Educate for Independence

D002.001 Key Findings Report



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1.Executive summary

This report presents the key findings of the transnational focus groups and SWOT analyses conducted as part of the European project **Educate for Independence (ED4IND)**. The initiative addresses the specific needs of young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs) with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments, aiming to support their inclusion and autonomy through innovative, community-based strategies.

The cornerstone of the activity was the evaluation of the Local Educational Unit (LEU) model, developed by the Italian partner IL RAMO. This model proposes a flexible, human-centred approach to support young people with intellectual impairments in developing life skills, accessing meaningful learning environments, and participating in inclusive work-based contexts.

Focus groups were held between April and June 2025 in Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain. Each session brought together a wide range of stakeholders including public authorities, educators, social workers, NGOs, volunteers, and NEET youth. These discussions informed a structured SWOT analysis carried out in each country, which served to identify shared strengths, context-specific challenges, and actionable recommendations.

The report synthesises findings across national contexts and provides a comparative overview of stakeholder perceptions. It offers insights to guide the refinement of inclusive methodologies and the development of pilot actions within ED4IND and beyond.

2. Introduction and purpose

The project **Educate for Independence (ED4IND)** is a transnational initiative aimed at improving the social and economic inclusion of NEETs with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments. By testing and adapting inclusive educational models such as the Local Educational Unit (LEU), the project promotes sustainable approaches to skill-building, autonomy, and active citizenship.

The key objective of this report is to capture the perspectives of stakeholders from four European countries, Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain, on the relevance and transferability of the LEU model. These perspectives were collected through national focus groups and systematised via SWOT analyses.

The outcomes presented here will inform the next stages of ED4IND, including the design of national pilot actions and the formulation of policy recommendations. They also contribute to a broader understanding of how inclusive practices can be embedded in local systems to support NEET youth with intellectual impairments.

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3. Methodology

3.1. Participant profile

The focus groups conducted in Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain brought together a total of 74 participants. These included representatives from public services such as municipal authorities, social services, and employment agencies. Professionals from education and training were involved, including teachers, trainers, and staff from vocational education centres, special education institutions, and inclusive training organisations.

All four focus groups included NGOs working in the fields of disability, youth, and community development. Representatives from companies, social cooperatives, and businesses with experience or interest in inclusive employment were also present. Volunteers from cultural, educational, and recreational associations participated, especially in Italy; in the case of Spain, participation came from staff members instead of volunteers. In Austria, Greece, and Spain, young people with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments took part in the sessions.

3.2. Focus Group procedure

The methodological process was defined by CESIE ETS to ensure a consistent yet context-sensitive approach across all countries. National focus groups were conducted between April and June 2025 in Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain. These sessions aimed to gather direct input from stakeholders on the LEU model and its potential transferability within their respective systems.

The format and structure of the focus groups varied across countries. In Austria, two separate sessions were held on the same day, one in-person with professionals and another online with young people with intellectual impairments. In Greece and Italy, the focus groups were conducted online in a single session. The Italian session was also supported by informal consultations with additional stakeholders. In Spain, two in-person focus group sessions were held: one with three stakeholders and another with six young people. In addition, three other stakeholders provided their input by responding to an online questionnaire. The participants included professionals from companies, employment services, schools, cultural associations, as well as young people.

Each focus group brought together a diverse selection of actors relevant to the inclusion of NEETs with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments. The focus group discussions were supported by common guiding questions and a shared presentation of the LEU model developed by the Italian partner, IL RAMO. Following the focus group sessions, each partner compiled a SWOT analysis, building upon the insights collected.

Participating organisations

- Austria: InterAktion
- Greece: Innovation Hive
- Italy: Il Ramo
- Spain: Asociación Bienestar y Desarrollo (ABD)

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Focus Group participant overview

Country	Total Participants	Profiles Represented
Austria	20	Social workers, vocational trainers, NEET youth representatives, disability experts
Greece	20	Municipal officials, educators, youth NGOs, employers, representatives of NEETs
Italy	22	Local authority staff, volunteers, cultural associations, social cooperatives, NEETs
Spain	12	Educational centres, youth employment services, municipal staff, non-profit actors

3.3. Process and data collection

Before the national focus groups took place, the Italian partner IL RAMO presented the LEU model to the consortium. A written document and PowerPoint presentation were provided, describing the model's structure, values, methods, and operational experience. This material served as a shared point of reference for all discussions.

Each partner facilitated one focus group, either online or in person. A common set of thematic questions guided the discussions, with adaptations introduced as needed to reflect each country's context and the composition of the group. Questions addressed the barriers faced by NEETs with intellectual impairments, characteristics of effective programmes, the role of local actors, skills for independence, approaches to community engagement, and the value of the LEU model.

In addition to direct group discussion, some partners collected complementary data. In Spain, a digital form was used to gather views from organisations unable to attend in person. In Italy, the focus group was supplemented with informal stakeholder consultations. Each partner documented their findings through notes or transcripts, which formed the basis for a national SWOT analysis.

3.4. Analytical approach

Each partner conducted a thematic analysis of the focus group data, which was also used in the shared SWOT framework to organize reflections on the LEU model. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified in relation to the model's implementation and adaptability within local systems.

The completed SWOT analyses were submitted to the coordinating partner. The results were then compared to identify recurrent issues, shared priorities, and variations linked to national conditions. The comparison focused on extracting insights relevant to the refinement of inclusive strategies for NEETs with intellectual impairments.

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4. Findings from Focus Groups

4.1. Common barriers identified

Stakeholders across Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain identified a range of persistent barriers that limit the educational, social, and professional inclusion of NEETs with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments. These barriers affect access to training, entry into the labour market, and the continuity of support after compulsory education.

In Austria, Greece, and Spain, stigma and negative public perceptions were reported as widespread. Employers, colleagues, and sometimes even service providers tend to underestimate the abilities of individuals with intellectual impairments, leading to limited opportunities and exclusion from mainstream programmes. In Austria, participants cited a lack of awareness and specific training among employers and vocational staff. In Spain, misconceptions about dependency and productivity were seen as common in the private sector.

Fragmentation of services and lack of coordinated pathways emerged in all four countries. Austrian stakeholders pointed to disconnected support systems across education, employment, and social care. In Greece, educators noted that NEETs are often left without direction after leaving school, with little transitional support. Italian participants described bureaucratic processes as complex and poorly integrated, often acting in parallel without communication. In Spain, young people reported that involvement from all institutions is needed, as the perception is that not all are equally committed.

Gaps in the design and delivery of training programmes were mentioned by all partners. In Greece and Austria, existing courses were considered too fast-paced, abstract, or generalised, lacking adaptation to the learning rhythms and cognitive needs of participants.

Barriers linked to personal and social contexts were also described. In Spain and Austria, young people with intellectual impairments expressed low self-confidence, difficulty articulating their goals, and limited experience in navigating job interviews or independent decision-making. In Greece, trainers observed high levels of anxiety and a lack of motivation following repeated failure or exclusion. Families, while often supportive, were reported as sometimes contributing to overprotection, particularly in Italy and Spain, where dependency on benefits was mentioned as a disincentive to active job-seeking.

Accessibility and transport were raised as practical barriers, particularly in Greece and Italy. In rural or less-connected areas, training centres and workplaces are often physically inaccessible, and young people frequently rely on family members or carers for mobility.

Financial and structural constraints were present in multiple contexts. In Austria and Spain, low wages and unattractive working conditions were reported as reducing motivation to enter or remain in the labour market. In Italy, the lack of formal recognition of innovative models like the LEU limited access to public funding and institutional support.

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4.2. Needs and support strategies

The focus groups across Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain identified several key areas where targeted support and programme adaptations are needed to improve outcomes for NEETs with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments.

A shared priority across all countries was the development of individualised and flexible training pathways. Stakeholders in Austria and Greece underlined the importance of adjusting the pace, format, and content of training programmes to meet learners' cognitive and emotional profiles. Educators in Greece emphasised the use of simplified materials, visual aids, and repetition. Austrian participants stressed the need for clear communication and flexible progression models that account for personal learning rhythms. In Spain, there was strong support for combining theory with practical activities tailored to real job roles, while in Italy, the experiential nature of the LEU model was seen as essential to sustaining engagement.

Ongoing, personalised guidance was consistently described as a necessary condition for success. In Greece and Spain, the figure of a long-term mentor or job coach was considered important to help build trust, reduce anxiety, and maintain motivation. In Austria, the absence of structured post-school transition planning was reported as a critical gap. Italian stakeholders also called for improved case-by-case coordination among services and for the presence of reference professionals able to monitor progress over time.

Emotional and psychological support was cited across the four contexts. In Austria and Greece, many young people were described as having experienced exclusion, rejection, or discouragement in previous settings. Counselling, peer support, and confidence-building activities were identified as valuable by both service providers and beneficiaries. In Spain, participants noted that emotional regulation, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills needed to be addressed before entering a work environment. Volunteers and educators in Italy also observed the positive relational effects of LEU activities, including improvements in self-expression and interpersonal trust.

Support strategies addressing daily autonomy were seen as necessary to complement technical training. In Spain and Austria, life skills such as money management, personal organisation, and healthcare navigation were considered essential for independent living. Greek educators also mentioned the importance of developing routines, public transport usage, and basic digital literacy. In Italy, the value of structured daily occupations and predictable responsibilities emerged as a central benefit of LEU placements.

Greater involvement of families and local communities was mentioned in several contexts. In Austria and Spain, participants highlighted the need to support families in encouraging autonomy and active participation. Greek stakeholders recommended including caregivers in certain phases of the learning and training process. In Italy, volunteers and local entities that collaborate with LEUs were seen as instrumental in creating inclusive environments and expanding the social reference points available to young people.

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4.3. Perceived strengths of the LEU model

The LEU model, introduced by IL RAMO and presented to all partners during the preparatory phase of this activity, was examined by stakeholders in all four participating countries. While direct familiarity with the model varied, its core principles and operational features were consistently recognised as relevant and well aligned with the needs of NEETs with intellectual impairments.

In Italy, where the model has been implemented, stakeholders highlighted its inclusive character and its ability to support personal development through daily engagement in structured, meaningful activities. Participants from municipalities, social cooperatives, and volunteer organisations observed that LEUs create environments where young people can gradually acquire independence, not only by learning practical tasks but also through exposure to social dynamics involving peers, mentors, and community members. Educators and employers valued the LEU's contribution to breaking the assistant–recipient dynamic and promoting the active role of the person with a disability in both social and work-like contexts.

The sense of continuity, predictability, and routine provided by the LEU model was considered beneficial by participants in Italy. These elements were linked to improved time management, the development of personal responsibility, and greater self-confidence. The activities carried out within LEUs were also appreciated for their flexible structure, allowing participants to experience different types of environments without rigid professional expectations.

In Greece and Austria, stakeholders found the model's focus on experiential learning particularly relevant. The emphasis on learning through action rather than through abstract or classroom-based methods was seen as compatible with the needs of learners who require repetition, contextual support, and clear feedback. Participants in Greece expressed interest in the model's community-based setting and its potential to function as a bridge between education, training, and employment. Austrian stakeholders noted the compatibility between the LEU's approach and the priorities of inclusive social enterprises, especially in relation to skills development and supported autonomy.

Spanish stakeholders highlighted the potential of the LEU model to counteract fragmentation in existing services. The multi-actor collaboration implicit in the model was considered a strength, especially where existing systems tend to operate in silos. Educators and employment service representatives pointed to the model's capacity to respond flexibly to individual rhythms and to generate practical, situated learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

In all countries, participants acknowledged that even without prior implementation, the LEU model reflects a set of values and working methods already seen as desirable or emerging within inclusive practices. These include adaptability, relational trust, cross-sector collaboration, and a focus on dignity and active participation for persons with intellectual impairments.

4.4. Stakeholder recommendations and opportunities

Stakeholders across all partner countries provided concrete recommendations for strengthening support systems for NEETs with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments and outlined opportunities to improve the visibility, sustainability, and adaptability of inclusive approaches such as the LEU model.

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A recurring recommendation was the creation of more coordinated, multi-sectoral frameworks to facilitate smoother transitions from school to adult life. In Austria and Greece, participants advocated for stronger collaboration between schools, social services, employment offices, and community actors. In Italy, where informal collaborations around the LEU model already exist, the absence of formal recognition was seen as a limiting factor in scaling and replicating such initiatives.

The development of partnerships with companies and local employers was encouraged in all contexts. Stakeholders in Spain and Greece proposed incentive schemes and awareness campaigns to promote inclusive hiring. In Austria, representatives of social businesses noted that the availability of tailored job roles and job coaching could facilitate gradual integration. Italian participants emphasised the importance of building relationships with companies that already show openness to inclusion, particularly at local level, and suggested that showcasing successful placements could help generate interest among new employers.

Capacity-building for staff working with NEETs with intellectual impairments was identified as a critical opportunity. Austrian and Greek stakeholders recommended specific training for VET professionals, job coaches, and employers, focusing on communication strategies, emotional support, and inclusive pedagogies. In Spain, the need to strengthen the competences of trainers and tutors in dealing with mixed-ability groups and managing group dynamics was highlighted.

The role of civil society and community organisations was considered essential for sustaining inclusion beyond the institutional sphere. Spanish and Italian stakeholders underlined the contribution of libraries, cultural centres, and volunteer associations in providing inclusive spaces and social visibility for young people with disabilities. Greek participants suggested involving NGOs more systematically in the design and delivery of training content. In Austria, community-led initiatives such as pop-up cafés or neighbourhood repair workshops were mentioned as accessible formats for experiential learning and public engagement.

Improved communication strategies were seen as an opportunity to reduce stigma and to shift perceptions around intellectual disability. In Spain and Austria, participants suggested the use of storytelling, community events, and campaigns to highlight the capabilities of young people and to normalise their presence in public and professional settings. Greek stakeholders proposed making greater use of youth-led content and first-person narratives. In Italy, public recognition of inclusive projects such as the LEU was seen as a way to promote institutional support and attract further collaboration.

5. SWOT analysis summary

Following the completion of national focus groups, each partner developed a SWOT analysis to assess the applicability, strengths, and critical aspects of the LEU model within their national contexts. The SWOT framework enabled stakeholders in Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain to systematically reflect on four key dimensions: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the model.

The analyses drew on the outcomes of the focus group discussions and, in some cases, additional interviews or observations from local stakeholders. While each country applied the framework according to its own institutional setting and stakeholder composition, several points of convergence emerged. The

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following sections present a synthesis of the national SWOTs, structured thematically to highlight shared reflections as well as context-specific observations.

SWOT Matrix

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Person-centred structure adaptable to individual needs	Lack of formal recognition in national systems
Experiential and inclusive methodology that boosts engagement	Economic fragility and dependency on project-based funding
Strong integration with local communities and small businesses	Limited infrastructure and weather-related constraints
Promotion of autonomy, dignity, and active citizenship	Insufficient staff capacity and coordination across services
Holistic focus on life skills and emotional wellbeing, not just employment	Lack of standardisation, evaluation tools, and transferability frameworks

Opportunities	**Threats**
Increased institutional and public attention to disability inclusion	Funding instability and rigid administrative processes
Availability of targeted funding programmes (EU, national, regional)	Shifts in political and social priorities
Strengthening of cross-sector partnerships and community alliances	Persistent stigma and prejudicial attitudes
Alignment with modern inclusive pedagogical approaches	Limited stakeholder engagement and coordination capacity
Emerging public discourse on disability and employment	Structural and infrastructural limitations; labour market constraints

5.1. Strengths

The SWOT analyses carried out in Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain highlighted several shared strengths of the LEU model, alongside some country-specific elements reflecting local contexts. The following strengths were recurrently identified across the partner countries.

Person-centred structure

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The LEU model was consistently appreciated for its human-centred and individualised approach. Partners in Austria and Spain underlined its capacity to adapt to the specific needs and learning pace of each participant. In Italy, this was directly linked to increased self-determination and personal growth. Greek stakeholders considered the model especially relevant for supporting autonomy and social inclusion in a structured but flexible manner.

Experiential and inclusive methodology
All partners recognised the LEU model's grounding in experiential learning as a fundamental strength. The integration of real-life environments, tasks, and relationships was seen as essential to the development of transferable skills and personal confidence. In Austria and Greece, this was connected to improved motivation and engagement among participants. Italian stakeholders emphasised the inclusive nature of the activities, which facilitate contact with neurotypical peers and non-specialised community members.

Connection with local communities
The LEU model's embeddedness in local social and economic contexts was noted as a valuable element. In Spain and Italy, the collaboration with small businesses, cooperatives, municipalities, and cultural entities creates environments of "normalised" interaction, reducing isolation and strengthening community ties. Austrian and Greek respondents also pointed to the opportunity to build structured networks around each person's trajectory, including families, employers, and public bodies.

Promotion of autonomy and dignity
In all four countries, the LEU model was seen as a means to promote autonomy, active citizenship, and dignity for persons with intellectual impairments. Participants in Italy noted the gradual shift from passive support to active participation. In Spain, the model was considered capable of challenging dependency dynamics and contributing to the perception of young people as capable actors. Austrian and Greek stakeholders echoed this view, noting the emphasis on real responsibility and task ownership.

Holistic development and quality of life
The model's focus on life skills and emotional wellbeing in addition to work-readiness was highlighted across contexts. In Greece and Austria, participants stressed the importance of balancing vocational and personal development. In Italy, the quality-of-life framework underpinning LEU activities was noted as a unique feature. Spanish stakeholders supported this view, indicating that the model supports overall wellbeing rather than focusing exclusively on employment outcomes.

5.2. Weaknesses

Several internal limitations of the LEU model were identified across the four partner countries, relating to implementation challenges, operational sustainability, and structural gaps that could affect long-term effectiveness.

Lack of formal recognition
In Italy, the LEU model is not yet formally recognised within the national social or educational system, which prevents access to stable funding and institutional support. Spanish stakeholders expressed concern about the absence of an official status that could allow the model to be integrated into public

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service networks. In Austria and Greece, participants observed that without legal or policy endorsement, such models remain marginal and difficult to replicate beyond the local level.

Economic fragility and dependency on external funding
In all countries, economic sustainability was raised as a key weakness. Italian and Spanish partners noted that the model depends heavily on project-based funding, which limits its scalability. Austrian participants highlighted the financial vulnerability of small-scale initiatives, especially in rural or less central areas. In Greece, reliance on short-term programmes and lack of long-term investment were identified as barriers to continuity.

Limited infrastructure and weather-related constraints
In Italy and Spain, the outdoor and context-based nature of many LEU activities, while seen as beneficial, also poses a logistical limitation during adverse weather conditions. Partners noted the absence of flexible indoor spaces that could guarantee continuity. This was particularly relevant in areas where public infrastructure is under-resourced or not adapted to inclusive training formats.

Insufficient staff capacity and coordination
Several partners reported challenges linked to human resources. In Greece and Austria, the availability of trained professionals with specific skills in intellectual disability and inclusive pedagogy was described as limited. Spanish stakeholders noted difficulties in maintaining staff continuity and coordination across actors involved in different stages of support. In Italy, the model's reliance on a network of committed individuals and informal collaboration was seen as a potential weakness in terms of reproducibility.

Lack of standardisation and scalability tools
The absence of clear protocols, evaluation metrics, and operational guidelines was identified as a limitation in Greece, Austria, and Spain. While the model is intentionally flexible, stakeholders highlighted the need for minimum standards to ensure quality and accountability. Italian participants acknowledged that the strong localisation of LEUs, while beneficial in some respects, may hinder wider transferability if not accompanied by a shared methodological framework.

5.3. Opportunities

The partner countries identified a number of external factors that could support the consolidation, expansion, and formal recognition of the LEU model or similar inclusive approaches aimed at NEETs with intellectual impairments.

Growing institutional and public interest in inclusion
In Greece, Austria, and Spain, stakeholders noted an increasing political and institutional sensitivity towards disability inclusion and supported employment. National and European strategies promoting social economy models and inclusive education were seen as potential levers for aligning the LEU model with broader policy frameworks. Italian participants referred to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a reference point for advocating the model's formal recognition.

Availability of targeted funding programmes
Opportunities for funding were identified at both national and European levels. Greek and Austrian stakeholders pointed to Erasmus+, the European Social Fund, and national innovation grants as possible

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instruments to sustain inclusive education initiatives. In Italy and Spain, foundations and regional authorities were seen as relevant actors for financing pilot actions, infrastructure upgrades, and transport solutions linked to the LEU methodology.

Expansion of local partnerships and intersectoral cooperation
Stakeholders in all four countries reported a growing willingness among municipalities, employers, training centres, and NGOs to engage in collaborative efforts. In Spain, community organisations and inclusive enterprises were seen as key allies for practical implementation. Austrian partners highlighted that cross-sector alliances could help bridge gaps between education and employment. Greek and Italian participants viewed the model as a catalyst for activating local networks around the person, encouraging integrated planning and shared responsibility.

Innovation in pedagogical and training approaches
The flexibility and adaptability of the LEU model were seen as compatible with recent developments in inclusive pedagogy. Greek and Spanish stakeholders referred to the rise of learner-centred, project-based, and experiential learning methodologies, which could support the institutionalisation of the model. In Austria, innovations in competence-based certification and micro-credentials were identified as potential tools to formally validate achievements within the LEU pathway.

Emerging public discourse on disability and work
In Italy, participants noted a cultural shift in how disability and employment are discussed in public forums, including the media and civic spaces. Spanish stakeholders proposed leveraging this discourse to promote positive narratives and increase the model's visibility. In Austria and Greece, campaigns and awareness-raising events were considered useful instruments to mobilise support among citizens, employers, and policymakers.

5.4. Threats

The analyses indicate a number of external challenges that could affect the sustainability and scalability of the LEU model. Stakeholders across the partner countries highlighted several interrelated risks:

Funding instability and bureaucratic constraints
Uncertainty in project-based and public funding was noted in Austria, Italy, and Spain. Rigid administrative requirements and fluctuations in public investment, coupled with potential changes in national or EU policies, may undermine the long-term financial support for the model.

Shifts in social and political priorities
In all four countries, changes in social policies or political priorities, particularly those that de-prioritise inclusive practices or place a stronger emphasis on fiscal austerity, were perceived as a threat. These changes could lead to reduced commitment from public authorities and potentially limit institutional recognition of innovative community-based approaches.

Persistent stigma and prejudicial attitudes
Stakeholders in Greece, Austria, and Spain observed that enduring societal stigma and misconceptions about intellectual impairments can hamper community acceptance and reduce opportunities for

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inclusion. Such negative perceptions may influence employer attitudes and limit the willingness of companies to engage in inclusive partnerships.

Inadequate stakeholder engagement and capacity
Concerns were raised regarding the potential for stakeholder fatigue, particularly when collaboration depends on overburdened social services, under-resourced community organisations, or companies focused on short-term economic gains. In Italy and Spain, difficulties in maintaining long-term engagement of all key actors were also mentioned, especially where models lack formal integration into existing frameworks.

Infrastructure and accessibility limitations
In Greece and Italy, physical infrastructure challenges were highlighted, with adverse weather conditions and limited indoor spaces affecting programme delivery. In Austria, geographical disparities and underdeveloped digital infrastructure in some areas could restrict the reach of LEU activities.

Economic and market pressures
Across partner countries, broader economic conditions, such as rising unemployment rates or an emphasis on short-term productivity in the labour market, could diminish the attractiveness of inclusive employment pathways, thereby reducing opportunities for meaningful job placements.

6. Recommendations

The insights gathered from the focus groups and SWOT analyses across Austria, Greece, Italy, and Spain have led to a set of shared recommendations aimed at enhancing the inclusion of NEETs with mild-to-moderate intellectual impairments. These recommendations address both the refinement of the LEU model and the broader conditions necessary for its successful integration and sustainability across different contexts.

One of the most pressing issues identified is the absence of formal recognition for models such as the LEU. Stakeholders in all four countries stressed the need for institutional frameworks that support flexible, community-based pathways to inclusion. Without legal status or integration into public service systems, such models remain dependent on temporary funding and the goodwill of local actors. Aligning the LEU approach with existing disability strategies, education policies, and labour inclusion frameworks would allow it to move from a promising local practice to a transferable solution.

Another key area relates to funding. The analyses consistently highlighted the fragility of project-based financing and the need for longer-term, diversified investment. Stakeholders recommended the combination of regional, national, and European funding streams, including structural funds and calls dedicated to inclusive education and employment. Support from private foundations and public–private partnerships was also identified as an opportunity to strengthen financial resilience.

The physical and organisational infrastructure supporting LEU-type initiatives requires reinforcement. In several countries, stakeholders pointed to the lack of accessible indoor spaces and reliable transport as barriers to continuity. Investments in infrastructure are needed to ensure that activities can take place

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year-round, especially in rural or underserved areas. This includes adapting facilities to universal design standards and developing logistical arrangements that reduce dependency on families or carers.

Capacity building emerged as a cross-cutting recommendation. The LEU model relies on the active involvement of educators, trainers, social workers, employers, and community actors. In this sense, the success of the model depends on equipping these stakeholders with the appropriate skills and tools. Training in inclusive pedagogy, emotional and behavioural support, and inter-agency cooperation was identified as a common need, especially where services are fragmented or under pressure.

Strengthening the local networks that support NEETs is considered essential. Stakeholders stressed the value of stable partnerships between schools, employment services, NGOs, and local authorities. Shared case management, clear role distribution, and mutual trust were seen as foundations for sustainable collaboration. Furthermore, the involvement of civil society, including volunteers, libraries, cultural associations, and social cooperatives, was considered a unique asset of the LEU approach that should be actively promoted.

Finally, visibility and public communication were noted as strategic levers. The persistence of stigma and low expectations around intellectual disability can only be countered through positive narratives and consistent community presence. Communication efforts should highlight the capabilities, contributions, and potential of NEETs involved in inclusive initiatives, while also advocating for broader cultural and policy change.

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