



EASI - EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION PROGRAMME

COPE – CAPABILITIES, OPPORTUNITIES, PLACES AND ENGAGEMENT: APPROACH FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION OF DIFFICULT TO REACH YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH A “RELATIONAL PROXIMITY” COMMUNITY NETWORK

INNOVATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Applying a relational proximity network technique to a new target group (NEETS)

SCALE AND TYPE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

INCREMENTAL AND SERVICE INNOVATION

CALL NAME

Establishing and testing integrated interventions aimed at supporting people in (the most) vulnerable situations

COUNTRY

Italy

POLICY AREAS

Youth Employment
Combat long-term unemployment
Fight against poverty and social exclusion
Promotion of a high level of quality and sustainable employment
Guarantee adequate and decent social protection
Combat discrimination

TARGET GROUPS

National, regional and local authorities
Employment services

COORDINATOR

Provincia Autonoma di Trento

EU CONTRIBUTION

€ 798,692 (80% of the total costs)

TOTAL COSTS

€ 998,365 (estimation)

DURATION

January 2021 - December 2023

SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

Vulnerable youngsters and young adults, aged between 15 and 29 that are not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) were identified as the target for this holistic approach based on relational proximity. Different factors, spanning from lack of involvement, cognitive deficiencies, mental sub-threshold and full-blown symptoms, to a decline in interpersonal functioning have all been shown to make it difficult for NEETs to access employment.

The COPE project has two main objectives: the implementation of an integrated intervention for social inclusion of these difficult-to-reach young people based on an innovative and experimental “relational proximity” approach, and the evaluation of how this intervention can add value and be integrated into the current design of NEET employment and social services.

The project is scheduled to conduct two investigations in Italy (Trento) and Portugal (Lisbon). It will provide 600 NEETs, including those young people who are disengaged and unavailable, with a comprehensive variety of services. The project uses a realistic evaluation methodology which not only assess individual social, health and community results, but also investigates the settings and mechanisms that drive the intervention in order to determine its long-term viability and scalability.

Keywords: vulnerable youngsters and young adults; relational proximity; social inclusion; community network

With groups of extremely disadvantaged people, the proportion of young NEETs in the EU ranged from 7.3 percent in Sweden to 27.8 percent in Italy in 2019. According to academic research, NEETs’ issues stem mostly from a lack of involvement, cognitive deficiencies, psychiatric sub-threshold and full-blown symptoms, and a loss in interpersonal functioning. As a consequence of a combination of reasons such as lifestyle, low mental well-being, lack of access to social and community networks, and overall socio-economic, cultural, and environmental problems in the country context, NEETs often isolate themselves from the labour market. COPE aims to empower them through a holistic approach based on relational proximity.

“The approach is based on social prescribing and activation of local community networks around disadvantaged people, in two pilot countries Italy and Portugal.”

OBJECTIVES

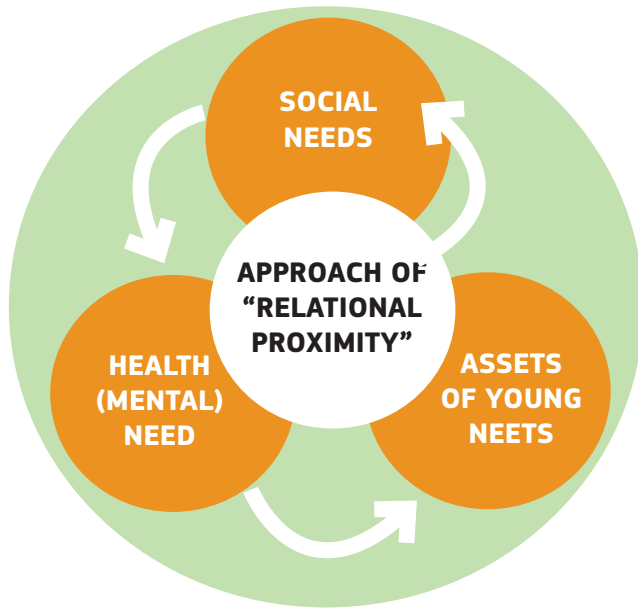
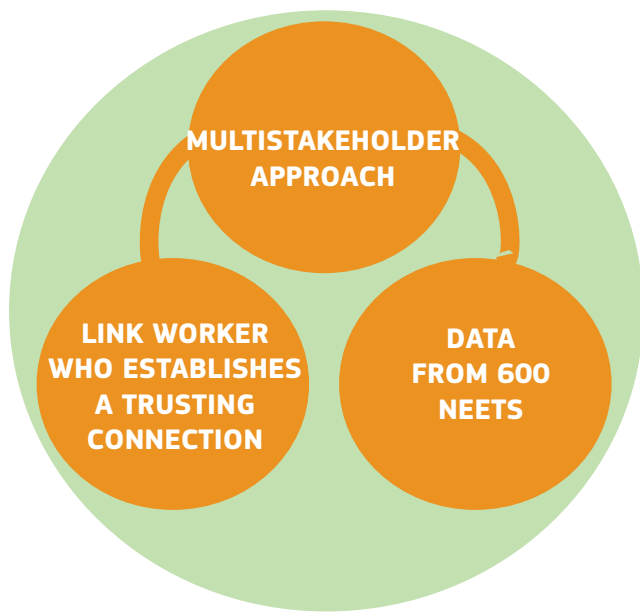
01

- Implement an intervention based on the “relational proximity” community network approach for social inclusion

02

- Evaluate how the intervention may add value and can be integrated into the way employment and social services are currently designed and implemented for NEETs in target groups.

CONTEXT AND NEEDS



The suggested approach of “relational proximity” would be used to handle the need variables concurrently throughout the project. The strategy is centred on the social and health needs – notably mental health needs – and assets of young NEETs, and it is created and supported through a multistakeholder approach.

The network formed through “relational proximity” is accessible with the help of a link worker who establishes a trusting connection with each young NEET. The link worker will assess needs and co-produce with the user a flexible social inclusion plan according to social prescribing practice. The plan will be implemented and monitored within the boundaries of the relational proximity community network.

The outcome evaluation will use the data collected by the employed link workers from at least 600 referred NEETs at the initial stage and follow-up data from at least 380 users in the six-month follow-up period.

RESULTS

The project has only begun in 2022, and the majority of its consequences are yet unknown. The project team intend to use a mixed-methods approach to track and assess the initiative’s impact. The method will emphasise the need of analysing results, not only at the individual level, but also comprehending the environment and mechanisms that drive the intervention’s implementation. The outcomes of the evaluation will be used to determine the project’s long-term viability and scalability.

“NEETs are the project’s target because young adults empowerment is key for social inclusion in southern Europe. Testing an innovative approach for social and occupational inclusion is the aim of C.O.P.E. project”

“The project intends to address the employment needs of NEETS as well as their needs related to psychological and social welfare.”

“The project intends to test an intervention based on social prescribing and rational proximity networks on target of NEETS which had not been explored before.”



CAPABILITIES, OPPORTUNITIES, PLACES AND ENGAGEMENT

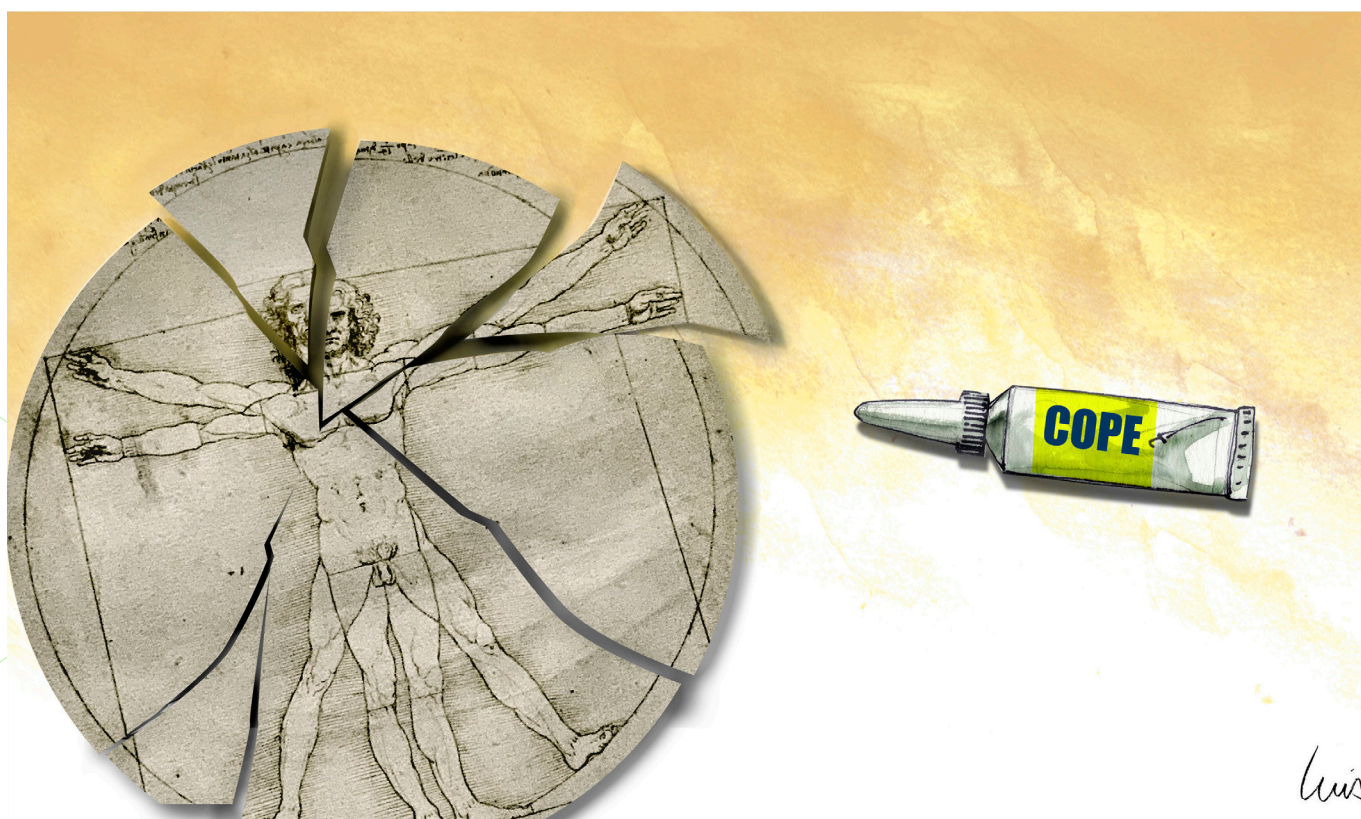
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The intervention's key novel feature is that it applies the relational proximity network technique to a new target group (NEETS), which had never been studied before adopting the intervention model foreseen in the project.

In terms of concept, the project represents not only a new service at the individual level, but also a new method of collaborating between institutions and all other informal entities and resources that exist in the target nations' communities.

TRANSFERABILITY AND UPSCALING

The project team are considering scaling up and adapting the study's outcomes to two other national settings in Italy and Portugal. They plan to expand the regional initiative and gain access to more places where the method may be evaluated further. The project team have been working on an operational design for the intervention's transmission through the cooperation of local stakeholders in both countries as of early 2022 (e.g. recruiting workers for interactions with NEETs).



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PROJECT CANVA



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