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# Scoping paper

## Non-formal learning methods in VET-schools

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## Clue to inclusion partners



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### ABBREVIATIONS

### SOURCES

Note: The information gathered in this document (IO1 Scoping Paper) has been collected by the project partners throughout the CLUE2 Inclusion project. There are two more Intellectual Outputs: research article “Towards a new paradigm in learning – a synthesis of non-formal, formal and informal learning processes” (IO2) and “Handbook short term group ESC” (IO3)

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## SUMMARY

### CLUE2 Inclusion: Bridging the gap between formal and non-formal learning.

1. In this Strategic Partnership we have analysed the potential of non-formal learning (NFL) methods used in youth work and how to implement these methods in Vocational Education and Training (VET-schools) as a supplement to formal education. NFL as a method is also called experienced based learning (“learning by doing”), and demands active and voluntarily participation from the learner.
2. Using non-formal learning methods, particular attention is given to the needs and interests of the learner. Especially students at risk of early school leaving and other young people with fewer opportunities benefit from non-formal learning, because of the individual approach.
3. This Scoping Paper shows the potential and many positive results of the use of non-formal learning methods in VET-schools. During the project we identified different methods that have been used by project partners:  
Group Volunteering (ESC/EVS) projects at VET-schools with teachers or through collaboration with NGO’s, individual EVS, volunteering locally, trainings and placements, reflection workshops, campus instructors, the Scrum method, conflict management workshops with trainers from NGO’s and student involvement.
4. Research shows that it is possible and desirable with non-formal learning methods as a supplement in formal learning environments like VET-schools, both from the viewpoint of students, school management and NGO’s.
5. Partners have been looking into NFL recognition and result measurement tools, and especially the already designed Open Badges seem to be a useful method implementing for example a NFL method like Group EVS into VET-schools.
6. Regarding the aim of prevention of early school leaving, we have looked at the experiences with different NFL projects and models carried out at our schools. Research shows that these activities received mostly positive feedback from the students. They recommend our schools to continue with non-formal learning in VET-education, but more research is needed to gather proof and draw the final conclusion that these measures help preventing early school leaving.
7. Where there's a will there's a way. Our project shows that in a relatively short time span, many good NFL activities can be carried out in VET schools. A good plan and a cooperation agreement between the school and NFL partners will smooth the road!

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## **CHAPTER 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1. Introduction**

CLUE2 Inclusion is a Strategic Partnership – Innovation project, financed through the Erasmus+ programme - Youth. It is a 14 months project (September 2018 – October 2019 ), with eight partners from the following four European countries:

Norway: Hordaland County Council (Lead partner), Årstad Upper Secondary School (Årstad VGS), Nordland Research Institute; Finland: Salpaus Further Education, Allianssi Youth Exchanges, Spain: Silla municipality, Amis de la Biblioteca Fonteta; The Netherlands: Bloom Foundation, 2 associated VET schools.

### **2. Project description**

In this 14 months project CLUE2 Inclusion (C2I), the eight partners want to reveal the potential of non-formal learning (NFL) methods to prevent early school leaving and to look into how to implement NFL in VET-schools, a formal learning (FL) environment. In short: we want to bridge the gap between formal education and non-formal education.

Our target group is upper secondary students at risk of early school leaving, most of them in the age group of 16-21 yrs. Statistically the figures of early school leaving are very high in our countries, especially at VET schools, and there is an urgent need to think differently and innovative. The NFL partners have long experiences with the use of non-formal learning methods in their work with early school leavers and other youth with fewer opportunities, and we want to transfer best practices and experiences to VET schools/providers and vice versa.

### **4. Objectives of the project**

The long-term objective of the project is to prevent early school leaving. Our short-term project aim is to analyse the potential of non-formal learning methods in VET schools. We want to develop one or more practical models to implement NFL projects as part of the regular school system, in addition to designing a tool to support the learning process and to measure the learning outcomes for students and their schools. In this project, we will take especially a good look at Erasmus+ project types, like European Solidarity Corps/European Voluntary Service and Group Exchanges, but also other non-formal learning methods will be of interest. Through our own network and desktop research, we will search for theories and best practice on using non-formal learning at upper secondary schools, as part of the regular school system. Interviews with students, teachers and other stakeholders will provide us knowledge about the needs in VET schools. The desktop research and interviews will result in an article, published in International Journal of Educational Research, Nordic Studies in Education or Nordic Journal of Pedagogy and Critique.

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## **CHAPTER 2: THE CHALLENGE: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING AT VET-SCHOOLS**

### **2.1 Early school leaving in Europe**

Fighting high numbers of early school leaving is one of the most urgent tasks for European governments, specifically mentioned in Part A of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide: “Too many young people leave school prematurely running a high risk of being unemployed and socially marginalised.” (Erasmus+ Programme Guide - Part A)

Early school leaving is an obstacle to economic growth and employment. It hampers productivity and competitiveness, and even worse: it fuels poverty and social exclusion. Young people who leave education and training prematurely are bound to lack skills and qualifications. They face a higher risk of unemployment, social exclusion and poverty.

Young people with a migrant background face a higher risk of leaving school early. The recent steep rise in the inflow of refugees and migrants has heightened the challenge of integrating pupils from a migrant background and so helping them to acquire the necessary skills and competences.

The Europe 2020 strategy has set the goal of reducing the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds leaving education and training early to below 10%.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-semester\\_thematic-factsheet\\_early-school-leavers\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_early-school-leavers_en_0.pdf)

### **2.2 Reasons for early school leaving**

There are many reasons why some young people give up education and training prematurely: personal or family problems, learning difficulties, mental health issues or a fragile socio-economic situation. The way the education system is set up, school climate, teacher-pupil relations and lack of motivation are also important factors.

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/school/early-school-leaving\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/school/early-school-leaving_en)

Since there are often complex, interconnected reasons for children not completing secondary schooling, policies to reduce early school leaving have been addressing a range of issues and combine education and social policy, youth work and health-related aspects.

In the following chapter, we will sum up some of the concrete actions taken in the VET schools in this partnership.

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## 2.3 Concrete actions taken by our partner VET-schools

What concrete actions have the VET-schools/providers in our Strategic Partnership taken to prevent early school leaving?

### **Educational measures**

The VET-schools/providers have worked on the improvement of the teaching in general, through the organising of teacher teams, and making the teaching more relevant to the working life. Some schools increased the resources for extra-curricular teaching and others offer the possibility to study in workshops. For example, the Lahti youth services in Finland organises workshops for young people, where also part of vocational qualifications maybe completed in cooperation with the vocational institute, Salpaus Further Education. <https://www.tpy.fi/jarjesto/briefly-in-english/>, also info on pdf on Workshop as a learning environment. Specific training on strengthening social skills is also key to prevent early school leaving.

### **Strengthening the school advisory team**

The schools have invested resources into strengthening the school advisory team. The formal curricula is complemented by a support system, to adjust to the needs and individual challenges of the students. The advisers have multidisciplinary competences in coaching and counselling young people with immigrant background, psychological challenges, students at risk of early school leaving, etc. Some schools have given contact teachers more time to follow up on the individual class students. Årstad vgs in Norway has employed three social workers, who work in the grey zone between the school and life outside school.

### **Helpers from outside the school:**

Schools can easily get help of a multidisciplinary care advice team, which gives support if needed: social workers, orthopedagog, debt counsellors, resistance fund, support suitable education, local police, etc (called ZAT in the Netherlands).

At some VET-schools, youth workers, social workers and sport club trainers are working with the students on a regular basis. In Finland, there are professional, educated youth workers in some VET schools who do the same work inside the school as other youth workers in youth clubs or in outreach youth work, ex Varia

<https://sivistysvantaa.fi/nuortenvantaa/artikkelit/tukeajaapua/erityis-jaliikkuvanuurisotyo/erityisnuorisotyovariassa.html>, KSAO

<https://www.nuortenkouvola.fi/koulu-ja-tyo/koulunuorisotyo/> and Tavastia:

<https://www.kktavastia.fi/ammattiopisto-tavastia/opiskelijalle/opiskelijatoiminta/>.

### **Special focus on transitions**

In Spain students usually go to secondary school after elementary school. In order to have a better and secure transition, teachers of both (primary and secondary) levels should plan meetings before the start of the academic year, to talk about children specific needs.

The guidance department of the high school is in charge of the special cases ones the school year has started and where more help is needed.

In Norway, all students have to go to a new school from lower secondary education to upper

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secondary education. Experts advise that there should be better communication between these schools in order to prevent early school leaving. Increased resources are also put in to secure the transition from school to apprenticeship, through employing an adviser who helps the students with this.

### **Special focus on mental health issues**

The topic of student mental health is a burning issue in all countries. Investing in wellbeing of young people is investing in prevention of early school leaving. “Promoting and strengthening mental health and students’ study ability are solutions that aim to ensure the work ability of our future workforce”. From: Finnish Procedural Plan for Promoting Youth’s and Students’ Mental Health “Solutions for Future Work Ability”: <https://www.nyyti.fi/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Procedural-plan-for-promoting-mental-health-eng.pdf>

### **Free breakfast in the morning**

Koulutuskeskus Salpaus in Finland offers free porridge to all students as well to members of the staff every school morning. The purpose of the morning porridge is to bring people of Salpaus at the same table and of course to provide a good start to the day. Morning Porridge aims to increase well-being at work and in the community.

Årstad vgs in Norway has similar experiences. Around 100-140 students eat free breakfast every school day. It improves not only their concentration ability in the classroom, but it is also a good learning opportunity. The school canteen uses proper cutlery, they learn to clean up afterwards and it is very much a socializing activity. Entire classes agree to meet sometimes in the canteen in the morning and to have breakfast together with their teacher.

### **Early morning didactic service**

Before class time in the morning, Spanish schools nowadays can offer a didactic service, where students can attend if the family is not able to take care of them until the first class (mostly because they may go to work earlier in the morning). In that service, students have the opportunity to finish their homework, read a book, study or otherwise prepare other guided tasks such as crafts or workshops (among others) with a person who supervises their activities. In most schools they can also bring their breakfast there or have a free breakfast.

### **Other measures**

Schoolbus by absenteeism team, Chance, Opportunity and Rebound classes

## **2.3 Bridging the gap between FL and NFL = Clue to inclusion?**

The Erasmus+ programme is the EU Programme for lifelong learning for the period 2014-2020. It is an umbrella programme, which gathers the fields of education, training, youth and sport. Before 2014, there were separate EU-programmes for the educational sector (formal learning) and the youth sector (non-formal learning). The two sectors work with the same group of young people with the same aim “developing young people”, but with different learning methods. Surprisingly enough, there hasn’t been much collaboration between the educational sector and youth sector, and the two cultures exist side by side and do not merge.



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Finland is a clear exception here. There is for example structural collaboration between workshops and VET schools as well as VET school learning projects in very close cooperation with working life, like NGOs or municipal youth sector.

Four organisations in the Netherlands, Spain, Finland and Norway with long experiences from EU-financed non-formal learning projects, see the unused potential and want to bridge the gap between the two “worlds”. All four have been working with youth with fewer opportunities (YFO) for many years. We are more and more convinced of the strength of non-formal learning methods in our work with this target group. Non-formal Learning (NFL) is a bottom-up approach, based on the interests, motivation and active participation of the individual young person, in addition to focussing on the young person's resources, and is a good way of getting young people into positive learning situations. The advantages of NFL methods are especially high regarding young people, who - because of various reasons - have dropped out of school. After many years working with providing non-formal learning opportunities to YFO/early school leavers, we want to take the next step with CLUE TO INCLUSION: to prevent/reduce early school leaving. We invited three VET schools/providers, two associated partner VET-schools and one Research Institute to become partners in this project in order to start looking more closely to the potential benefits of NFL and to go into an innovative process of implementing NFL methods - like Erasmus+ youth projects - in a formal education (VET) environment.

## **CHAPTER 3: BENEFITS/POTENTIAL OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING METHODS**

### **3.1 Formal, non-formal and informal learning**

#### **3.1.1 Definitions**

Formal, non-formal and informal learning are terms used by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) as well as researchers and practitioners around the globe. The Council of Europe describes the three terms in the following way (shortened version):

Educational systems exist to promote *formal learning*, which follows a syllabus and is intentional in the sense that learning is the goal of all the activities learners engage in. Learning outcomes are measured by tests and other forms of assessment.

*Informal learning* takes place outside schools and colleges and arises from the learner's involvement in activities that are not undertaken with a learning purpose in mind. Informal learning is involuntary and an inescapable part of daily life; for that reason, it is sometimes called *experiential learning*.

*Non-formal learning* takes place outside formal learning environments but within some kind of organisational framework. It arises from the learner's conscious decision to master a

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particular activity, skill or area of knowledge and is thus the result of intentional effort. But it need not follow a formal syllabus or be governed by external accreditation and assessment.

When we use the notion “non-formal learning” in the CLUE2 Inclusion project, we focus on the **non-formal learning process/ methods**. It is linked to **NFL-methods used in youth work with focus on the needs of the young person, active and voluntarily participation and is also called experienced based learning (“learning by doing”)**. This is rather process- than result-orientated, and used in non-commercial organisations like NGO’s and public services. We acknowledge that the terminology non-formal learning or education is also used in a different way, focussing on the fact that non-formal learning is not recognised as part of the formal education system, without necessarily using NFL-methods.

Learning that is formal or non-formal is partly intentional and partly incidental: when we consciously pursue any learning target we cannot help learning things that are not part of that target. Informal learning, however, is exclusively incidental.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/formal-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

**In the framework of this project, we have focussed mostly on organised and planned learning, that is: formal and non-formal learning.**

### **3.1.2 Difference between formal and non-formal education**

Formal education is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters for people of all ages, but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized, as formal qualifications by the relevant national educational authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development. (Source: <http://uis.unesco.org/node/334726>)

Non-formal learning does not happen accidentally. There is an organised environment where the learning takes place. From the learner’s perspective, the motivation is thought to differ from formal learning. While taking part in an activity is intrinsic in non-formal learning (the learner takes part voluntarily, and the motivation to participate springs from within the person), in formal learning the motivation (i.e. to get a diploma) is extrinsic. Structures and forms of learning are less stable in non-formal learning, and usually change during the process. It is an efficient way to develop social, political and moral identities and competences, and to empower (young people) to take action, in short, to promote active citizenship.

<b>Formal education</b>	<b>Non-formal education</b>
Structured	Flexible structure
Result oriented	Process oriented
Curriculum oriented	Learner oriented
More stringent	Flexible and easily adaptable
Planned learning methods	Planned learning methods
Grades through tests	Self-evaluation through reflection
From teacher to student	Participative
Mandatory – extrinsic motivation	Active participation – intrinsic motivation
Certified/diploma	Participation certified
Time conditioned	Adaptive time schedule
Normally big classes	Smaller working groups

As an example, the difference between apprenticeship and volunteering activities is:

<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<b>Volunteering project</b>
Formal learning	Non-formal learning
Focus on professional skills	Focus on personal skills
Part of standard education	Motivation based, personalised learning
Compulsary activity	Voluntary activity
Focus on the result	Focus on the process: helping others
Diploma	Youthpass certificate/Open Badges/other

### **Grey zone**

At the same time, there is a huge grey zone in between formal and non-formal education. What about all activities organised by the school which take place outside the school walls? To give an example: a teacher takes his or her student class to the museum. It is not only about seeing art, but also teaching life skills, like: get in time, talk with other people, overcome your fear of public transport. ROC Mondriaan comments: “The teachers coach the students and grab the opportunity when something comes along. This demands a certain attitude of the teacher: not the education itself is most important but the process of learning of each individual is what counts. As a teacher you need to see the person and its needs.” Most schools organise school camps. Also the students of Salpaus comment: “Each Summer and Spring, we go for a short camp as part of our studies to learn professional skills as well as NFL skills.” In Spain it is very common to plan an end-of-year school trip, a weekend excursion to a farm school, where students not only develop their academic skills but also it is a marvelous opportunity to put them in contact with a natural atmosphere.

According to the Finnish working group, there is actually **no division between non-formal and formal education in Finland**. The method of teaching is free, and the teacher can actually use any method seen suitable for the subject (from: report working group, ms Katri Schadewitz). This is also confirmed by the report from the youth group at Salpaus. The students mention many NFL methods, which are already part of their formal education, and

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help with NFL skills - skills that they need in their future work as instructors of different kind of people: camps, games and plays with a certain goal, learning/projects at working places, learning in teams, group work, project work, weekly assignments, campus instructors, voluntary work at school, international activities like group mobility abroad, national voluntary cultural festival (Saku Stars), national skills competition (Taitaja), peer education, arts and creative methods, study trips and visits.

Finland was the first of the Nordic countries to introduce a comprehensive national approach to validation through its competence-based system for vocational education and training. As part of a lifelong learning strategy, non-formal learning was integrated in formal education and training. Since the 1990s, several policy initiatives have confirmed the key-role of validation of non-formal and informal learning in the competence-based system for vocational education and training. Various legal initiatives pursue a set of basic objectives, such as strengthening individual learning achievements, improving access to education and training opportunities, and supporting the development of individual talents. Today, the education system is largely competence-based, accepting competences acquired outside formal education and training as equivalent to learning outcomes from within the system.

Source: [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5164\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5164_en.pdf)

The Spanish law proves the importance of including social and civic competences in the curriculum as a valuable part of the students' learning process. In this case, even though teachers should include these competences in their scheduled teachers guide, the teachers are free to make use of these cross curricular competences in a deeper or rather superficial way. As a great explanatory prove, the Spanish working group has come up with the idea of creating a check list to sum up the relationship between three different tasks and the social ability referred to with three columns to point out the level of acquisition. Referring to document: "Competence registration table-social abilities"

### **3.2 What are the benefits of non-formal learning methods?**

Non-formal education is beneficial in a number of ways:

#### Focus on the individual learner

Most NFL methods are not a set structure, but can adjust to the learner and its learning environment. There is focus on the individual needs and the learning style of the learner. Most of the time formal education takes place in big classes, while it is more typical to work with smaller working groups in non-formal education.

#### Motivational learning – connected to learners interests

NFL connects with ones interests and it is about intrinsic motivational learning. NFL offers activities that encourage young people to choose their own programme and projects that are important because they offer the youth the flexibility and freedom to explore their emerging interests. When the youth can choose the activities in which they can participate, they have opportunities to develop several skills and be in control of their own lifelong learning proces.

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### Promoting active citizenship

The planned (but adaptable) nature of non-formal learning is sometimes seen as an efficient way of promoting active citizenship. Learners are better capable of emphasising criticism towards society and the world beyond. The most important is the process: engaging in activities is likely to produce beneficial results. The results are more likely to emerge in the process.

### Peer learning

The impact of peer relations is quite important in the non-formal learning process; most of the processes are done together. If you manage to make youth to work together as a group they will learn from each other. Formal education is more about one-direction relations, from teacher to student.

### Authentic learning

Taking part in NFL activities means learning by doing. This is a deeper kind of learning, which in many cases involves also feelings and emotions, and is therefore more authentic. Knowledge acquired through memorisation and retention has the unfortunate tendency to be forgotten some days after an exam...

### Learning in a broader way

Learning by doing not only reflects one's intellectual skills but also makes it possible to show and practice so-called "soft skills", like personal, emotional and behavioural skills. NFL uses also failure as a learning possibility, intentionally. Non-formal learning has experiential learning activities that foster the development of skills and knowledge. This helps in building the confidence and abilities among the youth of today. It also helps in development of personal relationships not only among the youth but also among the adults. It helps in developing interpersonal skills among the young people as they learn to interact with peers outside the class and with adults in the community.

### Focus on the process

Non-formal education normally focusses on the process more than the result. The process ends with an evaluation or reflection. Formal education focusses on the result (test/exam results) more than the process.

### Flexible learning in a changing society

NFL methods can easily adapt, not only according to the learners needs, but also to rapid changes in society.

## **3.3 Weaknesses of non-formal learning methods**

### Lack of recognition

The biggest weakness of non-formal education is that it isn't standardized, normalised and recognised. The result is that NFL generally has lower status, and is not seen as a serious learning method, and not as usefull as formal education.

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#### Difficult to predict result

Predicting the exact outcomes of non-formal learning is difficult, because the aim of the activity is not to produce a certain type of learning result. It is difficult to make explicit what is learned and therefore it is said that there is low efficiency and a risk of knowledge gaps.

### **3.4 What is the potential of non-formal learning in VET-schools?**

In the last two chapters we discussed the benefits and weaknesses of NFL-methods, based on our own experiences. In this CLUE2 Inclusion Strategic Partnership, we have been analysing the potential of non-formal learning methods in VET-schools. How can NFL in addition to FL contribute to the prevention of early school leaving in VET-schools? We see that the general benefits of NFL methods often apply also in the VET-context.

#### Boost to intrinsic motivation

Non-formal learning methods increase the variety of learning. It can make learning more fun and engage the students in ways that increase their motivation for learning and attitude towards the importance of learning.

#### Increased self-esteem of the learner

Non-formal learning can help to increase the self-esteem, because the methods focus on ones competences and possibilities. Because the methods connect with the needs and motivation of the learner, the results are mostly positive.

#### Learning in a broader cross-disciplinary (cross-sectoral) sense

Non-formal learning can change our attitude and perspective of what learning can be, and look broader to include activities and competences in what we look for when working towards our criteria for competence defined by the educational programmes. It fosters the integral (full) personal development.

#### NFL-education is a necessary part of lifelong learning

Formal education system are inadequate to effectively meet the needs of the individual and the society. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe acknowledges that formal educational systems alone cannot respond to rapid and constant technological, social and economic change in society, and that they should be reinforced by non-formal educational practices. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on governments and the appropriate authorities of member states: to recognise non-formal education as a de facto partner in the lifelong learning process and in youth policy and to elaborate effective systems for evaluating it (this could be done by the certification of non-formal educational activities so that they can also be mentioned in curricula vitae as professional experience and cited as internationally recognised skills and qualifications). A quality label could be given to the educational activities of recognised organisations providing non-formal education. Source: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=16762&lang=en>

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There are more and more voices today, who say that we need to change the whole system of education. “We send our children to school to prepare them for the real world, which is changing very fast, but our schools haven’t changed much for hundreds of years. In fact, thought leaders from around the world agree, that the current system was designed in the industrial age, mainly to turn out factory workers. This industrial age mentality and mass production and mass control still runs deep in schools.” In the shortfilm “six problems with our school system, the following problems are identified: 1. industrial age values, 2. lack of autonomy, 3. inauthentic learning, 4. no room for passions and interests, 5. differences in how we learn and 6. lecturing, no interaction. Source: published by NEXT School, India’s first Big Picture School: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okpg-lVWLbE>

NFL methods as a supplement to formal learning will help us very much tackling the mentioned problems.

ad 1: The modern world values people who can be creative, who can communicate their ideas and collaborate with others. This is the strength of non-formal learning, which demands active participation.

ad 2: Experts say that autonomy is incredibly important for children, and non-formal learning demands in principle voluntary participation.

ad 3: Non-formal learning is deeper and more authentic. It can be so much more than just memorisation and retention.

ad 4: The NFL methods connect with the own motivation and interests of the learner.

ad 5: As already mentioned, non-formal learning methods increase the variety of learning.

ad 6: Non-formal learning methods have high focus on interaction through peer-learning.

### Especially early school leavers will gain from NFL

Early school leavers and other young people with fewer opportunities will benefit strongly from non-formal learning, because of the individual approach.

### What VET topics?

What topics in the VET-curriculum can be linked up/implemented through non-formal learning? In principal in all the VET education, but these fields especially according to the partner’s experiences:

- All parts of Youth and Community/Youth Worker studies.
- Professional skills linked to the social field (soft skills) and iT.
- All the basic key competences, focusing on entrepreneurship

**In this Strategic Partnership we see the potential of NFL methods, working with young people at risk of early school leaving. The aim of our CLUE2 Inclusion project is to find out how we can work more systematic and consciously with each other, and make use of all knowledge and best practices of FL and NFL methods for the benefit of the young learning at risk of early school leaving.**

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### 3.5 Best practices with non-formal learning at VET schools

#### **NFL and FL hand in hand in Finnish schools**

As already mentioned, in Finland many teachers have been taught NFL methods and use them wherever it feels natural: games and plays with a certain goal, peer education, arts and creative methods, voluntary work at school, national voluntary cultural festival (Saku Stars, a nationwide cultural competition for all students studying the profession:

<https://sakustars.fi/>), and national skills competition (Taitaja, the largest single annual vocational education and training event organized in Finland, <https://skillsfinland.fi/eng/national-skills-competition-taitaja>)

The outside world is also inside the school. There is good communication between the teaching community in school and the working community outside the school.

The Finnish teachers have professional autonomy to create their own school-based work plan and curriculum. All education in Finland is publicly financed, including teacher education in Finland's research universities. Teachers in Finland possess a strong sense of being esteemed professionals, similar to medical doctors, engineers, or lawyers. Teachers at all levels of schooling expect that they will be given the full range of professional autonomy they need to practice what they have been educated to do: to plan, teach, diagnose, execute, and evaluate. They also expect to be provided with enough time to accomplish all of these goals, both inside and outside of normal classroom duties. In Finland, teachers spend relatively less time teaching than their peers in many other countries do. The teachers' key role in pedagogical decisionmaking clearly requires teacher education to install in all prospective teachers well-developed knowledge and skills related to curriculum development, student assessment theory and practice, and teacher leadership. Moreover, it has shifted the focus of Finnish teacher professional development from fragmented inservice training toward more systemic school improvement that builds better ethical and theoretical grounding for effective teaching. [http://www.submeet.eu/european\\_library/Finnish\\_lessons.pdf](http://www.submeet.eu/european_library/Finnish_lessons.pdf)

#### **Volunteering abroad**

In the Netherlands, Norway and Spain, we have used Group volunteering projects as part of VET-education, especially involving students who have the risk of dropping out in VET education. These projects are EU-funded through European Voluntary Service and European Solidarity Corps.

The Dutch VET-school sent for example 2 teachers and 8 students to the Spanish partner to do 2 weeks of voluntary work abroad and use this as a tool for observing and learning conditional skills a student needs in school or at work. Competences such as working in a group, following instructions, perseverance, subdivide the assignment into tasks etc. The EVS is part of a 3 months programme in which the group and the individual student prepare on the volunteering abroad (what do I want to learn, what are challenges, what can I expect etc) and afterwards they are helped in giving words to the learned competences. Also, they are coached in how to use the gained skills in daily life at school and at home.

Årstad upper secondary school in Norway sent almost thirty Youth worker students to three different volunteering projects, as part of their education. They were guided by 3 times 2 group leaders, volunteers from Red Cross Bergen.

Finland organises international voluntary work camps in Finland. The whole idea of the camps is to empower young people by non-formal learning methods.



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### **International trainings and placements**

In Finland, we organise trainings for outgoing volunteers and students using non-formal methods to increase participation, sharing and learning.

### **NFL trainings and reflection workshops**

Finnish outgoing volunteers or work experience participants go through a nonformal training process prior to departure. The aim is define non-formal learning goals, share and learn from each others.

After the volunteering or training placement abroad we organise work shops using non-formal methods to make participants recognise and value what they learn and encourage them to use their enhanced skills in working life.

### **Campus instructors**

At the Finnish VET-school Salpaus, we introduced a new model, called Campus instructors. Campus instructors are dedicated a specific, unique role in between student and teacher. Other school staff give them special tasks for instance in cooperation, networking and coordinating. Their role is close to the role of the school youth workers, using NFL methods.

### **Social skills training programs/workshops and formal skill training through NFL**

Both Finland and Spain offer training programs – at home or abroad - for vocational graduates aiming mainly to enhance their social skills and life management through empowerment and increased self-esteem. The participants are trained and supported throughout the process, and they use learning diaries and video blogs to share their learning. The aim is to get this integrated in the formal curriculum.

Silla has experience with the occupational and professional training programs where students learn a profession (there is a mix between NFL and FL) while they have a work contract for a year. The projects focused on public services or social interest activities. These programmes are aimed to young people between sixteen and thirty years old. Through training combined with employment, certificates of professionalism can be obtained through contracts for training and learning and also through participation in the programs of VET Schools and Workshops. <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/formacion/certificados-profesionalidad.html>; <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/publicaciones/publicaciones-oficiales/listado-pub-formacion/repertorio-certificados-profesionalidad.html>

### **Formal skills training through NFL**

In Spain, specific training and learning opportunities are given in other specialities complementing the own formal curriculum. For instance: risk assessment training and food management training. Vocational school provides this.

### **The Scrum method**

ROC Mondriaan in the Netherlands uses the Scrum method with the students. Through this method, the student discovers his or her method of learning and how a learning process is working for him. He is owner of his own learning process and it is individually and tailormade learning. The Scrum method values what they learn and encourage them to use their enhanced skills in working life. This journey of discovery will help him in all learning paths of life. The Scrum method is developed inside the school, by the school department InGang.

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## **Production School**

Hordaland County Council established recently a new “supporting school” model, based on the Danish production school model. Hyssingen Production School opened in 2015 and is the first production school in Norway to accommodate students between the ages of 16 to 21 who have dropped out of respective schools. The participants may stay in the project for one year. The objective is to motivate and qualify them to continue their education in a regular upper secondary school or bring them into the work force. The production school is based on labour market oriented work-based learning, development of social and basic skills, self-directed learning approaches and guidance and counselling measures. Work based training while producing real products for the local and regional market is a powerful means of engaging and motivating young people. The aim is to enhance and enable the learning process, bring self-belief and esteem, evoke an interest for work life and thus reintegrate young drop outs. <https://www.hordaland.no/nb-NO/skole/hyssing/information-in-english/>

## **Service learning methodology**

The idea of Service learning (ApS in Spanish) is to substitute a part of the work at school with a project with a clear social benefit. For example, a VET-teacher in the field of Early Childhood Education plans to do a final work for the subject “Children’s play and its methodology”, where the students should show their acquired knowledge. The teacher can propose to the students to design a project for a Children’s hospital where they put in practice what they learned, then the project is launched and society benefits from the students project. The Service Learning methodology is a win-win: students get the opportunity to be integrated in society in a comprehensive way, experience that what they learned is relevant and meaningful, it increases their citizen awareness and it has a beneficial effect in society. <https://www.fundacionecuup.org/projects/aps-service-learning/?lang=en>

## **School library**

In Spain there is a specific plan of reading promotion included in the educational law (LOMCE) which is a program with a series of actions whose purpose is to favor interest in it. This programme focusses on different groups, generally children or teenagers, and the performances will vary depending on the group to which it is directed. There are a wide range of activities that high schools and elementary schools are promoting in their libraries:

- Actions to support the curriculum and related to the search for information strategies: Search for information about a specific time or country to set a newsroom. Collection of news on a particular topic for a special day such as the day of the working woman, the day of the book, the day of the audiovisual heritage , or the search for movies based on novels.
- Actions for the reading promotion: Screening of a movie based on a previously read book, exhibition of posters and books in the library related to a specific theme, acquisition of comics, in some original cases and other adaptations of novels, to reach students and encourage their taste for reading and theater workshops. To create a reading club and arrange some conferences with authors. A dedicated book’s day where the students go to the library to do some prepared activities.

The school librarian of Årstad vgs initiates reading promotion projects. During five weeks, all students should read 15 minutes a day. The students can choose their own book and

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exchange reading experiences with each other. The teachers should preferably read a book they too, being a good example for the students. The library invites authors to the school. Research shows that children who read for pleasure are likely to do better in maths and English than those who rarely read: <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-24046971> Reading carried out in “fertile solitude” fosters readers’ resilience and mental wellbeing, and can lead to relaxation and stress reduction, according to Nguyen et al. 2017: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0146167217733073>

### **Reflection on best practices in our own VET-schools:**

Which of these methods have given the best results?

All four country teams have experienced positive results with voluntary activities abroad for their students: ESC/EVS projects (the Spanish, Norwegian and Dutch schools) and international volunteer camps (Finnish schools). Voluntary activities abroad are proven to be worthwhile in making young people more empowered and interested in the surrounding world as well as feel active citizens who can make a difference. We also believe that the learning diaries are a useful method to reflect on the non-formal learning results.

At the same time we acknowledge that there is no such thing as a best working practice and results, because it all depends on the matching of the student and the method. Non-formal learning is tailor made, and it is all about the connection. What works for one type of student, will not work for another type. So it would be ideal to have a set of NFL tools which can be used in a formal learning setting.

### **OTHER EXAMPLES:**

#### **Agora secondary education**

At the Agora Secondary School in the Netherlands, students discover the world themselves while the teachers have the role of coaches. Each student makes a personal learning route based on his own wishes, questions and interests. This increases motivation and stimulates the natural curiosity of pupils. 'Learning is best done in freedom', is one of the principles of Agora. The school is unconventional in many ways: there are no school levels, no school subjects, no tests, no timetables, no classes, no textbooks or methods. Classroom instruction has been cancelled and students do not have traditional homework. Still, Agora is operating as a public school with public funding, as part of the formal school system in the Netherlands. Source: <https://medium.com/pi-top/meet-the-school-with-no-classes-no-classrooms-and-no-curriculum-7cc7be517cef>

#### **Pluscoach**

Plusmaatje (Pluscoach or Plus-buddy in English) is a new Dutch concept of volunteers in education: “an adult who stands behind you. The Pluscoach is a supporter and a coach; a trusted person and buddy in one. He or she works as an addition to school and parents. The Pluscoach consults with teachers and parents about the performance and behavior of his or her student. The student and the pluscoach determine together how often they see each

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other. A plusmaatje is living in the area, has the will and the time to invest in a youngster and besides: he or she likes to coach a youngster. The fact that the plus mate is a volunteer gives an important added value to the coaching process. Source:

[http://www.plusgroep.org/\(S\(mzftzqyfed5xquls04v2iyb\)\)/index.aspx](http://www.plusgroep.org/(S(mzftzqyfed5xquls04v2iyb))/index.aspx)

### **UngInvest**

Buskerud County Council has a talent/motivation based model for youth, called UngInvest (meaning: Invest in Youth). It is based on Appreciative Inquiry:

<http://www.aib.bfk.no/Informasjon/AI-Metoden/>

### **Solution and progress focussed learning**

This method is mainly used in youthcare and youthcare organisations in the Netherlands. Its basis is that every problem offers the possibility of finding your own solutions. A problem is a learning opportunity. This approach can potentially also be helpful in the school system, preventing early school leaving. The Dutch working group is interested in this approach but hasn't have the time during this project period to look more into it. For more information:

<https://www.movisie.nl/interventie/oplossingsgericht-werken>

### **École 42**

École 42 is a teacher-less coding school in Paris and totally different from any other school in France. Every morning, students get digital projects – tasks from working life - to complete. They have 48 hours to complete them, so they are always juggling various projects, sort of like in real life. Since there are no teachers, it is up to students to figure things out.

Everything is graded by peers. It is totally self-organised and the students manage their time how they want. École 42 uses non-formal learning methods, as it is all about active student participation, peer-to-peer learning and project and experience-based learning.

Read more: <https://qz.com/1054412/a-french-billionaires-free-teacher-less-university-is-designing-thousands-of-future-proof-employees/>

## **CHAPTER 4: RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING PROCESSES**

### **4.1 The Erasmus+ instrument: Youthpass**

#### **4.1.1 Experiences with Youthpass**

Youthpass is a European recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work, initially for the Youth in Action programme. Youthpass is for projects funded by Erasmus+ youth programmes and helps the participants of those projects to record their learning and skills development, which could then be used to support job applications or applications for further courses for example. On 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019 the one millionth Youthpass certificate was issued through the Youthpass database. That is the total number

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of certificates that have been issued to the young people and the youth workers who have participated in the European youth programmes since 2007, to confirm their participation in and to recognise their learning in the projects. The 1,000,000 certificates have been issued in more than 64,000 projects, by slightly more than 26,000 organisations offering young people and youth workers non-formal and informal learning opportunities in Europe and beyond. The numbers show an exponentially increasing trend, which implies also the potential of a larger visibility and recognition of the non-formal and informal learning in European youth projects. <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>

**Benefits YOUTHPASS:**

- it helps in marking the period of learning and gives recognition to the student.
- it helps with the structural approach towards learning.
- it increases awareness for lifelong learning as the learner reflects on his/her own learning
- peer review: the participants are invited in couples of peers to support each other in their learning reflection.

**Weaknes YOUTHPASS:**

- Part two with the 8 key competences is not always relevant for our students (no suitable language or usefull topics) so we use part 9 for this. There they decribe their own learning proces and learned competences.

#### **4.1.2 Organising the Youthpass proces**

How to reflect on the non-formal learning process? There are many ways of approaching this in a structural way:

**Planned in the agenda:**

- Coordination meeting with volunteers once a week. In the case of shorter experiences, like youth exchanges, reflection meetings every evening.

**People helping to reflect:**

- There is always a coach involved who helps the student getting insight in his learning path, see description BloomEVS.
- Through Peer review: participants are invited in couples of peers to support each other learning reflection.

**Materials and tools helping to reflect:**

- Bloom Foundation uses a Scaling form in which a student scales his competences in all life skills before and after the activity.
- Learning diary is very useful, and have been used by almost all partners in this partnership. The learning diary helps to get insight in what you learn during an NFL activity such as ESC/EVS/voluntary camp. This makes the learning process more visible for the youngster and for the coach. Some exercises are individual and some can be done in the group. The exercises differ in text, doing things, filling in forms or open questions. The exercises can be adjusted depending on the project and the learning curve of the youngster.

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-Blogging:

In Finland blogging is used as learning diary. The students of youth and community instruction of Salpaus Further Education have both individual as well as team blogs as part of their studies. They can be used also as portfolios of their professional development and skills after graduation. Each team has also an Instagram account where they share photos of their team projects on regular basis.

In Norway, several of our volunteers have used their own blogs to reflect on their experiences abroad. They are open about their struggles and challenges, and the support they receive from their readers help them to stand in it and not quit the project. After they come home, they continue their reflections on the learning results. Here comes a blog text written by one of our Norwegian volunteers after returning from her short term EVS (translated in English): *“Part of me feared that I would come home and be the same as before, that things wouldn’t have changed and that these two months would be for nothing. Little did I know that I would be completely wrong, that the way I see myself and the world would change. It is not as clear all the time, but I notice it in the small things I do. Something has changed, for the better. I miss my bike, my friends in the little town I lived in. I will for ever be grateful for the opportunity. A fairy-tale is over for now, but if you ask me who I am, I can’t give you an answer. Not necessarily because I don’t have a clear answer, but because I have learned that who I am is not defined by the things one does or the people around, but which values one has and how one chooses to use them. I don’t need to be glad or happy to be somebody. I just need to exist/to be, and sometimes that is enough. (“Jeg trenger bare å være, og noen ganger er det nok”)* (Source: From one day to another, 1st August 2019)

## 4.2 Other instruments

### The non-formal professional skills certificate

In Spain, the main recognition is through the professional skills certificate, which is a national validation of skills, recognised and similar to the formal education certificates.

[https://www.sepe.es/contenidos/personas/formacion/certificados\\_de\\_profesionalidad/certificados\\_profesionalidad.html](https://www.sepe.es/contenidos/personas/formacion/certificados_de_profesionalidad/certificados_profesionalidad.html). There is a “bridge” system linking the formal VET system to the non-formal professional skills certificate. It means that a young person who complete the non-formal course, can access later higher studies.

The system of micro-certificates was very useful after the “building and construction bubble” in Spain. Many young people didn’t go to school, because they had the opportunity to earn a lot of money in the construction sector. But after the bubble cracked, there was a lot of unemployment. The professional skills certificate was designed to validate all micro-skills in a flexible way, without having a full degree.

### I’ve

Finland has used I’ve tool which was developed in a strategic partnership project together with other voluntary organisations.

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## **Badges**

Open Badges communicate skills and achievements by providing visual symbols of accomplishments packed with verifiable data and evidence that can be shared across the web. Open Badges empower individuals to take their learning with them, wherever they go, building a rich picture of their lifelong learning journey. Thousands of organizations across the world already issue Open Badges, from non-profits to major employers to educational institutions at all levels. <https://openbadges.org/>

Bloom Foundation has used SHARE method and System use badges as a tool for youngsters to recognize their gained skills and competences in informal, non-formal and formal learning on an EQF level 1 and we're busy implementing this in the schoolsystem at the moment. According to the Spanish working group, badges help with the motivation for the young students since it is credited little by little, but it is counterproductive for older students as it is demotivating not to achieve badges.

In Finland, it is not so easy to use the badges because of a rigid evaluation system. But, badges could be used in a more informal way, for example when planning and studying larger entities. The badges can then be used as "milestones".

The Norwegian VET-school Årstad VGS has also looked into the potential of using Badges as a measurement and recognition tool in other parts of VET-education, and sees several advantages for the students, the school and future employers. Read more on page 30.

## **Competence disk**

The Competence disc shows how competence accumulated through hobbies and volunteering can be used in studies leading to a qualification. It is developed and updated by the Finnish Scouts: <https://www.osaamiskiekkko.fi/>

The Competence disk will help you utilize your skills diversely. First: select organisation or education institute, for example The Guides and Scouts of Finland. Secondly: select qualification, training or Open Badge, for example Group leader training. Outcome: this can be used in two qualifications in Upper Secondary education – Health and Welfare.

## **Competence demonstrations**

Finnish vocational education and training is competence-based and customer-oriented. Students are assessed and credited for previously acquired competence and only acquire the missing competence during their studies. The system allows students to flexibly utilise units of the qualifications and smaller parts corresponding to their own needs. For individuals, it is important that they can have their learning outcomes validated, irrespective of how and where they have acquired the competence, and assessed units of learning outcomes can be accumulated towards a qualification. Vocational qualifications are independent of the way the vocational skills have been acquired. As long as the individual's competences meet the national qualification requirements, they can be acquired in different learning environments and ways, at different times. Students demonstrate their skills in competence demonstrations at practical work. Students may have obtained relevant skills from working life, another school, international study, work placement periods, family and leisure activities or through the media. Previous learning is recognised and only the missing skills are acquired. [https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/finnish\\_vet\\_in\\_a\\_nutshell.pdf](https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/finnish_vet_in_a_nutshell.pdf)

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### 4.3 Open Badges linked to volunteering abroad

One of the three Clue to Inclusion intellectual outputs is a manual for schools and organisations that want to carry out a short term group volunteering project (ESC) and want to connect digital badges to this. The handbook will not only be a guidance in carrying out a Group ESC within your school/organisation, but will also contain a collection of digital badges on ESC in education.

### 4.4 Which parts/topics in the VET-curriculum can be linked up/implemented through non-formal learning methods?

FIN	All parts of Youth and Leisure (new name: Youth and Community) All vocational qualifications, depending on the national qualification requirements
NL	In all the VET education We can do more with soft skills
SP	All the basic key competences, focusing on entrepreneurship. Also all the professional skills linked with social and IT fields.
NO	This depends on the different courses at the school.

More literature on the recognition of NFL:

[https://www.academia.edu/12112915/How\\_Can\\_Youth\\_Work\\_Secure\\_Recognition\\_Briefing\\_paper\\_in\\_the\\_framework\\_of\\_of\\_the\\_Belgian\\_Chairmanship\\_of\\_the\\_Committee\\_of\\_the\\_Ministers\\_of\\_the\\_Council\\_of\\_Europe\\_European\\_Youth\\_Work\\_Convention\\_2015](https://www.academia.edu/12112915/How_Can_Youth_Work_Secure_Recognition_Briefing_paper_in_the_framework_of_of_the_Belgian_Chairmanship_of_the_Committee_of_the_Ministers_of_the_Council_of_Europe_European_Youth_Work_Convention_2015)

## CHAPTER 5: SCOPING THE OBSTACLES OF USING NFL IN VET-SCHOOLS

### 5.1 What are the obstacles that make it difficult to implement NFL in schools?

#### **Strict educational programmes**

The tailormade approach of NFL methods is crucial and difficult at the same time. The educational system is a strict structure. The teacher needs to be willing to let (to some extent) go of the educational programme, and see on an individual level what the student needs in order to learn.

#### **NFL methodology is not part of general teacher's education**

In most European countries, with the exception of Finland, non-formal learning methods are not a natural part of the teacher's educational programme. So, even though there is a possibility of using NFL in the contemporary school systems, this field is out of the comfort zone for many teachers. It demands a creative, playful and personal approach, and not all teachers are ready for that. It explains also the resistance of teachers for the implementation of new measures.



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### **Lack of resources**

NFL demands resources, both human, timewise and economical. A personal approach is costly, but with some creativity and willingness, it can be carried out with the resources already at school, or with the help of resources outside the school (NGO's like Red Cross, sports clubs, volunteers, (grand)parents, public services like libraries, social entrepreneurs and local businesses).

### **NFL scepticism**

Humanistic fields of study, in which NFL methods is mostly applied, is not taken seriously. "NFL is only about playing games" and people don't realise that all activities are goal based. The lack of interdisciplinary cooperation doesn't help to bridge the gap. There are different cultures and different fields of study. In addition, NFL is outside the comfort zone and it takes time and guts to try something new and different. This is a challenge for both students, teachers as well as other staff members.

### **Too big school classes**

The tailormade approach of NFL methods is crucial and difficult at the same time. The bigger the classes, the more demanding it is for the teacher to make the learning tailor made for all.

## **5.2 What can be done to take away these obstacles / lower the obstacle level?**

### **Willingnes school management to invest in NFL**

The Dutch VET-school ROC Mondriaan has implemented NFL methods in a semi-educational setting (=students who are not in a formal programme at school yet, so there is no strict programme). The results so far have been very positive and promising, and the school decided to take the next step. In the new school year 2019-20 they will start a new development project and are going to analyse how the powerful NFL methods can be implemented in (all kinds of) the formal education at ROC Mondriaan. They are going to find out how to be more creative and personal focussed within the existing school structure.

### **Teacher trainings and/or creating work teams**

Teachers can be better trained in non-formal learning methods and the use of NFL in the school. At the educational center in Silla, they create work teams that can make improvement proposals to educational centers at the regional level.

### **More student initiatives at school**

Creating an environment of active student participation at school, for example through establishing/strengthening the student council or students working groups. The students can come with concrete proposals to the teachers and school management, and try to improve matters constantly.

In Finland, student councils operate regularly in two of the three vocational institutes.

<https://www.oph.fi/fi/uutiset/2019/lukiot-ja-ammattilliset-oppilaitokset-panostavat-entisten-opiskelijoiden>

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## **CHAPTER 6: PROPOSED MODELS FOR THE USE OF NFL IN VET**

### **Group Volunteering at VET-schools**

Two models have been tested out:

- A) Teachers accompanying groups of student (2 teachers pr 8 students), and
- b) NGO volunteers (3 x 2 pp) accompanying almost 30 youth worker students (level VG 2: age 17 to 23).

Both models have given positive results and the partners are going to continue EVS/ESC group projects within the educational system.

Model A: In the Netherlands, the teachers from the school department InGang at ROC Mondriaan call Group Volunteering supported through European Solidarity Corps (former EVS) “the strongest tool we have”. Department InGang is a 3 months programme designed for early school leavers to support a restart in upper secondary education. The teachers we met at Dpt. X are so dedicated in their role that they are even willing to sacrifice two weekends and free evenings/nights during two weeks to support their students during Group Volunteering. They say that they get to know the students very well, using every opportunity to get behind the outer shell and to search for the resources and the weaker points which they should work further on. They carried out a total of six Group Volunteering (ESC/EVS) projects.

ROC Mondriaan is planning to expand these projects to other parts and educations in the VET-school. The experienced teachers are going to write a best practice manual for their teacher colleagues.

Model B: In Norway, Årstad Upper Secondary School and Red Cross Bergen carried out three EVS group projects for the first time together this year. 27 students were accompanied by six volunteers from the Red Cross to EVS projects in Romania, the Netherlands and Spain (hosting organisation: Silla vocational and education school!). There were many challenges (time management and communication, to mention two of them), but partners drew the conclusion that the results were so positive that they want to organise new group ESC projects in 2020. The students anonymously advised the school management to offer this kind of non-formal learning opportunities to next year’s students. Five out of six group leaders have now leader positions in the Red Cross voluntary services (the last group leader decided to study abroad). An article about this project was published in the Norwegian magazine Skolelederen in June 2019 (See: attachment). Årstad VGS and Red Cross Bergen have decided to continue collaboration after the CLUE2 Inclusion project period and to sign a cooperation agreement with each other.

In Finland, European Solidarity Corps cannot be part of formal education in general and/or replace practical trainings which are part of the school curriculum. But ESC can be used for reducing school drop outs, giving perspective to their own situation or as path to working life for recent graduates. The need for participation in ESC projects has to be for example social empowerment of students or improving their work life skills. If the vocational institute is hosting foreign ESC volunteers their tasks have to be outside the classroom setting/ formal education, for example related to activities to improve school contentment among the students. Also possible ESC solidarity projects have to be initiated by young people themselves. The students can organise or be part in solidarity projects if they are carried out in their free time for the benefit of other people.

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### **Badge system in VET**

We refer to our Intellectual Output 3: Handbook 'International short term group volunteering projects under ESC'. See also page 22 and 30.

### **Individual volunteering (locally and abroad) for students at VET-schools**

Hordaland County Council has sent early school leavers to short-term EVS projects since 2015. This has been a huge success, and the intention is to make this a structural offer in the new Vestland County Council (from 01.01.2000). During the CLUE2 Inclusion project, we wanted to test out if individual volunteering also would work out for students at risk of early school leaving. We started working on an EVS project together with Årstad VGS and everything was settled, but the student decided to withdraw before project start because of some personal issues. Anyway, we concluded that it is possible and desirable to offer EVS in school as part of individual student programmes in the school.

In April 2019, Red Cross Bergen hosted one of the students from Årstad VGS. She did voluntary work at the youth centre of the Red Cross "Fellesverket", and this worked well for both the young person and the host organisation. You don't need to travel abroad as a young volunteer to get valuable learning experiences, and there are lots of organisations around schools who need extra help!

### **Peer education**

The Finnish VET-school Salpaus has already implemented many NFL methods in the formal education programme of youth workers. During the C2I study visit we saw for example peer education in practice. The students work in groups with tasks and projects, and the teacher has the role of mentor and gives guidance during the process. The teacher decides on who is in which group. The students say that they are very satisfied with this "peer education model" or "team model", after two years of experiences. This way of learning and working together increases motivation, and also the quality of the studies. At the same time, the students feel there still is a strong need for good contact with the teacher. Those students with two years of experience with the team model feel that they could have met their teacher a bit more. Therefore, they propose that there should be a schedule for each week for the group/class, so that there is a common meeting time with the teacher for everybody. The topic for the meeting should come from the students themselves and raises from the last weeks' meeting.

### **Non-formal education activities in formal education to reach out to target group**

Most young people with fewer opportunities get a positive boost in their well-being and performance at school after putting extra focus on social skills, conflict resolution, self-esteem and teamwork through NFL activities.

In Norway, Årstad VGS and Red Cross Bergen collaborated a whole year on different projects. Group EVS has already been mentioned, but Red Cross volunteers have also given four conflict management trainings to students at Årstad, using non-formal learning methods. After the last training, we had a celebration at Hordaland County Council and each student received a Red Cross certificate.

Årstad VGS and Red Cross Bergen decided to continue collaboration after the CLUE2 Inclusion project period and to sign a cooperation agreement with each other. Some of the proposed future activities: 1) establishing student groups (8-10 students) with school nurse and Red Cross, twice a month. Target group: students with social anxiety, lack of motivation, high degree of challenges, those at risk of early school leaving. Activities: visiting the Red

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Cross Youth Centre “Fellesverket”, NFL workshops, discuss topics chosen by the students, fun games and activities. We want the group sessions to be the highlights in their month, something to look forward to (not a punishment!) in a not too serious but trustworthy and playful environment. 2) a new Group EVS; 3) conflict management trainings; 4) student placements at Fellesverket; 5) NFL workshops for teachers.

### **More student participation/involvement in VET schools**

Creating an environment of active student participation at school, for example through establishing or strengthening the student council or students working groups. The students can come with concrete proposals to the teachers and school management, and try to improve matters constantly.

There should be real student participation in practice, not only in theory. Referring to: “The Ladder of Youth Participation.” This is a model developed by Roger Hart, which identifies eight levels of youth participation in projects. It is designed to encourage those working with young people to think more closely about the nature and purpose of youth involvement in community activities. Source:

[https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/ASTC/00e37246-8bd9-481f-900c-ad9d6b6b3393/UploadedImages/Ladder\\_of\\_Participation\\_1.pdf](https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/ASTC/00e37246-8bd9-481f-900c-ad9d6b6b3393/UploadedImages/Ladder_of_Participation_1.pdf)

### **What would the ideal VET-school look like?**

During the CLUE2 Inclusion project 4 working groups have been discussing NFL in VET-schools. This resulted not only in concrete models mentioned above, but we discussed also the ideal school concept. How should an ideal VET-school look like, a school in which there are no school leavers, and how do we come there?

#### **The proposal of the Dutch working group:**

The most ideal situation would be that we don't have schoolbuildings anymore, but that school is there where people learn. To connect the knowledge with the practice, there where it is already happening. Every person is willing to learn and to develop. Everyone has talents and entrepreneurial skills. The focus should be on the individual and its learning process. Go where this person is learning and give him/her the knowledge, fitting to its interest and at the place where he or she is already learning. Learning is happening everywhere and more and more we hear the term ‘hybrid learning’. The teacher is going there where is learned. The student can pile up the skills he is learning at different places and in different ways. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81pZli0CmRY&feature=youtu.be>

A move in this direction are the badges, which help to recognise and acknowledge what is learned, in- and outside of school. It's not the schoolsystem that is determinative, but the student whose process is leading. More and more we see for the lower secondary education, that the young people go to a learning working place instead of school, for example a garage to fix cars. They used to try to get the students go to school (building) for one day a week to learn about their profession. Now the school starts in cooperation with the garage a class at the garage location. This is not only motivating for the students but also for young people who work at the garage and are not in education. It is an easy accessible way to get back to school. For example: <http://www.sleutelenmetjongeren.nl/online/>

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Everyone in the network of the students is important to involve, as the whole life is a learning ground. Also the government is needed for this switch in the school system. This is not only a switch of the school but a switch in society and so we need to involve society as well. We need businesses where students can learn and who are willing to connect to the school.

**The proposal of the Finnish youth group:**

The ideal school is based on a participatory model, where first of all the students have the possibility to influence on tasks and assignments, and secondly there are work/study combined apprenticeships. The ideal school model has high flexibility. How can we come there? It is all about attitude. Cooperation within the school as well outside school is needed. Different skills are optimised. Everybody does not need to be good in everything.

**The Norwegian proposal:**

Inspired by the Danish philosopher Jens Bay (1940-2013), a school model 100% based on the holistic approach of consequence pedagogy would be interesting to try out in its pure form. Several teachers at Årstad vgs have been trained in the methodology and started implementing the pedagogy. Starting point is a humanistic point of view, with focus on freedom, autonomy, choice, responsibility and consequences. There are several similarities with the bottom-up approach of non-formal learning: the learner is an active participant in his/her learning process, with a high amount of autonomy, and learning needs interaction with other people. According to the theory of consequence pedagogy, the learner should start with learning social skills and competences, before professional competences. The student is given the opportunity to choose between various alternatives of action, but they are also responsible for the consequences of their choice of action. In this way, there is a high degree of autonomy and the learner is in control of the whole learning process.

<http://www.konsekvenspedagogisk-forum.no/Hva/Introduksjon>

**The proposal of the Spanish working group:**

The ideal school (formal) should be much more practical and experiential. The real school (formal) is all about the theory and exams. For some of us, learning in this way is very complicated and we would prefer other style of lessons. When we start in primary and we continue in secondary school, it's all the time the same: lots of homework, every time more exams and lots of things to remember by heart. If the school would use a bit more of games or activities or small projects to learn and understand the things, we would be more eager to continue learning. Regarding the buildings, we also agree that the school is not very welcoming place, the style of classrooms, the building in general, the windows, the canteen, the outdoors... We would like another kind of learning place, more open and more green. Regarding the teachers, most of the time they focus on the results, the exams, the homework... and they don't see our difficulties and challenges. In secondary school and high school we have a lot of teachers, and they seem to be totally independent, asking for more all of them, not knowing that we already have a lot to do from the others too. They are not very flexible."

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## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this project, we have analysed the potential of non-formal learning in VET-education. The conclusions we have reached are as follows:

Yes, it is possible to use non-formal learning methods in formal learning environments.

Yes, both participants and schools recommend to use non-formal learning in VET-education.

Yes, it is rewarding and necessary for optimal lifelong learning to use NFL in VET.

But it is too early to conclude if NFL in VET increases motivation and prevents early school leaving.

### **Closing the gap between FL and NFL / FL and NFL hand in hand...**

The Finnish schools show us that formal and non-formal learning complement each other, and that NFL methods have its valuable place as part of the formal education system. As the Finnish working group sums up: there is actually no division between non-formal and formal education in Finland. The method of teaching is free, and the teacher can actually use any method seen suitable for the subject. This is also confirmed by the report from the youth group at Salpaus. The student group mentions many NFL methods, which are already part of their formal education.

Already in 2000, the Assembly recommended that the Committee of Ministers call on governments and the appropriate authorities of member states: to recognise non-formal education as a de facto partner in the lifelong learning process and in youth policy and to elaborate effective systems for evaluating it (this could be done by the certification of non-formal educational activities so that they can also be mentioned in curricula vitae as professional experience and cited as internationally recognised skills and qualifications). A quality label could be given to the educational activities of recognised organisations providing non-formal education.

### **ESC group projects**

So far, the Dutch VET-school ROC Mondriaan and the Norwegian VET-school Årstad VGS have reached very positive results with using NFL methods.

ROC Mondriaan used volunteering in a semi-educational setting (=students who are not in a formal programme at school yet, so there is no strict programme). The results after x years have been very promising, and the school decided to take the next step. In the new school year 2019-20 they'll start a development project, analysing how the powerful NFL methods can be implemented in (all kinds of) the formal education at ROC Mondriaan. They are going to find out how to be more creative and personal focussed within the existing school structure.

Årstad VGS sent two youth worker classes to three different projects in Romania, Spain and the Netherlands. The students recommended the school to continue with this and to offer

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next year's students Group EVS. The school management and the teachers are positive to this too. The biggest challenge though lays on the national level: will Norway – not an EU-member - be part of the new European Solidarity Corps programme? So far, the Norwegian government decided not to designate a budget to ESC activities in the years 2019 and 2020.

### **Badge system in VET-schools**

In this project, we have analyzed the potential of the Badge system, first of all as a tool in Group EVS projects. The results so far has been promising and therefore we decided to make a manual for this specific use (Clue2 Inclusion/ Intellectual Output 3).

The Norwegian VET-school Årstad VGS has also looked into the potential of using Badges as a measurement and recognition tool in other parts of VET-education, and sees the following advantages:

For the **student**, Badges could be a digital “library” of various competences obtained at the school. These may be competencies that normally will not be fully covered by grades. Digital badges may also be a useful tool in assessing the grade “Order and Behavior” for example, which is practiced differently from school to school and from teacher to teacher. It is the only grade that starts at the best grade and then builds down as the students show their lack of competence. It is largely based on what the student should not do and not what the student has achieved. Using Badges, the student can together with their fellow students participate in a process in which they formulate the social goals that the group will achieve (based on the school's goals and regulations). It can be, collaboration, meeting precisely - in short, the social processes that are common in the vast majority of workplaces. It will also be easier for the student to see what needs to be in place and one will not be able to hide behind the fact that "teachers do not like me".

The **school** will be able to work better and more clearly with the social competences in a forward-looking, educational process, while at the same time supporting the professional learning. It will also become clearer to a teacher that as an educator, it is expected that work will be done in both areas. At the same time, the teacher will have a safer basis for setting the right Order and Behavior grade, based on conversations and process, and not a mark of an action (or lack thereof).

The **company** will more easily be able to demand skills which are important for a future employee to be able to master and develop further in the social reality that the workplace in question is. For the company, this could replace the need to call a teacher for references.

### **More student participation in VET schools**

Erasmus+ Programme Guide – Part A: “Another challenge relates to the development of social capital among young people, the empowerment of young people and their ability to participate actively in society (...). This issue can also be targeted through non-formal learning activities, which aim at enhancing the skills and competences of young people as well as

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active citizenship.” Student councils can make proposals to the teachers and try to improve matters constantly. It is important that the VET school encourages their students to active participation in the school learning environment by establishing/ strengthening the school council and youth involvement activities.

And finally...

**Investing in the wellbeing of young people is investing in the prevention of early school leaving.**

### **ABBREVIATIONS:**

<b>ESC</b>	European Solidarity Corps
<b>EVS</b>	European Voluntary Service
<b>FL</b>	Formal learning
<b>NFL</b>	Non-formal learning
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>YFO</b>	Youth with fewer opportunities

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## ATTACHMENT

### “Skolelederen” (The School leader magazine) June 2019 - English translation

#### A lot of learning in non-formal learning

**-The best I learned is to not judge. There is always a history behind. I have also learned more about conflict management – and to be more patient! To live more in the situation. This is how the child- and youth work students summarised their own learning after practice in a school for handicapped children in Romania.**

#### SUCCESS, BUT THE GOVERNMENT SAYS NO

-Today’s school is based on formal learning. Now we are looking for more non-formal learning in order to activate motivation and interests in the students. We will develop concrete models for how schools can use non-formal learning methods, says project leader Barbara Harterink at Hordaland County Council.

– Non-formal learning means that we work with planned learning outside the formal structures. According to the International Strategy of the County Council, different international projects shall contribute to the provision of international competences for young people.

The County Council has been sending young people on voluntary projects in a safe environment for many years, funded by the EU through the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme. Harterink tells us that they offer tailor made projects for early school leavers. Young people can travel abroad in teams of two persons – from two weeks to two months. They are also part of planning the project. – They have to be motivated and ready to make an effort. We have good mentors and good cooperation partners who support them. We work with so-called gamers, youth with anxiety and ADHD – to mention some groups. We collaborate with the Follow-up service and they send potential candidates to us. The programme is free. – Last year we sent 27 young people. Many young participants bloom through this experience! Our results have impressed the Norwegian National Agency (Buf-directorate).

Harterink is clearly frustrated by this development. –Now we are losing the possibility to give this learning opportunity to our young people! This Spring, it was decided that Norway will no longer participate in the new programme for volunteering, European Solidarity Corps 2019-2020. We have been working strategically with EUs programme for youth and we want to show what we have achieved. We strongly encourage that Norway participates in European Solidarity Corps from 2021.

VOLUNTEER WORK IN THREE COUNTRIES Hordaland is also involved in another project. EU has given around 1,7 mill Norwegian kroner to a cooperation project among four countries aiming at prevention of early school leaving in VET schools. Project coordinator is Hordaland County Council, and Årstad upper secondary school and Nordland Research are the Norwegian partners. Finland, Spain and the Netherlands are the other partner countries.

Årstad vgs in Bergen is a VET school with a high percentage of early school leavers, who do not finish their courses.

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– We wanted to start activities for students at risk of dropping out of school. The name of the project is “Clue to inclusion”, financed through the EU-programme Erasmus+ Youth in Action. Årstad vgs sent two VG2 classes with 27 child- and youth worker students to three different projects in Romania, the Netherlands and Spain. The students did volunteer work for two weeks.

Red Cross volunteers were the group leaders, two for each of the three student groups. Red Cross has also carried out Conflict mediation workshops with the students at the school.

Dag Ofstad from Nordland Research follows the project as a researcher and is partner in the project. He has worked with the topic of early school leaving since the seventies. – Formal learning happens at school. In addition to this, there is another type of learning in non-formal learning arenas in the daily life of young people. We want to develop learning models based on practical cooperation and co-creation between teachers and students, both formal and non-formal methods. If we manage to combine these types of learning, it will contribute to strengthening life skills for many young people, says Ofstad.

#### STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND NGOS

Arthur Tøsdal is department for Healthcare, Childhood and Youth Development at Årstad vgs.

–In the long run, we would like to try out different non-formal learning methods together with Hordaland County Council and analyse what can prevent early school leaving. The short-term goal is non-formal learning for the students. –This is “Learning by doing”; we strengthen group dynamics and personal development through active participation, and through learning about volunteering, says Harterink.

The two add that they also want to strengthen collaboration with NGOs, especially Red Cross Bergen. It has been a crucial success factor that Red Cross was part of our project. The students say that they felt very safe with the two Red Cross volunteers, who accompanied each group of students. It is said that more competences should come into school –Red Cross has both the competences and skills and we can strongly recommend other schools to try this kind of cooperation. They will also analyse an assessment system, called Badges. It is an app, which documents gained skills and competences in a certain field, where achievement cannot be measured through the usual grade system, like social skills and cooperation competences. –Here it is possible, in cooperation with the students, to find skills, which are important for the specific student groups. Badges can become a sort of references from each individual school, explains Tøsdal.

#### A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE PROJECTS

As already mentioned, three groups of students (10+10+7) travelled to projects in Spain, The Netherlands and Romania. They stayed in these countries for two weeks. In Romania, they cooperated with several schools. They worked with children in a blind school and a school for children with special needs. In The Netherlands they worked with activating handicapped people – and in Spain they were connected to a school for tourist students. They were also involved in an agriculture project. In Romania, they lived in different host families for one week and one week in a hotel, in the two other countries the students lived together as a group for two weeks.

-It is important that young people are actively involved in all phases of the project including the planning phase. They participated in an Advance Planning Visit – together with Red Cross representatives, say Tøsdal and Harterink.

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## WHAT DO THE STUDENTS SAY?

We meet the students Emilie N. Kleppestø, Marthe Halle, Isabell Chyba Dale and Karina Andersen Øren. They were part of the group, which travelled to Romania. It was a long journey to Târgu Frumos Iași, but their host families looked after them very well.

It was difficult to communicate though; just a few could speak English and Google translate was a practical tool. The girls lived with different host families during one week, but because of local transport and distance to the school, it was more practical to move together in a hotel the last week. We saw many young people, who didn't go to school – there was clearly no child care or support system for them.

I asked them whether they felt unsafe? No, responded all. We met nice people! We met teachers who were truly engaged in their work.

They visited different local schools and participated in several activities. – Behavioural problems was a problem in the special school, where 380 pupils were gathered with different diagnoses; autism, downs, mental handicaps. The girls were surprised to learn that physical contact was forbidden. They were not allowed to touch or to hug the children. They had to talk from a distance – with a sort of security zone in between. The Norwegian girls talked about Norwegian experiences, via an interpreter, and the teachers preferred such a system.

Emilie, Marthe, Isabell and Karina were in agreement in their assessment of their stay and learning outcomes. – It was exciting. We learned a lot. Also about ourselves, and what we can accomplish. Not least, we learned to appreciate living in Norway. The organisation and structure during the stay abroad could have been better, say the four. -But after all, we learned something from that too.

I must say that I was impressed about what the girls told me that they had learned – and their reflections about their stay abroad. I cannot reproduce everything, but here are some examples: – I learned to adapt to whom I work with. It is useful for my job in future.

Photo 1: Exciting project with practical activities abroad for child- and youth worker students at Årstad VGS. The students in the front are: Michelle Catharina Tvedt Waardal, Victorya Arnesen Tuv, Mizzy Stephanie Lao Guico, William Telle Sandland, Sarah Engdal Høyland, Isabell Chyba Dale. At the back: Dag Ofstad (Nordlandsforskning), head of department Arthur Tøsdal (Årstad videregående skole) and project leader Barbara Harterink (Hordaland fylkeskommune).

Photo 2: - It was exciting. We learned a lot. Also about ourselves and what we can accomplish, say Isabell Chyba Dale, Karina Andersen Øren, Emilie N. Kleppestø and Marthe Halle. They volunteered at special schools in Romania for fourteen days.

Photo 3: From a day-centre where Romany culture was presented to the Norwegian students.







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