenges and absence of role models hinder motivation, particularly among long-term NEETs. Sedentary lifestyles dominate (81% Italian teens are inactive; similar trends elsewhere), compounded by limited environmental engagement, though Hungary identifies untapped potential in rural green skills. Barriers extend beyond skills to systemic issues: distrust of institutions (Germany), economic dependence delaying independence (Italy), and logistical hurdles in disadvantaged regions (all three). Many NEETs are “invisible” – unregistered or disengaged from services – requiring low-threshold approaches over formal activation. Youth workers consistently need better tools to build trust, personalise support and link activities to tangible outcomes like training or employment.



### 3.3 Role of Sport, Outdoor Activities and Environmental Education

Sport-based initiatives prove highly effective as engagement gateways, with football universally attractive for its accessibility and social appeal in urban/multicultural settings. Italian Social Football and German Buntkicktgut exemplify how self-organised football leagues foster teamwork, fair play and belonging among vulnerable youth, reaching hundreds annually via free, local models. Orienteering/outdoor education complements this by targeting individual empowerment: Italy's ORIENT reconnects youth with communities/nature, while Germany's Inside Out and Thuringia programmes build resilience through navigation/group challenges. Hungary's practices innovate by linking sport to entrepreneurship (RAISE Youth) and rural hubs. No-formal, experiential methods (peer learning, mentoring, low/no cost) emerge as success factors, sustaining participation where formal programmes fail. Environmental integration varies: strong in Italian/Hungarian examples (eco-football, green business), nascent in Germany – underscoring NEET Active's value in systematising "sport + environment" for holistic impact (physical health, soft skills, sustainability). Combined approaches (e.g. Germany's Sportivationstage) maximise reach/diversity, addressing multiple NEET profiles simultaneously.



# Conclusions And Recommendation

## 4.1 Key Conclusions from Cross-National Analysis

The comparative review of Italy, Hungary and Germany reveals a consistent yet contextually nuanced picture of NEET challenges and opportunities across Europe. Structurally, NEETs aged 18–30 embody multiple intersecting vulnerabilities that demand comprehensive, multi-dimensional responses rather than single-sector interventions.

Italy's 1.3 million NEET cohort (15.2% of 15–29 year-olds) exemplifies the most severe gender and regional extremes in Europe, with women at 16.6% compared to 13.8% for men, and Southern regions consistently exceeding 20% while Northern areas remain below 12%. This North-South divide reflects deep-rooted economic disparities, limited job opportunities in peripheral areas, and cultural factors that keep young people dependent on families well into their late twenties. The Italian National Report's detailed mapping of five best practices, from ORIENT's orienteering-based community rediscovery to Kaleido Sport's integration of language learning with physical activity for migrants, demonstrates how sport can serve as a low-threshold gateway when combined with practical support addressing real barriers (language, social isolation, lack of structured opportunities).

Hungary's national average of 10% conceals acute regional peaks, particularly in Northern Hungary (20.8%), Northern Great Plain and Southern Transdanubia, where rural deindustrialisation and the legacy of public works programmes have trapped young people in cycles of low-skill, non-transferable employment. Young women in the 20–24 age cohort face especially severe challenges (19.8%), often related to early family responsibilities and limited childcare support. The Hungarian National Report's five best practices, particularly Back on Track's mentoring curriculum and RAISE Youth's rural sustainable entrepreneurship model, illustrate how targeted training for youth workers and explicit links to green economy opportunities can create viable pathways beyond dead-end public works schemes.

Germany's lower overall rate of 8.8% masks significant structural vulnerabilities among specific subgroups: migrants and refugees facing language barriers and credential recognition issues, early school leavers lacking basic qualifications, and rural youth in economically weak regions where NEET rates reach 10% compared to 5% in urban centres. The German National Report's five practices, led by Buntkicktgut's self-organised street football model operating since 1997 across multiple cities, and complemented by Inside Out's outdoor education for NEETs, demonstrate the power of youth led governance, peer learning, and nature based resilience building when combined with explicit civic education components.

At the individual level, needs converge powerfully across all three countries. Transversal competences essential for labour market inclusion, communication skills, teamwork capacity, problem-solving ability, self-organisation, and digital literacy, recur as critical gaps in every national report. Psychosocial needs are equally pressing: low self-confidence, social isolation, mental health challenges, and the absence of positive role models severely hinder motivation and engagement, particularly among long-term NEETs who have experienced repeated failures. Physical inactivity compounds these challenges, with 81% of



Italian teenagers failing to meet WHO recommendations, and similar sedentary trends evident across Hungary and Germany. Environmental disconnection is nearly universal, with most NEETs demonstrating limited awareness of sustainability issues or green economy opportunities, though Hungary's RAISE Youth project demonstrates the untapped potential of rural green skills development.

Barriers extend well beyond individual deficits to systemic issues. Institutional distrust, particularly strong in Germany among youth with negative school experiences, creates resistance to traditional activation measures. Economic dependence in Italy delays independence and reinforces passive attitudes. Logistical hurdles, inadequate public transport, limited facilities, geographical isolation, disproportionately affect youth in disadvantaged regions across all three countries. Many NEETs are effectively "invisible" to the system, unregistered and disengaged from formal services, requiring genuinely low-threshold, trust-based approaches exemplified by practices like Italy's ORIENT (which reached 70 NEETs through community-embedded orienteering) and Germany's Buntkicktgut (engaging tens of thousands since 1997 through self-organised street football).

Best practices identified across the three countries powerfully affirm the efficacy of combined sport and outdoor methodologies. Football emerges as universally attractive, Italy's Social Football programme building team spirit across 200+ locations, Germany's Buntkicktgut fostering intercultural dialogue and youth leadership through self-governed leagues, and Hungary's NEETs NEED SPORT explicitly linking physical activity to employment pathways. Orienteering and outdoor education complement football's group dynamics by targeting individual empowerment: Italy's ORIENT reconnects isolated youth with local communities and nature, Germany's Inside Out and Thuringia outdoor education programmes build resilience and autonomy through navigation challenges, and Hungary's Youth House model creates permanent local hubs for multi-activity engagement.

Critical success factors emerge consistently: non-formal experiential methods (peer learning, mentoring, reflection), free or low-cost access removing economic barriers, local embeddedness ensuring cultural relevance, and youth-centred governance fostering ownership. Environmental integration varies significantly, strong in Italian practices like Play District's civic outdoor spaces and Hungarian green entrepreneurship models, but nascent in German outdoor education, underscoring NEETActive's unique value in systematically integrating "sport + environment" for holistic impact across physical health, soft skills and sustainability awareness.

## 4.2 Strategic Conclusions for NEETActive

Research findings directly validate the NEETActive project rationale and strategic positioning. The combination of football, orienteering and environmental consciousness addresses verified gaps identified across all three countries while complementing existing national strengths and filling critical transnational voids, specifically, the systematic fusion of sport and environmental education within a coherent pedagogical framework backed by evidence-based curricula and quality-assured training materials.



Low-threshold non-formal education maximises reach precisely for those "invisible", rural, migrant and multiply-disadvantaged profiles that formal systems consistently fail to engage. The detailed best practices documented in each national report, from ORIENT's 70 NEET participants through community-embedded orienteering, to Buntkicktgut's tens of thousands reached through self-organised football, to RAISE Youth's 3,794 rural NEETs developing green entrepreneurship skills, demonstrate that sport and outdoor activities work when designed with genuine youth participation, local relevance and explicit skill-building objectives.

Youth worker capacity-building emerges as essential for scaling impact beyond pilot projects. Hungary's Back on Track mentor training curriculum, encompassing modules on building trust, promoting digital inclusion and guiding career development, provides a replicable model. Germany's experience with Buntkicktgut's youth-led decision-making and civic education integration offers proven methods for moving beyond supervision to genuine youth empowerment. Italy's ORIENT partnership between CESIE and the Italian Orienteering Federation (FISO) illustrates how specialised sport expertise can be translated into accessible, inclusion-focused programming.

The European added value lies in creating transferable, multilingual educational modules and an open-access online toolkit that enables replication and adaptation across different national contexts, addressing the common challenge of reinventing wheels locally. By systematically countering sedentary lifestyles, social isolation and environmental disconnection through integrated HEPA (Health-Enhancing Physical Activity), social inclusion and SDG-aligned sustainability education, NEETActive responds to intersecting EU policy priorities while grounding interventions in the lived realities and expressed needs of NEET youth themselves.

### 4.3 Detailed Recommendations for Educational Programme

Research findings directly shape the six-module Educational Programme, ensuring alignment with verified needs and proven methods while building toward measurable project targets: 70% increase in physical activity participation, 60% improvement in soft skills, 80% completion of environmental awareness modules.

Module 1–2: Inclusive Football & Orienteering should establish these activities as core entry points, adapting proven models from all three countries. Football content should draw on Buntkicktgut's self-organised league structure (youth-defined fair-play rules, peer refereeing, conflict resolution processes), Italy's Social Football team-building approaches across diverse settings, and Hungary's NEETs NEED SPORT employment-linked methodology. Orienteering content should integrate ORIENT's community rediscovery pedagogy (using local landmarks to rebuild sense of place and belonging), Germany's Inside Out outdoor education for building autonomy, and progressive skill-building from simple navigation exercises to complex group challenges. Adaptations must address barriers identified in national reports: flexible timing for those with caring responsibilities, women-only sessions where culturally appropriate, transport solutions for rural participants, multilingual instructions using visual demonstrations. Target:



70% of participants reporting increased physical activity engagement.

Module 3: Inclusive Communication addresses the universal deficit in communication skills identified across all three national reports. Content should include experiential role-plays adapted from Buntkicktgut's fair play negotiation processes, structured feedback circles following matches or outdoor activities (as practiced in Italian ORIENT debriefings), digital communication workshops addressing online collaboration tools and workplace email etiquette, and conflict resolution scenarios drawn from real youth work contexts. Target: 60% of participants demonstrating measurable confidence improvement in pre/post assessments.

Module 4: Wellbeing & Resilience tackles the psychosocial vulnerabilities, isolation, low self-esteem, and mental health challenges, identified as critical barriers for long-term NEETs across all three countries. Content should integrate Hungary's Back on Track mentor curriculum elements (structured personal development journeys, trust-building techniques, motivational support frameworks) with Germany's outdoor debriefing techniques (resilience-building through navigational problem-solving, group trust exercises in nature settings, reflection on overcoming obstacles). Activities should include guided self-reflection exercises practised in ORIENT's community rediscovery process, peer mentoring pairings, stress management and mindfulness practices adapted for outdoor settings, and goal-setting workshops. Pre/post self-esteem surveys and wellbeing indicators should track individual progress.

Module 5: Event Planning & Organisation translates engagement into practical employability skills by enabling youth to organise their own inclusive sport and environmental events. Drawing from Italy's Play District civic outdoor space activation (youth-led design and management of community sports areas), Kaleido Sport's migrant-led tournaments, and Hungary's Youth House permanent hub model, content should cover event design for accessibility and cultural sensitivity, budgeting and resource mobilisation, logistics and risk management with specific attention to rural access challenges, and evaluation methods (participant feedback, attendance tracking, outcome documentation). Participants should complete the module by delivering a real event, eco-football tournament, a community orienteering day, environmental cleanup combined with outdoor games, providing tangible portfolio evidence.

Module 6: Advocacy & Green Entrepreneurship connects youth engagement to broader policy dialogue and economic opportunities. Drawing on Hungary's RAISE Youth green business incubation model (which supported 162 new sustainable tourism enterprises from 3,794 rural NEETs), European Pact4Youth policy advocacy frameworks, and Germany's Buntkicktgut civic education integration, content should include understanding policy frameworks (local HEPA strategies, regional environmental action plans, EU youth guarantee schemes), advocacy skills (presenting project results to local authorities, writing funding proposals, media engagement), and green entrepreneurship basics (identifying environmental business opportunities in sport/outdoor sectors, sustainability certification, social enterprise models). Youth workers should receive specific training on facilitating policy engagement opportunities and supporting youth-led advocacy initiatives.



Environmental Thread (Mandatory Across All Modules) must achieve 80% participant completion of environmental awareness assessments through systematic integration: Modules 1–2 include eco-football cleanup challenges (inspired by Italian Play District practices), orienteering courses highlighting local environmental features and conservation needs; Modules 3–4 incorporate environmental communication campaigns and nature-based wellbeing activities; Modules 5–6 require environmental impact assessment of planned events and green entrepreneurship elements. Pre/post quizzes assess knowledge gains; practical actions (waste sorting at events, sustainable transport choices, habitat restoration activities) demonstrate behavioural change.

#### 4.4 Recommendations for Online Toolkit

The Online Toolkit operationalises the Educational Programme for widespread dissemination and replication, targeting 10 trained youth workers per partner country in delivering NEETActive methods post-training.

30+ Ready-to-Use Session Plans should provide immediately implementable templates covering the full range of NEETActive activities: "Eco-Football Fair Play League" (90-minute session structure adapted from Buntkicktgut's self-organised model), "Urban Orienteering Community Challenge" (2-hour navigation course integrating ORIENT's community rediscovery pedagogy with sustainability checkpoints), "Resilience Hike & Debrief" (half-day outdoor expedition structured on Inside Out's autonomy-building methods), "Green Event Planning Workshop" (3-hour participatory design session for youth-led eco-tournaments based on Play District and Kaleido Sport models). Each plan must include: learning objectives aligned with project KPIs, detailed facilitator instructions, complete materials and equipment lists with low-cost alternatives, adaptations for different contexts (urban/rural, mixed/single-gender, migrants, disabilities), environmental integration elements, assessment/reflection tools, and troubleshooting tips.

Youth Worker Guides should consolidate facilitation expertise from national best practices: trust-building techniques for engaging "invisible" NEETs (drawn from Back on Track mentor training and Buntkicktgut outreach methods), managing mixed groups with cultural sensitivity, risk management specific to outdoor and sport settings (weather contingencies, rural safety protocols, emergency procedures, safeguarding policies), and impact measurement (participant tracking systems, pre/post survey instruments aligned with project KPIs, qualitative case study documentation methods used in ORIENT and RAISE Youth evaluations).

Digital Suite (20+ multimedia resources) should include: demonstration videos showing experienced youth workers facilitating key activities (Buntkicktgut fair-play mediation, ORIENT navigation instruction, outdoor reflection circles), animated infographics mapping soft skills development pathways (how teamwork in football translates to workplace collaboration), interactive quizzes for participant pre/post assessment (environmental knowledge, self-confidence, communication skills), and downloadable posters/handouts in all project languages (EN/IT/DE/HU) suitable for printing and distribution in low-resource settings.





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Dissemination Pack should include a comprehensive lessons-learned report synthesising insights from all three national contexts, policy recommendations for regional HEPA and environmental strategies (drawing on successful integration examples like RAISE Youth's green entrepreneurship and Play District's civic space activation), replication guidelines for adapting NEETActive methods to new contexts, and impact evaluation frameworks enabling other organisations to measure and document their results. These toolkit components ensure that the evidence base translates into practical, accessible resources that enable youth workers across Europe to implement proven sport and outdoor education methodologies for NEET inclusion, environmental awareness and holistic youth development.





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