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## ARCO COMPARATIVE STUDY – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Comparative Study is one of the outcomes of the project “*ARCO – Key Competences for Young People NEET inclusion*” project funded by the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation.

This report presents the findings from research undertaken by the ARCO project partner organisations:

- Wac Arts, UK
- Rinova, UK
- MuLab, Italy
- QUESTAO, Portugal
- Metro Lab, Spain
- Hope for Children, Cyprus
- Sticing Kunstbedrijf Arnham, Netherlands

The central aim of ARCO is to develop the key competences of young people who are NEET, in particular, those defined as transferable skills, so that they are better able to maximize their potential in terms of social, cultural and economic inclusion. In order to achieve this the project partners are tasked with transferring and testing the methodology and approach defined by the *Transferable Skills Toolkit for Trainers*, which is a pedagogical resource for trainers. This has been developed by Rinova in close consultation with WAC ARTS, whose practice provided the inspiration and experience for the content.



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The specific objectives of the ARCO project are summarised as:

- Transferring and testing the 'Transferable Skills Toolkit'
- Building on the capacity of partner organisations to adapt and use the learning materials and approach
- Embed key competences into vocational related content
- Identify learning outcomes and disseminate widely in order to cascade knowledge.

Rinova developed the Comparative Study brief with agreement from all the partners. It employed the following methods:

- Desk-based research
- Baseline Study Questionnaire
- Partnership liaison, discussion and exchange
- Partner presentations.

The aim of this Comparative Study is to detail and compare the different contexts each of the targeted countries/organization are working, and in doing so establish the baseline research analysis for the work of the project. This has assisted in developing a work plan for the models' adaptation and identifying any potential issues.

The central areas of enquiry were:



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1. The social/economic context and the VET systems that the partner organisations are currently working within
2. Their target group profile and needs
3. Their training and learning ethos and offer
4. How the *Transferable Skills Toolkit for Trainers* fits within their current approach to delivery and to specific learners groups.

The following table summarises the key points in relation to the above four areas of enquiry across the partners. It does this in order to be able to offer easy comparative analysis thereby highlighting key areas of similarity and difference in the different partner national contexts.



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**Comparative Analysis Table**

Partner and Country	1. The social/economic context and the VET system	2. Target Group Profile
<p><b>WAC, UK &amp; Rinova, UK</b></p>	<p>18.7% youth unemployment. NEET characteristics: little work experience; often young people who are the most disadvantaged facing multiple barriers to inclusion; despite large scale government targeted programmes little policy level innovation with regards to NEET young people. Evidence of greater disadvantage in the labour market for YP from BME communities and particularly young men. Some evidence for links between worklessness and disengagement / low civil cohesion. Main programmes currently: the Work Programme and Apprenticeships. Key Skills narrowing within current government programmes despite body of research that points to the necessity of investment in these for young people.</p> <p>WAC is well known for its innovative work in engaging with NEET young people through creative performing arts. This is underpinned by a youth work holistic approach that aims to bring about positive changes for young people enabling them to move forward into EET pathways.</p>	<p>WAC works with young people from as young as five through to 30 across a range of different creative programmes. There are pathways for young people to progress within the organization as they develop skills.</p> <p>WAC works with all young people, however many of their young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and BME communities; mostly from low-income, low-level skills families that might have a history of generational worklessness.</p>
<p><b>Mulab, Italy</b></p>	<p>Increasing youth unemployment (38.7% now). Italy has more than 2million NEETs; the highest rate in Europe. Youth falling out of education is increasing. Difficulty in finding work has led/forced the youth to live with parents. Really difficult for migrants to get into employment as they don't hold qualifications. The same with youth with disabilities; NEET or very likely to be because are</p>	<p>Mulab is a cultural association performing promotion, consulting and training in the field of the independent cultural industry. Works mostly with young people who're aged between 18-30 years. They have also worked with children as</p>



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	<p>seen inactive for work. NEET group is recognized as the 'subgroup' of young people. The cost of NEETs in Italy is the highest in Europe. Increased awareness in Apprenticeships and plans for reducing school quitting are believed to be the key parts to finding work for young people. Mulab has become a training body that offers qualifications, which also provides permanent and continuous education.</p>	<p>young as 7 to 16 on different projects. Mulab privileges working with people who are at high risks of drop out coming from disadvantaged families such as migrant and low-income parents.</p>
<b>QUESTAO, Portugal</b>	<p>38.6% youth unemployment recorded in January 2013 in Portugal. Young people are currently facing difficulties entering the labour market. In Portugal, Education &amp; Training programmes aimed at young people are considered to be the key to Employment because they provide qualifications. These programmes are open to all young people including women, migrants and the disabled (no exclusions). QUESTAO developed a programme for young people who have dropped out of education or which were socially excluded which they ran for 8 years till 2 years ago.</p>	<p>QUESTAO works with youngsters aged between 15 and 18 years, which are mostly socially excluded. These are generally people that come from dysfunctional families, migrant backgrounds or families with low economic resources.</p>
<b>Metrolab, Spain</b>	<p>53.2% youth unemployment. Second highest in Europe (after Greece). Spain is behind Europe in terms of average percentages as 24.9% young people are early school leavers compared to the average percentage located to be around 15%. A lot of programs in Spain are focused on training to enhance employability of the younger generation. Vocational &amp; Educational training programmes have been introduced throughout the whole country to help younger people get into employment etc. by achieving some qualifications. This is also planned to reduce the percentage of the NEETs and youth unemployment in the country. METROLAB specializes in creative education through performing arts and in working with other organizations providing high levels of training for young people.</p>	<p>METROLAB works with a very large and diverse age range of people (Adults, youth, the unemployed, immigrants, people at risk of social exclusion etc.). The immigrant populations, along with the elderly and low-income families are the social groups that are most at risk. METROLAB will support those through many activities.</p>
<b>Hope for Children, Cyprus</b>	<p>31.8% youth unemployment. 16% of 15-24 year olds are NEETs. Statistics show that young males are more likely to be early school leavers compared to young</p>	<p>HFC is a non-governmental organization, which offers guidance and social support as well as</p>



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	<p>females. Migrants and Minorities are more likely to be the ones that will drop out of school first. Education and Training services receive a very high priority in Cyprus now. There are a lot of training programmes in Cyprus, which are run by governmental or semi-governmental agencies, aimed at the unemployed to become more competitive in the labour market. Also to reduce the percentage of the unemployed, to upgrade their skills and help fill vacancies etc. HFC utilizes the training programmes for newly employed tertiary education graduates. Non-formal education trainings delivered for developments of skills and to promote youth competence.</p>	<p>updating transferrable skills in addition to formal qualifications to young people. It often works with young NEETs helping/assisting them gain the skills that they may need to secure future employment. The majority of the young people that they work with come from a disadvantaged background in terms of social opportunities (i.e. migrants, victims of bullying etc.)</p>
<p><b>New Arts College, Netherlands</b></p>	<p>Youth unemployment 15.3% (129,000). Of all age groups the unemployment of youngsters is highest, followed by the age group 45-65. Statistics show that in Netherlands, someone with no qualifications is less likely to have a better income than someone who holds a qualification. It is believed that Education is the key to success in a labour market. The percentage of unemployed young women has increased especially for those that do not have qualifications. Migrants are generally less successful in school and labour market especially if not western. The Government supports youngsters with disabilities find suitable work. There are teams that focus only on young people who are NEETS and helping them get into employment or apprenticeships. Having some sort of qualification (i.e. 'Start qualification') gained through vocational/educational training or apprenticeships is believed to open the doors into employment. New Arts' main goal is to ensure that disadvantaged young people can take part in our society. They do this through formal and non-formal education. Provides 'star qualification' in order to increase the chances getting the unemployed into employment.</p>	<p>New Arts works with people aged 12-30. Concentrates more on training those who are NEETs, from disadvantaged backgrounds; BME communities and which are socially excluded. The company privileges NEET youngsters but who're involved in criminal activities.</p>



Partner and Country	3. Training and Learning Ethos	4. The WAC/Rinova Key/Transferable Skills Toolkit for Trainers
<b>WAC, UK &amp; Rinova, UK</b>	<p>It is believed that Arts can encourage the NEETs or people with anti-social behaviour to being responsible and a contributing member of the society. WAC aims to provide equality of access to high quality performing arts training for all students regardless of their backgrounds – In fact, concentrates more on those that have learning difficulties. WAC provides a lot of formal and non-formal programmes for young people mainly to train them on performing arts. It has one to one meetings between practitioners, mentoring, observations while working with young people in a non-formal learning setting in order to identify their need for Key/Transferable Skills. Focuses on skills such as communicational, interpersonal, creative thinking etc. All tutors working at WAC has/should have extensive experience of working with young people and are all being trained as assessors and verifiers to support delivery qualifications.</p>	<p>From the toolkit the competencies that best fit are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Communication</li> <li>b) Interpersonal</li> <li>c) Creative Thinking</li> <li>d) Learning &amp; Improving.</li> </ol> <p>WAC use these all in the creative context. A generic part of Apprenticeship training (what ever the sector) was key skills, which were broken down into 6 subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Application of Number</li> <li>• ICT</li> <li>• Working with Others</li> <li>• Improving Own Learning and Performance</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> </ul> <p>It is this area of ‘key skills’ that has the strongest relation to the ERF key competencies. However, these have recently been re-defined more narrowly as ‘functional skills’ and covering only English, Maths and ICT, therefore moving further away from ERF relevance</p>
<b>Mulab, Italy</b>	<p>In Italy, non-formal learning has begun to get greater attention thanks to the Apprenticeships and social &amp; cultural associations. Courses such that do not provide qualifications but help young people with the competences needed at school, during training, at work and in daily life have been introduced. MULAB</p>	<p>MuLab has identified as the most important the followings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications skills;</li> <li>• Technology skills;</li> </ul>



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	<p>works with all sorts of people regardless of their needs or their backgrounds, and the training delivered includes both technical / creative and personal skills. The main transversal skills are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diagnosis (situation, tasks, problem itself);</li> <li>• relationships (communicating, working group, negotiate);</li> <li>• problem solving (improving and developing self-learning, facing and solving problems, developing decisions).</li> </ul> <p>The teachers/tutors in Italy are not specifically trained to record the level of the acquired transversal competences however made sure that lessons are held in a dynamic way using many effective strategies to develop key and transversal competences.</p> <p>Teachers at MULAB are all professionals of their fields and must have technical-professional knowledge, the high school diploma.</p> <p>Competences defined through developing training and also through assessing individual learners skills and skill needs. Activities structured to deliver these skills although tutors not specifically trained in this area.</p> <p>“As a matter of fact, training activities are made with didactic units split into training purposes (key and transversal competences) and theoretical-practical competences. Lessons are held in a dynamic way, using many effective didactic methodologies and strategies to develop key and transversal competences, like cooperative learning, role plays, simulation of professional activities in the classroom, stages.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal skills (working with others);</li> <li>• Creative Thinking skills.</li> </ul> <p>This is because they are useful both within the creative industry and in other professional fields. They also contribute to ERF Key Competences such as Cultural Awareness and Social &amp; civic competences.</p> <p>Yes there is a fit within the Italian qualification system, which has recently been aligned with the ERF 8 KCs for Lifelong Learning.</p>
<p><b>QUESTAO, Portugal</b></p>	<p>Through our work experience developed over the past 12 years, namely throughout the project "Forest School" designed for young people who have left the formal school system, we found that only active methods with motivating activities, of proximity and practical use, enables the active</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication Skills</li> <li>• Personal Skills</li> <li>• Information Skills</li> <li>• Organisational Skills</li> </ul>



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	<p>participation of young people in their learning process.  They offer: School qualifications, learning support, psychological counselling, sports and leisure activities, families counselling (social, psychological, legal, ludic, parental training), articulation with other services and entities, family activities  Teachers / tutors equipped by “the work previously done, for their technical and human profile, for the interest shown in the training planned within the project and for the support we internally want to ensure in the development of activities.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Skills</li> <li>• Personal, creative, “learning and improving”, learning how to learn</li> </ul> <p>Because those would probably be the ones that would better prepare them to labour market, taking into account their disabilities, characteristics and needs.</p>
<p><b>Metrolab, Spain</b></p>	<p>We understand non-formal learning as a key tool in the development of skills that open the doors of the labor market integration, contributing to social inclusion. However Traditionally in Spain, the recognition of education and non-formal learning has found itself in a marginal situation compared to formal education. Non-formal education has been gaining specific weight in Education, due to our current socio-economic context, but there is no uniformity of views on this.</p> <p>To promote social and economic inclusion of people who need it, the main aims and principles that we have adopted, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting research and citizen participation, especially in traditionally discriminated groups: immigrants, gypsies, women, inhabitants of degraded neighbourhood, elderly people and young precarious workers.</li> <li>• Encourage cooperative work, with special attention to the use of new technologies.</li> <li>• Facilitating the learning and use of new technologies to those groups traditionally more away from them.</li> <li>• Promoting the integration of disadvantaged groups through networking.</li> <li>• Training all those interested in specific aspects of new technologies: multimedia, audio-visual, graphics, and animation.</li> <li>• Encouraging the use of free software.</li> </ul>	<p>As regards skills or abilities that fit best our work philosophy, we include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology skills</li> <li>• Creative thinking</li> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Teamwork.</li> </ul> <p>Our organization focuses on non-formal and informal education, within the European Qualifications Framework. Specifically, we use as benchmarks for evaluation and accreditation the competence units of qualifications listed in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications. So, the competence unit is subdivided into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional achievements</li> <li>• Achievement criteria</li> <li>• The professional context.</li> </ul> <p>The first phase in our accreditation system, regardless of previous track procedures is the key skills identification.</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in the implementation of projects that promote social values and may require the application of new technologies.</li> <li>• Promoting the meeting and exchange of ideas between like-minded groups.</li> </ul> <p>The identification of skills and competencies is the initial phase of our projects as well as understand the socio-cultural contexts from which target groups come.</p> <p>The skills they focus on are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative thinking</li> <li>• Technological Skills</li> <li>• Self-management</li> <li>• The participation and teamwork</li> <li>• Verbal communication.</li> </ul> <p>Our teachers are trained to develop continuously the skills needed to perform effectively teaching, within the educational models we promote.</p>	
<p><b>Hope for Children, Cyprus</b></p>	<p>In Cyprus there are no established frameworks, bodies, or guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning<sup>1</sup>. However, some progress is made towards that direction, for example the support of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).</p> <p>“Hope For Children” organises non-formal education activities for both children and youngsters, as we believe in the power of non-formal settings to build the capacities of young people to improve their chances in employment, interpersonal relationships and self-esteem.</p> <p>They deliver different types of activities and workshops relating to general human rights education training and training on subject-specific issues under</p>	<p>The 4 most important KCs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal skills</li> <li>• Learning and improving</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Creative thinking.</li> </ul> <p>Cypriot educational system is not providing chance for acquiring those skills, therefore we see it as necessary to initiate and incorporate programs that will include above mentioned skills within both formal and non-formal educational</p>



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	<p>the umbrella term of human rights using non-formal methods.</p> <p>Through the trainings and our promotion of non-formal education we emphasise that although it is difficult to certify non-formal education achievements their social recognition is increasing and the role of participation and learning of life skills to prepare for active citizenship is extremely valued.</p> <p>A ground needs assessment according to the target group must initially be carried out with the consultation and participation of the target group involved.</p> <p>During informal interactions with young people through our work and in our work place we identify important gaps when it comes to key/transferable skills exemplified in the ordinary tasks they are called to undertake and in their everyday communication.</p> <p>We focus on team work and team-building, critical thinking, on finding information and appraising it constructively, identifying biases and decision-making based on rational judgements. We set competence-based objectives, so we adjust the trainings conducted according to the specific skill that young people wish to develop or that we want the young people we work with to develop.</p> <p>The tutors/trainers apart from specialised skills according to the training they offer they are equipped with transferable skills themselves in order to mainstream them in the sessions carried out with the target group. Regarding teachers who we train to utilise non-formal HRE in their work they have a basic knowledge of communicating key/transferable skills and their reinforced importance with the target group.</p>	<p>structures.</p> <p>There are training programmes (e.g. targeted at the unemployed) that include 'horizontal skills', for e.g. information technology (IT) skills, languages and health and safety issues.</p>
<p><b>New Arts College, Netherlands</b></p>	<p>Non-formal learning is not a topic that is on the national politicians agenda. Government's plan in the Netherlands focuses more on youngsters who are in education and keeping them in formal education. Also, apprenticeships and training beyond formal systems are means that are used by UWV. At New Arts, it is believed that it is important for young people to have commitment and responsibility to gain appreciation + reduce the distance to the labour market. New arts give NEET youngsters the chance to gain skills in a project based</p>	<p>The 4 most important KCs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning and improving skills</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Personal skills</li> <li>• Interpersonal skills</li> </ul> <p>These are important to the young people, the teachers and trainers and also the organisation in</p>



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	<p>learning environment and does this through skilled trainer/role models improving the quality of projects. Key/Transferable skills; Learning and improving skills, communication skills, personal skills, Interpersonal skills. Tutors are trained in the setting of Powered by New Arts. However it is believed that the quality of training programs for Tutors should be improved.</p>	<p>different ways. The fit is that the qualification system used by New Arts College, through the ROC, emphasizes reflecting and evaluating.</p>
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### Comparative Analysis – Key Findings

The table below draws on all of the research findings produced by the partners in their individual national contexts, and from these draws out areas of similarity and difference.

Areas of Research Enquiry	Similarities	Differences
<p><b>1. The social/economic context and the VET system</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All partners highlighted issues of high youth unemployment relating to the current economic content.</li> <li>• Some groups of young people face additional disadvantages / barriers to inclusion and positive EET progression (for e.g. BME, migrants, immigrants, early school leavers, learning difficulties, disability, etc.).</li> <li>• Education and training seen as key to addressing youth unemployment. There are various programmes cited including a focus on VET, Apprenticeships, and employability. There seems to be general recognition that while qualifications are important additional employability and key skills are vital, particularly for those young people with lower educational attainments levels and / or facing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of youth unemployment very variable from 53% in Spain to 15% in the Netherlands.</li> </ul>



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	additional barriers to employment.	
<b>2. Target Group Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All partners work with young people and particularly NEET groups who face multiple disadvantages and barriers to inclusion and progression. All of the partners' organisations are NGOs using creative and non-formal approaches to working with their target groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The age ranges and groups that the partners work with differ with some working with very specific groups (for e.g. Questao works with those aged 15-18 years, while Metrolab works with a diversity of groups).</li> </ul>
<b>3. Training and Learning Ethos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That services and resources are open and designed to promote equality of access and encourage those affected by disadvantage</li> <li>Non formal and informal learning approach is used to attract and engage young people in non mainstream settings</li> <li>Trainers / tutors from a range of professional backgrounds with numerous skills, but importantly good at engaging with the target group/s</li> <li>Partners work with learners / participants to both identify skills /competences they have as well as gaps and needs.</li> <li>Developing skills, particularly key skills is seen as vital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using creativity and the arts was central to the work of some of the partners but less so with others</li> <li>Some partners offered programmes that led to formal accreditations / qualifications</li> </ul>
<b>4. The fit with the WAC/Rinova Key/Transferable Skills Toolkit for Trainers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All partners identified ways in which the transferable skills areas had fit or relevance with their work and in their national contexts for VET key skills learning.</li> <li>The four most cited skills areas of that best fit their work were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication</li> <li>Interpersonal</li> <li>Creative Thinking</li> <li>Learning and Improving.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some partners referred to the ERF Key Competencies as being relevant and recognized whilst other do not (for e.g. in Italy the qualification system has recently been aligned with the ERF)</li> <li>There was variance in the recognition and promotion of the importance of key skills or competencies in the different partner countries. For example in Cyprus the educational system does not provide opportunities to acquire these types of skills.</li> <li>Skills areas cited only once or twice were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Information</li><li>○ Organisation</li><li>○ Business</li><li>○ Team Work</li><li>○ Personal</li></ul>
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