



maya

Handbook



Montessori Method Principles for
Personal and Professional Development
of Young Adult Inactive NEET Women



**Montessori Method Principles for Personal and Professional Development of
Young Adult Inactive NEET Women**

A Handbook Developed as Part of the MAYA Project

**Mainstreaming Activities to Empower the Professional and Emotional
Aspects of Young Adult Women Not in Employment/Training/Education
(NEET) in Europe**

Erasmus+ KA220-YOU Türkiye · Austria · Portugal · Italy

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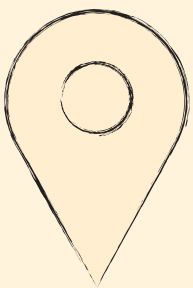
CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

The purpose is to imagine.



Imagine a woman whose access to education or employment is restricted, not because she lacks ambition, but because of the obstacles she faces. Her potential is still there; it just needs to be seen.

Main Concepts



Young Adult Inactive NEET Women: Young women aged 18–35 who are not in education or employment.

MAYA Approach: A new learning method tailored to the needs of individuals facing complex situations.

Personal Roadmap



This section encourages Young Adult Inactive NEET Women to visually create their own success roadmaps, thus initiating a self-directed development process.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

“The MAYA Project empowers NEET women through a flexible, Montessori-inspired learning approach; it restores their dignity and promotes inclusivity.”

1.1 MAYA Project

Imagine a young woman full of potential, creativity, and untold stories—her journey in education or employment interrupted not by a lack of ambition, but by circumstances beyond her control. Perhaps she faced social expectations, economic hardship, or the absence of an environment that believed in her worth. And she is not alone. Countless young women across Europe live disconnected from opportunities, waiting not only for a job, but also for the chance to reconnect with a sense of purpose. MAYA was created for them, and for you, the youth workers, educators, and community leaders who stand alongside them.

The project asks us to shift our focus: Instead of seeing these women as problems to be solved, what if we saw them as individuals with strengths to be nurtured? What if we reimaged education not as a rigid system, but as a flexible, respectful, and empowering experience?

Inspired by the Montessori method, MAYA offers a new approach to learning — one that values dignity, personal growth, and self-discovery as much as employability. It's about creating spaces where women can develop emotionally, socially, and professionally on their own terms. The MAYA Project is a European initiative developed and implemented in Turkey, Italy, Austria, Portugal, and Lithuania. It focuses on one of the most important challenges in adult education: how do we meaningfully empower Young Adult Inactive NEET Women (YAINWs) aged 18–35 who are not in education, employment, or any form of training, towards autonomy and inclusion? Recognizing that traditional educational models often fail to address the complex realities of NEET women, MAYA brings together educational institutions, community-based organizations, youth workers, and social service professionals. Together, we explore how Montessori principles, designed for children, can be adapted and applied to adult learning environments — aiming to rebuild dignity, confidence, and learning capacity.

The project transcends the narrow confines of vocational training. Instead, it offers emotional, social, and cognitive tools that support sustainable change through tailored learning interventions that prioritize personal growth alongside vocational development, incorporating flexibility, emotional security, and respect for individual pace.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

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1.2 Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is designed for practitioners and stakeholders committed to the inclusion and empowerment of Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women (YAINWs). Because this group is often overlooked, it offers practical guidance, evidence-based methods, and adaptable tools to support meaningful engagement.

This handbook is for youth workers who work daily with young women facing social exclusion and are seeking innovative ways to promote personal development and employability. It is for adult educators and non-formal education trainers who work with learners whose educational journey has been interrupted. It is for social workers and NGOs focused on women's empowerment, mental health, and labor market participation. It is also for policymakers and corporate leaders seeking proven models to strengthen social and labor market integration.

This handbook aims to help understand the real challenges faced by Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women (YAINWs)—care responsibilities, economic hardship, emotional vulnerability, and systemic exclusion—and to adopt learner-centered approaches that foster trust, autonomy, resilience, and long-term inclusion. By promoting more humane, resilient, and empowering learning environments, this resource supports you in creating pathways to opportunities, trust, and meaningful social inclusion.

1.3 The Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook is designed to support youth workers as facilitators of meaningful change for Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women (YAINWs). Based on Montessori principles, this resource has three interconnected aims: to provide practical tools, insights, and strategies to help youth workers increase their impact through special, respectful, and empowering interventions.

The primary aim is to equip youth workers with the tools necessary to empower Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women (YAINWs) through skill development and social integration. Building on Montessori's emphasis on self-directed and experiential learning, the handbook guides youth workers in creating supportive environments where young women can discover and develop their talents, build self-confidence, and progress toward active participation in the labor market. It offers an accessible summary of Montessori principles, research on the obstacles faced by NEET women, and case studies demonstrating how personal and professional development can be addressed together.

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1.3 The Purpose of the Handbook

The second aim is to enable youth workers to bridge the gap between policy, research, and practice. Recognizing that employability is not solely about technical skills, the handbook, inspired by Montessori’s respect for individual pace and autonomy, offers a flexible training framework suitable for adult NEET learners. It includes methods for developing personal and social competencies, and guidelines on how to design inclusive and emotionally safe learning environments (physical or digital) that respond to the diverse needs of each learner.

The third objective is to empower youth workers to become pioneers of innovation within their communities and networks. Through Montessori-based methods, this handbook provides tools for testing new approaches, encouraging Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women (YAINWs) to define personal goals and life projects, and establishing collaborations with local stakeholders. It also promotes strategies for scaling Montessori learning models at local and national levels, helping youth workers increase the reach and sustainability of their initiatives.

Through these goals, the handbook equips youth workers to design and implement learner-centered and personalized pathways based on the core values of Montessori principles. By building trust, fostering autonomy, and supporting both personal and professional development, these approaches enable NEET women to re-engage in learning and life on their own terms. Ultimately, this helps youth workers become catalysts for lasting inclusion; enabling young women not only to access opportunities but also to build a resilient and self-governing future.

1.4 Methodological Basis

This handbook is based on real experiences and in-depth listening. To truly understand the challenges faced by Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women (YAINWs) and how Montessori principles can support their development, the project involved direct interaction with young women and the professionals working with them.

Across Austria, Turkey, Italy, and Portugal, the aim was not just to collect data, but to hear the stories behind the statistics. Through structured surveys, more than 100 young women and over 100 youth workers, educators, and social service professionals shared their experiences regarding barriers to education, employment, and opportunities.

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1.4 Methodological Basis

These responses offered a rich insight into the challenges and expectations that define the daily lives of many Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women (YAINWs). In addition, 10 focus group sessions were conducted with young women, providing them with safe and supportive spaces where they could openly reflect on their journeys. These sessions revealed powerful narratives of struggle, resilience, and hope, and these perspectives played a significant role in shaping the practical guidance included in this handbook.

In addition to this direct interaction, the project also examined national policies, systemic gaps, and examples of real-world educational initiatives inspired by Montessori principles. Analysis of these examples revealed the impact of hands-on, respectful, and adaptive learning environments and how these approaches can be successfully applied to support the personal and professional development of young women in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts.

Reminder: Montessori methods emphasize individual pace, self-directed learning, and respectful interaction. Apply these principles when designing your interventions.

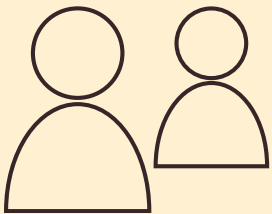
CHAPTER 2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Resilient NEET Women



NEET women are resilient young women navigating a labyrinth of social, economic, and cultural barriers.

Understanding the Realities of NEET Women



Interviews conducted across Austria, Türkiye, Italy, and Portugal reveal the nuanced challenges faced by these women.

What the research shows:



Approximately 70% live in disadvantaged areas.

Between 40% and 50% of women identify family responsibilities as the main obstacle.

- Reminder: Youth workers should create inclusive, resilient, and trust-based environments that encourage the participation of NEET women.

Chapter 2 – Understanding the Context

“Young Adult Inactive NEET Women are resilient young women navigating a labyrinth of social, economic, and cultural barriers — disconnected not by choice, but due to circumstances; yet ready to reconnect when given the opportunity.”

2.1 Profile of Young Adult Inactive NEET Women

General demographic characteristics, challenges faced, and barriers to employment and social integration.

A summary of findings from national reports and surveys.

2.2 Barriers to Employment and Social Participation

Structural, socio-economic and individual barriers,

Insights gained from focus group discussions and desk research,

2.3 Understanding the Realities of Young Adult Inactive NEET Women

Youth workers who work with Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women encounter lives shaped by stories of resilience but also multifaceted exclusion. Based on interviews with over 100 women and more than 100 professionals across Austria, Turkey, Italy, and Portugal, the findings reveal the nuanced challenges these young women face. These insights offer a valuable guide to understanding who Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women are and what shapes their paths.

Young Adult Inactive NEET Women are not a homogeneous group; however, they share common characteristics. They are women aged 18–35 who are out of education, employment, or any educational program. But these definitions remain superficial. Many live in disadvantaged urban areas, remote rural communities, or within immigrant families. Their access to quality services such as education, childcare, transportation, or employment is often limited or nonexistent.

They take on multiple roles simultaneously:

- Caregivers and mothers whose family responsibilities take precedence over their personal goals.
- Individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from those who left school early to university graduates who have been left behind due to cultural or economic barriers,
- Women who, despite having strong community ties, are deprived of opportunities that others take for granted,

Chapter 2 – Understanding the Context

“Young Adult Inactive NEET Women are resilient young women navigating a labyrinth of social, economic, and cultural barriers — disconnected not by choice, but due to circumstances; yet ready to reconnect when given the opportunity.”

2.3 Understanding the Realities of Young Adult Inactive NEET Women

In Turkey, Young Adult Inactive NEET Women are concentrated in conservative, rural areas where early marriages and limited resources restrict women's participation in public life. In Austria, despite a strong vocational training system, young women living in rural towns or immigrant communities may still remain outside the system. Similarly, in Italy and Portugal, Young Adult Inactive NEET Women are often concentrated in economically disadvantaged regions, particularly in the south or interior, where youth employment is limited and community support is fragmented.

2.4 What Youth Workers Need to Know: Navigating Complex Realities

Young Adult Inactive NEET Women live at the intersection of expectations, economic hardship, and interrupted educational journeys. Often financially dependent on their families or partners, these women feel disconnected not only from the job market or learning opportunities, but also from their peers who have progressed in their careers or education. Youth workers will encounter women with very different backgrounds. Some may have a diploma or even a college degree, but are not encouraged to work due to cultural or family constraints. Others have dropped out of school early, lack formal qualifications, and carry the burden of past educational struggles.

It's important to recognize that family responsibilities are not just obstacles, but daily realities that shape every decision. For many Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs), caring for children, siblings, or elderly family members isn't a choice; it's an expectation that leaves no room for personal growth. These responsibilities hinder any desire to return to education or employment.

- Isolation also plays a significant role. This can be both social and geographical. Many young women live in areas where access to transportation, affordable childcare, or safe public spaces is limited. This lack of access exacerbates feelings of disconnection, not only from opportunities but also from social networks that could support learning or reintegration into the workforce.
- In any case, Young Adult Inactive NEET Women don't just wait for opportunities to arise; they often try to navigate their way through a world that leaves them behind.

Chapter 2 – Understanding the Context

“Young Adult Inactive NEET Women are resilient young women navigating a labyrinth of social, economic, and cultural barriers — disconnected not by choice, but due to circumstances; yet ready to reconnect when given the opportunity.”

2.5 What is holding them back?

The obstacles faced by Young Adult Inactive NEET Women are multifaceted and often reinforce each other, making participation in work or education a distant goal. One of the most common barriers is the lack of supportive infrastructure. Affordable childcare is often inaccessible, especially for low-income families. Without it, women cannot attend courses or work because caregiving is an indispensable priority. Transportation is also a frequent problem. Even in urban settings, long commutes, high costs, and unreliable public transportation deter Young Adult Inactive NEET Women from accessing opportunities.

Adult education is often planned with the assumption that participants are free during traditional hours; however, the realities of those dealing with family responsibilities or having limited mobility are often not taken into account. Information about programs often fails to reach the women who need it most. Language and cultural differences, and institutional insecurity prevent Young Adult Inactive NEET Women, especially those of immigrant or minority backgrounds, from accessing available services. Information campaigns are often inadequate because trusted community channels are not utilized, creating a disconnect between what is offered and what is received. Furthermore, gender biases in the labor market continue to limit options. Young Adult Inactive NEET Women frequently report facing discrimination, particularly when attempting to return to male-dominated sectors or when employers question their commitment due to family responsibilities.

Economic insecurity is both a cause and a perpetuator of NEET (Not in Active Economics). Many Young Adult NEET women live dependent on their families or partners without a stable income. In some cases, cultural norms even prevent young women from seeking financial independence and reinforce domestic roles. In places like Turkey, young women often remain financially dependent on their families even into adulthood. In Italy and Portugal, the effects of economic crises have made it difficult for even aspiring women to find meaningful and stable work.

Where local labor markets are weak, short-term or informal jobs offer women little incentive or stability. In Austria, many women are stuck in low-wage, precarious jobs and unable to transition to more sustainable employment. Youth workers should not only offer learning opportunities.

Chapter 2 – Understanding the Context

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2.6 What the Research Shows: A Brief Look at the Realities

Research conducted in partner countries provides a clear and sometimes striking picture of the realities faced by Young Adult Non-Elective (NEET) women. Approximately 70% of these women live in disadvantaged, marginalized areas where access to services is limited due to geographic, infrastructural, or social exclusion. Caregiving remains one of the most common challenges; 40% to 50% of women identify family responsibilities as a primary factor preventing them from returning to education or employment. For many, these roles are deeply ingrained in cultural expectations and daily necessities, leaving little room for personal aspirations.

Educational level also presents a significant barrier. More than half of the women lack formal qualifications, and for many, returning to traditional forms of education seems unattainable—either due to negative past experiences or because current systems fail to consider their realities. Financial constraints exacerbate these problems. 60% of women report that financial constraints are the primary obstacle to accessing learning or work opportunities. The cost of courses, transportation, or childcare often makes participation an impossible choice. Emotional barriers are equally influential; 70% of Young Adult Inactive NEET women report that the thought of returning to education or the labor market causes them anxiety or fear. These feelings are often rooted in past experiences of failure, rejection, or systemic exclusion. Perhaps most strikingly, less than 30% of these women have participated in appropriate or supportive training. This highlights the urgent need for approaches that reflect their true needs and circumstances.

Reminder: Young Adult Non-Education (NEET) women face overlapping structural, emotional, and economic barriers that lead to their disengagement from education and employment. Youth workers need to create inclusive, resilient, and trust-based learning environments that reflect the real lives of these women.

THE ROLE OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

Why Montessori?



NEET offers women respect, autonomy, and safe learning connected to real life.

Respect for the Individual



Respect for every woman's experience and pace.

Independence



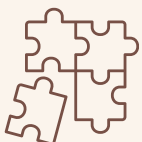
Making your own choices, autonomy.

Experiential Learning



Practical, based on real life.

Supportive Environment and Self-Directed Learning



A safe, inclusive learning environment, the power to chart one's own path.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

“The MAYA Project adapts the Montessori approach, which is particularly based on the principle of respect for the individual, to create resilient, learner-centered environments by offering personalized, culturally sensitive and emotionally safe learning experiences to NEET women across Europe.”

3.1 Why Montessori?

For youth workers seeking ways to offer meaningful support to inactive young adult women, the Montessori Method offers a respectful, innovative, and highly relevant approach. Although originally developed for children, its core principles have had a profound impact on adults who feel marginalized by traditional educational and social systems. At its core, Montessori understands that the most powerful form of learning occurs when the individual is treated with respect for their whole being—their experiences, needs, and potential.

Montessori does not demand that young adult inactive women conform to rigid structures; instead, it offers them a space to rediscover their strengths, rebuild their self-confidence, and engage in learning in personal and empowering ways. It views each woman not as a “problem” to be solved, but as a curious, developing individual capable of charting her own path.

3.2 How do Montessori principles help young, inactive women meet their needs?

Montessori's foundation of respect and autonomy is critical. Each learner is seen as an individual with unique strengths, experiences, and goals. For many Young Adult Inactive Women who carry the burden of past failures or exclusion, this recognition has a transformative effect. They are neither told or reminded of their shortcomings, nor are they constantly implied to be deficient; instead, they are encouraged to discover what they have and to determine the direction they want to go.

The method encourages self-directed learning; women set their own goals, decide what and how to learn, and progress at their own pace. In practice, this might mean choosing to focus on a skill they value, independently undertaking a small project, or participating in group activities that interest them. Montessori's concept of a “prepared environment”—designing a safe, inclusive, and welcoming setting—reduces the fear and anxiety often associated with formal education. In this environment, women feel valued and respected without judgment or pressure, and are open to learning. Learning here is hands-on and experience-based, directly connected to real life, rather than theoretical lessons. Instead of abstract lectures, Young Adult Inactive Women participate in meaningful and practical activities—for example, rehearsing a job interview, planning a small community project, or creating a craft.

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3.2 How do Montessori principles help young, inactive women meet their needs?

These experiences build both self-confidence and real-life skills, demonstrating that learning can be both beneficial and enjoyable. Most importantly, Montessori fosters intrinsic motivation. Progress is measured by personal growth, not by comparison with others. It teaches young adult inactive women to value their own progress; it encourages them to persevere, no matter how small, and to believe they can succeed.

3.3 The Role of Youth Workers: Facilitators of Change

In this approach, youth workers are not teachers who deliver fixed content; they are facilitators, guides, and observers. Their role is to adapt to, listen to, and support the needs of each woman, thus creating conditions in which learning can flourish. They foster an environment of choice, respect, and encouragement instead of pressure and judgment. The importance of Montessori for adult learners is also supported by modern educational theories such as Malcolm Knowles' andragogic approach.

These theories also value self-direction, life experience, and learning connected to real life. Montessori's contribution is that she offers a profound, practical method for putting these values into practice in everyday learning environments. For Young Adult Inactive Women, relearning is not just about acquiring skills; it's about taking back control, rebuilding their self-confidence, and imagining new possibilities.

Montessori-inspired methods offer a path from isolation to participation by supporting emotional well-being, social bonding, and cognitive development. Youth workers using this approach help women move from being passive recipients to active participants in their own journeys. With autonomy, respect, and practical support, Young Adult Inactive Women can take meaningful steps on their path to personal and professional development, not because they are pushed away, but because they are empowered.

Montessori is more than a method; it is a philosophy of belief that every individual can develop, and a powerful tool for those dedicated to making that belief a reality.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

At its core, the Montessori Method is more than just an educational technique; it's a perspective that views learners as whole individuals, believing they can thrive when given the right environment. Developed over a century ago by Dr. Maria Montessori, this approach is based on respect, autonomy, experiential learning, emotional security, and self-direction. While traditionally associated with children, these principles have had a remarkable impact when carefully adapted to adults (especially Young Adult Non-Engineered Women who have been let down by traditional systems). These women carry the burden of exclusion, low self-esteem, and life's challenges, and they need not just vocational training, but spaces that will help them regain their self-confidence.

The Montessori approach addresses this need by creating learning environments where women are not merely recipients of information, but active, respected participants in their own journey. In the MAYA project's implementations in Italy, Austria, Portugal, and Turkey, these principles have been put into practice in various ways, providing youth workers with concrete examples of how to apply them.

Respect for the Individual

At the heart of the Montessori philosophy lies an unwavering commitment to recognizing each learner as a unique and whole individual. This respect for individuality is not merely a pedagogical choice; it is a transformative force, especially for Young Adult Non-Elective women who come from experiences such as neglect, judgment, and invisibility. In this context, respect is not simply about being kind; it means allowing each woman's experience, her own pace, and her unique strengths to define her learning journey. In the MAYA project, this principle has been put into practice in different, but always deeply personal ways.

In Turkey, at the Nizip Public Education Center, respect began with listening. The women who came there had layered and often challenging backgrounds—some were young mothers juxtaposing caregiving responsibilities with the trauma of displacement, others were local women constrained by conservative norms. The facilitators didn't assume readiness or impose a rigid curriculum. Instead, they collaboratively created a flexible learning environment that responded to real life.

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

The sessions were designed with open doors: mothers could bring their children, take breaks when they felt overwhelmed, or request alternative activities as needed. For many, this was the first environment where life circumstances were not an obstacle, but a fundamental element shaping what and how they would learn. This environment acknowledged the dignity of each learner; it allowed women to feel visible and respected not despite their difficulties, but precisely through them. In this space, built within a framework of cultural sensitivity and emotional security, women began to explore education as a personal and achievable space. (Appendix IV – National Case Studies TR)

In Italy, the “Empowerment Through Personalized Learning Pathways Project” in Lombardy transformed the principle of respect into individual learning journeys. Facilitators began by focusing on conversation rather than content—sitting down with each participant to explore their background, expectations, and untapped strengths. For one woman, respect meant having her interest in her living space supported; for another, it was an opportunity to develop digital storytelling skills. Some expressed themselves through crafts, finding voice through tangible creations. The program avoided uniformity. If no two learning plans were alike, it was a conscious choice. By acknowledging each woman's choices and tailoring the learning process accordingly, sustainable participation was ensured. Participants not only came, but invested in the process because the environment respected their autonomy from the outset. As one facilitator put it: “When we respected their choices, they respected the process.”

In Austria, the respectful approach was based on observation and gentle facilitation. Many women, who had spent years in caregiving roles or on the fringes of formal education, were not rushed into the activity. Instructors observed only in the initial sessions—paying attention to body language, hesitations, and sparks of interest. Some women turned to spontaneous arts of expression, using creativity as a safe entry point into learning. Others sought order and predictability, preferring more structured tasks such as project planning or digital workshops. This patient respect created an atmosphere of trust. Participants felt no pressure to conform or perform; instead, they gradually took ownership of the process, shaping the sessions with their own input. Being seen and allowed to progress at their own pace was a new and empowering experience for many women, transforming passive participation into active participation.

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

In Portugal, respect emerged through autobiographical storytelling—a practice that placed women's voices at the heart of the learning environment. Journals, reflective exercises, and facilitated group discussions invited participants to tell their own stories, often for the first time in a public space. These stories of resilience and struggle were not only therapeutic but also fundamental building blocks. As women wrote and narrated their journeys, the group transformed from a classroom into a community. Learning was no longer abstract; it was deeply rooted in each individual's reality. The facilitators did not correct or direct these narratives—they validated them, creating a respectful space where vulnerability was a strength. Recognizing personal history as valuable content transformed the dynamic; participants felt their experiences were not only acknowledged but also necessary and honored for their growth.

Promoting Independence

In the Montessori philosophy, independence is not merely a practical skill; it is also a profound shift in mindset. It is a transition from being directed to self-directed, from relying on external approval to trusting in one's own judgment. For many Young Adult Inactive NEET women who have been told for years what they couldn't do, regaining this sense of autonomy is both empowering and vital. Montessori creates environments where choice is not only possible but encouraged—women not only learn content but also how to manage their own development.

In Austria, the Tyrol Digital Empowerment Program offered women a dynamic platform to harness this autonomy. Each woman participating in the program collaboratively designed her own learning journey through thematic workshops on topics such as digital literacy, well-being, event planning, and financial management. These workshops were not pre-assigned based on perceived needs; the choice was entirely left to the women, and facilitators provided support as guides, not teachers. This conscious act of choice gave participants an immediate sense of ownership over their path. They weren't just participating; they were creating. As the weeks progressed, the women reported a growing sense of control not only in the classroom but also in their broader lives; they began applying decision-making and problem-solving skills beyond the learning environment.

In Turkey, independence took root through a series of Household Budget and Life Skills workshops.

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

Many women managing households with limited resources were invited to work with budgeting tools suited to their daily realities. Instead of passively receiving financial advice, they examined real-world scenarios: planning a month's expenses, assessing potential savings for personal goals, and even designing small-scale, home-based initiatives. The sessions encouraged participants to set individual financial goals and track their progress. This not only restored a sense of willpower in economic matters but also reframed daily decisions, often dismissed as “just for the home,” as valid and empowering acts of independence. As they gained confidence in resource management, many women began to articulate larger goals, from contributing to household income to taking steps towards their children's education.

In Italy, the Empowerment Through Personalized Learning Pathways Project offered a vivid example of independence in practice. Here, each woman was encouraged to design and develop her own micro-entrepreneurship project based on her interests and life context. Some turned to handmade products—jewelry, textiles, ceramics—while others embraced digital platforms, designing social media strategies to promote services or ideas. Facilitators provided tools, but the content was never dictated. The women learned to prepare business models, plan logistics, and consider market dynamics—all by charting their own course. The process was profoundly personal: one initially hesitant participant discovered her passion for photography and began building a portfolio to establish a freelance business. This transformation—from uncertainty to action—was possible as a result of the Montessori principle, which believes that untapped talents emerge when learners are given choices.

Experiential and Applied Learning

Montessori education is based on the belief that knowledge is best acquired through action. For many YAINWs who feel disconnected from traditional, abstract education, engaging directly with tasks that reflect real-life experiences can be both empowering and transformative. Practical, hands-on activities not only provide these women with new skills but also allow them to see immediate, meaningful results from their efforts, reinforcing their sense of competence and willpower. Throughout the MAYA project, experiential learning served as a bridge from theory to reality, from passive learning to active participation.

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

In Portugal, the Community Storytelling and Role-Playing Initiative offered women a deeply emotionally resonant form of learning. Instead of focusing on textbook scenarios, participants were invited to real-life simulations reflecting challenges they might encounter in daily life. Job interview practice wasn't limited to memorizing questions; for many, it meant imagining themselves as confident, competent professionals for the first time. Role-playing exercises extended to workplace conversations, public speaking, and contact with social services—providing women with the tools to express themselves in previously daunting environments. Beyond these simulations, the initiative also included artistic and collaborative tasks.

One notable example was a community mural project where women expressed their personal and collective stories through art. This tangible and visual experience helped participants connect with each other, develop social bonds, and foster a sense of ownership over the learning space. Painting together and discussing themes of resistance and hope transformed the group from learners into creators of a shared narrative. Through these activities, experiential learning not only built skills but also strengthened self-confidence, emotional expression, and a sense of belonging.

In Austria, experiential learning was seamlessly integrated with practical tasks reflecting the needs of daily working life. The Budgeting and Community Event Planning modules were key elements of this approach. In the budgeting sessions, women worked with real numbers, managing simulated household or project budgets. These exercises not only improved numerical literacy but also strengthened decision-making and prioritization skills—essential for both personal and professional contexts. More importantly, the Community Event Planning project gave participants the opportunity to take on leadership roles. Together, they undertook tasks such as logistics management, promotion, and coordination with external stakeholders in the design, organization, and implementation of a community event. Throughout this process, women practiced communication, negotiation, teamwork, and time management skills in a supportive and structured environment. The hands-on nature of the project ensured that the learning outcomes were tangible: the event itself was a testament to their competencies. For many participants, the successful completion of the event was a turning point, transforming them from passive beneficiaries to active contributors within the community.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

In Italy, the Sales Simulation and Micro-Entrepreneurship Development Initiative brought the world of entrepreneurship into the classroom, transforming abstract concepts into experiences. Women participated in every stage of the business cycle: developing product ideas, producing handmade goods (such as jewelry and textiles), defining pricing strategies, designing marketing materials, and managing customer interactions in a simulated marketplace. This wasn't abstract learning—it was inclusive, dynamic, and hands-on. Each participant took ownership of their own project, tackling challenges such as cost management, quality control, and marketing. Facilitators offered guidance but allowed the women to lead, enabling them to experience both successes and the lessons of real-world entrepreneurship.

This process not only provided job skills but also built self-confidence. Women who had previously doubted their own abilities began to believe they could manage an initiative, plan tasks, and make decisions. The market simulation was not just a training exercise; it was a transformative experience where learning happened by doing, and success was measured not only in profit but also in pride and empowerment.

Encouraging a Supportive Environment

For young adult women who are not actively participating in education or professional development, the journey back to education or career development is often overshadowed by emotional wounds—past failures, social exclusion, or persistent self-doubt. In such cases, a supportive and emotionally safe environment is not a luxury; it is the foundation upon which growth is built. The Montessori approach understands this deeply; it creates spaces where learners feel respected, listened to, and safe enough to take the first steps toward change. Fostering such environments in the MAYA project enabled women not only to learn but also to reconnect with themselves, others, and their communities, and to heal.

In Turkey, at the Nizip Public Education Center, the learning process began not with lectures, but with trust. The traumas carried by many Syrian refugees and Turkish women—displacement, cultural isolation, domestic burdens—were acknowledged, and mindfulness was integrated into each session. Breathing exercises opened and closed the day, creating a ritual that helped participants emotionally recover.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

These moments of stillness were more than just a simple relief; they were a sign that this was a different and safe space. Peer storytelling also became another cornerstone of emotional security. Women were invited to share their life experiences, whether joyful or painful, within a circle of peers who listened without judgment.

This act of sharing transformed the group dynamic from one of strangers to a community based on mutual understanding. Reflection sessions often gave women the opportunity, for the first time, to express their feelings, fears, and hopes. One participant described it as “being able to speak without fear of being silenced.”

Based on Montessori’s emphasis on emotional security, these elements allowed women to let go of shame, rebuild confidence, and reimagine their place in the world.

In Austria, Community Gardening and Event Planning Projects were carefully designed to create a space for shared responsibility and emotional support. Gardening became a powerful metaphor for growth and patience, with its slow pace and tangible results. Women worked side-by-side, nurturing both plants and new relationships. Looking after life together—digging, watering, harvesting—strengthened cooperation and mutual care. Conversations developed spontaneously, and a sense of belonging blossomed.

This practical, hands-on task transformed the social isolation felt by participants into a quiet but profound space of connection. Similarly, planning and implementing a community event requires collaboration and trust. Women took on roles they felt comfortable with and that suited their abilities, from logistics to communication, but always acted within a framework of shared success. The facilitators played a non-authoritarian role, gently offering support rather than directing; reinforcing that this was a space they would create and own together.

These projects were a vivid example of how, according to the Montessori philosophy, a learning environment should be based not only on physical elements but also on a calm, respectful, and empowering emotional atmosphere.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

In Italy, fostering a supportive environment began with recognizing each participant's emotional world. The Empowerment Through Personalized Learning Pathways Project incorporated visual emotion cards as a simple yet effective tool for expressing feelings. At the beginning and end of each session, women chose cards representing what they were feeling—from joy to anxiety, hope to disappointment—and, if they wished, shared why they felt that way.

This approach normalized the idea that emotions are a part of learning, not an obstacle. Facilitators acknowledged every emotion, demonstrating that challenges, doubts, and setbacks are not signs of weakness but steps in the growth process. This approach shattered the fear of failure and replaced it with a culture of acceptance.

Over time, the women became more comfortable expressing their needs, asking for help, and supporting each other. The environment itself—intimate, flexible, and non-judgmental—reflected the respect at the heart of the Montessori philosophy. For many participants, this was their first educational experience where their emotional world was recognized as an integral part of their development.

In Portugal, creating a supportive environment was both visual and community-based. The Community Mural Project was more than an artistic endeavor; it was a collective act of expression and belonging. Each woman contributed to the mural with symbols, words, or images reflecting her journey, struggles, and dreams. As the mural grew, so did the sense of shared ownership and mutual respect. This physical reflection of their stories became the focal point of the group, a reminder that each individual's voice is valuable and that together they form a whole greater than the sum of the pieces.

Group discussions often took place in front of the mural, serving as a starting point for deeper conversations about identity, resilience, and expectations. The facilitators nurtured this space with sensitivity, ensuring each participant was seen and heard. The atmosphere was deliberately non-competitive, collaborative, and warm, reinforcing that this was not just a course, but a community of support.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

Self-Directed Learning

Montessori education is based on a deep belief that true learning flourishes when individuals are empowered to chart their own course. For Young Adult Non-Elective Women, who have often been passive participants in systems where their voices are unheard, self-directed learning is not just a method, but a profound shift in how they perceive themselves. This approach conveys the message that they can direct their own development, make choices, and set goals that align with their realities and dreams. In the MAYA project, this principle remained theoretical; it was put into practice through applications that empowered women to take control, think, and move forward purposefully.

In Portugal, personal journals became a key tool for self-directed learning. These journals were more than just notebooks; they were living documents where women recorded their thoughts, tracked emotional shifts, and set personal intentions. Each entry reflected a step in their journey, whether it was an epiphany during a role-playing exercise or progress in managing anxiety. Facilitators encouraged participants to review their journals regularly, identify patterns, and notice their progress. This continuous cycle between writing, thinking, and acting created a visible narrative of change. Women who initially doubted their abilities began to see tangible evidence of progress, not only in skills but also in self-confidence. One participant described her journal as “a mirror showing me that I am stronger than I thought.” Both metaphorically and literally, taking up the pen offered them the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning paths and redefine themselves as active learners.

In Austria, reflection circles and growth portfolios formed the backbone of self-assessment and planning. At the end of each week, participants gathered in a supportive circle to share their insights, challenges, and successes. These sessions were not an assessment, but a space for mutual learning—each woman learned from herself and her peers. Portfolios completed this practice, documenting the goals set, skills acquired, and personal milestones. The women included photographs of their projects, facilitator notes, and their own reflection notes. This multi-dimensional record served as both a motivational tool and a roadmap, helping participants visualize how far they had come and where they wanted to go.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

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3.4 Principles of the Montessori Method

Looking to the past and planning for the future fostered critical thinking, self-awareness, and a sense of direction—qualities often lacking in the lives of individuals marginalized by traditional systems. Montessori’s concept of freedom within a structure was vividly realized here: the women decided for themselves what to focus on, but progress and responsibility were secured within a framework.

In Italy, Personal Development Plans (PDPs) became a cornerstone of the empowerment process. At the beginning of the program, each woman, with the help of a facilitator, prepared her PDP, outlining her expectations, strengths, areas for improvement, and specific goals—whether it was learning a technical skill, improving communication, or exploring entrepreneurship. These plans were not static documents; they were regularly reviewed and updated in one-on-one sessions. The women evaluated their achievements, the challenges they faced, and the support they needed. This ongoing dialogue reinforced the idea that education was not something imposed on them, but a process they themselves shaped. PDPs helped participants stay focused, adapt when necessary, and celebrate their successes. A woman who started the project without direction might discover an interest in digital media or realize her leadership abilities in group activities through this process. By taking control of their development plans, participants redefined themselves not as NEETs (Need for Education, Training), but as purposeful and competent learners.

In Turkey, learning journals have served as a bridge between personal and professional spheres, particularly for young mothers balancing education with childcare. These journals became spaces where women reflected on what they learned in sessions and how that learning intersected with their daily lives. For example, a financial planning session could fuel the dream of managing household expenses or starting a small, home-based business. Through writing, participants realized that there was no conflict between the roles of mother, caregiver, and learner; rather, they could support each other. Facilitators encouraged them to note not only completed tasks, such as successfully resolving a family conflict or teaching a child a new skill, but also moments of growth. This holistic reflection reinforced the understanding that personal empowerment cannot be considered separate from professional development. It also strengthened self-efficacy: as women realized the value of their daily life experiences, they began to imagine themselves in broader possibilities beyond their domestic roles. Thus, the journals became a tool for integrating learning into life; this is one of the fundamental principles of Montessori.

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3.5 Applying Montessori Principles to Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women

A comprehensive literature review was conducted in each participating country to guide the development of meaningful and human-centered learning environments for Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs). The aim was to explore how the century-old Montessori Method, known for promoting autonomy, respect, and hands-on learning, could be adapted for women who often feel invisible in traditional systems. Each national report focused on how core Montessori principles could be reinterpreted to the realities of Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs); aiming not only to teach skills but also to rebuild self-esteem and foster genuine inclusion.

For youth workers, understanding how Montessori principles are adapted across different cultural and societal contexts is critical. This doesn't mean simply applying a rigid methodology; it means using a flexible philosophy to create spaces where women feel respected, competent, and empowered. The reviews also addressed the barriers faced by Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women and how the Montessori approach can help overcome them—through personalized learning, emotional support, or real-life connections. These findings offer practical insights not only for academics but also for those working daily in the field to make education and empowerment more accessible.

In Italy, the birthplace of Montessori, research has revealed how the method's values of respect and autonomy can revitalize learning for women who have long felt marginalized. Italian Young Adult Inactive NEET women often balance family responsibilities with economic uncertainty, and rigorous training courses rarely meet their needs.

The literature here argues that learning should be rooted in women's real lives and be flexible. Montessori-inspired approaches in Italy emphasize practical, community-based projects such as budget management, caregiving, or starting a small business—where facilitators are mentors, not teachers. Emotional support and personalized learning pathways are central, enabling women to reconnect with their abilities at their own pace.

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3.5 Applying Montessori Principles to Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women

The study in Austria offered a different perspective; it showed how Montessori fit into the country's strong vocational education culture. Project-based teamwork is key here. Particularly for Young Adult Non-Education (NEET) women of immigrant background, learning alongside peers helps rebuild skills and self-confidence.

Adaptations in Austria include peer mentoring, reflection circles, and emotionally safe environments where women are encouraged to grow steadily and without rushing. Learning spaces are both digital and physical, always prioritizing learner autonomy.

In Portugal, while Montessori is not very common in adult education, the review highlighted how its principles align with rising inclusive practices. Portuguese Young Adult Inactive NEET Women face significant socio-economic barriers, and many feel disconnected from formal education. The literature here focuses on the power of emotional resilience and community-based support.

Instead of lectures, it is suggested that youth workers make learning meaningful by using storytelling, role-playing, and culturally sensitive activities. Flexibility is essential; sessions should be adapted to women's care responsibilities, and the environment should be safe enough for them to open up and participate.

Turkey's study offered a unique perspective. Applying Montessori to adult women—especially in conservative or refugee communities—is still a new topic, but it holds great potential. Gender roles and family responsibilities shape every aspect of these women's lives. The study called for a learning approach that incorporates, rather than excludes, these realities. Cross-generational approaches where mothers can learn alongside their children are key.

Here, facilitators act as trusted mentors, helping women see themselves as relearning individuals through community-based projects and sensory activities. Programmes are flexible, and content should reflect the real challenges women face at home and in their communities.

Chapter 3 – The Role of the Montessori Method

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3.5 Applying Montessori Principles to Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women

The common message emerging from all four countries is that it's not about replicating the Montessori child-centered model for adults—it's about planting and growing the essence and spirit of this approach in new soil. It's about shifting from a system filled with didactic materials in classrooms to spaces filled with real-life tasks. Facilitators move from being teachers to mentors; they walk alongside learners instead of leading the way. Emotional security, cultural respect, and personal choice are indispensable.

For youth workers, this means creating environments that respect each woman's journey. Whether through collaborative projects, moments of quiet reflection, or practical skills training, the goal is the same: to help women regain faith in their potential. These reviews remind us that Montessori is more than a method—it's a way of seeing learners not as problems to be solved, but as individuals to be empowered.

Reminder: The Montessori Method is an inclusive, flexible, and empowering approach based on respect, autonomy, emotional security, and self-directed learning in real life, transforming Young Adult Non-Early Mental (NEET) women from passive recipients to active learners.

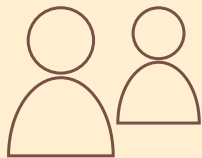
PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

Why Montessori?



Respect for the individual, hands-on learning, and a safe environment boost women's self-confidence.

Real-Life Skills



Entrepreneurship, communication, and financial literacy develop through project-based and collaborative activities.

Emotional Security



Supportive environments foster empathy and social engagement.

Fundamental Principles:

- ✓ Respect for the individual
- ✓ Freedom and independence
- ✓ Hands-on learning
- ✓ Supportive environment

Chapter 4 – Developing Professional Skills

“The MAYA Project adapts the Montessori approach, which is based on the principle of respect for the individual, to create resilient, learner-centered environments by offering personalized, culturally sensitive and emotionally safe learning experiences to NEET women across Europe.”

4.1 Development of Professional Skills

Traditional methods of vocational training for adults, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs), are often based on rigid curricula, standardized assessments, and teacher-centered lessons. These approaches often focus narrowly on technical skills and overlook the emotional and social factors that affect learner engagement, retention, and success. For many Young Adult Non-Engineered Women who have experienced exclusion, early school leaving, or prolonged absence from the workforce, these traditional models may seem daunting, irrelevant, or detached from their own experiences. In contrast, the Montessori method offers a transformative alternative that respects individual journeys, prioritizes experiential learning, and fosters intrinsic motivation. Instead of viewing vocational skills as abstract knowledge to be memorized, Montessori-based environments integrate these skills into real-life tasks aligned with the learner's personal goals and daily realities. Skills such as entrepreneurship, financial literacy, communication, and problem-solving are not taught in isolation; they develop naturally through project-based learning, peer collaboration, and self-directed exploration. While traditional systems often view learners as passive recipients, Montessori sees them as active individuals capable of making choices, producing results, and thinking critically. This perspective empowers young adult women who are inactive to regain control over their professional development. Furthermore, Montessori's emphasis on emotional security, a sense of community, and personalized pace directly addresses the obstacles many women face in succeeding in traditional settings.

For young adult non-NEET women, developing vocational skills is not simply about acquiring a set of qualifications; it's about regaining self-confidence, willpower, and a place in the workforce. Theoretically-heavy vocational training often fails to reach these women whose life paths have distanced them from formal education and employment. What is effective is learning environments connected to real life, where skills are not developed in isolation but are interwoven with meaningful tasks. The Montessori approach, focusing on experiential learning, self-direction, and respect for individual pace, offers a dynamic vocational skills development model that supports women in growing from where they are. The findings from the MAYA project's literature reviews and national case studies demonstrate how these principles are put into practice.

Chapter 4 – Developing Professional Skills

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4.1 Development of Professional Skills

In Italy, a case study titled “Empowerment Through Personalized Learning Pathways” demonstrated how inactive young adult women developed professional skills through micro-enterprise projects. The women designed and managed their own ventures, choosing to focus on areas such as crafts, hospitality, or digital media. By undertaking tasks like pricing, branding, and social media promotion, they gained entrepreneurial skills within a context that respected their autonomy. A literature review in Italy titled “Adapting Montessori Principles for Social Inclusion and Professional Development” highlighted that community-based projects rooted in local economies are the most direct path to empowerment.

In Austria, the Tyrol Digital Empowerment Program used community activity planning as a tool for professional skills development. Women collaborated on real-world projects, developing leadership, negotiation, and time management skills in a supportive and team-based environment. An Austrian literature review, “Montessori and Andragogy: Synergies for Adult Professional Learning,” indicated that these project-based team activities were fully aligned with Montessori principles, offering learners the opportunity to practice and develop professional behaviors without the pressures of a traditional classroom.

In Portugal, the Community Storytelling and Role-Playing Initiative took a creative approach, empowering women's communication, self-expression, and critical thinking skills through simulation exercises such as mock interviews and collaborative storytelling. The Portuguese report, “Montessori for Inclusion: Emotional Safety and Skill Development in Adult Learning,” highlighted the power of culturally appropriate and emotionally safe environments in transforming women's personal narratives into professional development.

In Turkey, workshops on household budgeting and home-based income generation have linked domestic skills to economic empowerment. A case study from the Nizip Public Education Center demonstrated that women often plan and manage small projects related to their caregiver roles, thereby gaining financial literacy and planning skills that will support future entrepreneurship. A literature review of Turkey, “Montessori as Community Learning for Women: A Culturally Adapted Model,” highlighted how daily tasks, when properly framed, become a legitimate learning space for professional development.

Chapter 4 – Developing Professional Skills

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4.1 Development of Professional Skills

In all these contexts, the Montessori method proves its adaptability. Focusing on doing rather than just knowing, these programs help Young Adult Inactive Women gain not only marketable skills but also the self-confidence needed to rejoin the workforce. Whether through entrepreneurship, team projects, or life simulations, the principle remains the same: professional development flourishes when learning is hands-on, personalized, and respectful of the learner's reality.

4.2 Developing Social Skills

For young adult inactive NEET women, developing social skills such as emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, and cooperation is not a secondary goal; it is a foundation for education, employment, and reintegration into society. Many of these women have experienced prolonged isolation, marginalization, or trauma, resulting in diminished self-confidence in social settings and difficulty forming supportive relationships. Traditional education and vocational training systems often overlook these aspects, focusing instead on measurable outcomes such as qualifications or job placement, and failing to address the interpersonal and emotional barriers that hinder long-term participation. The Montessori method, however, recognizes that emotional and social development cannot be separated from learning. Across national case studies and literature reviews, this approach is seen to foster safe, respectful environments where women can rebuild confidence, practice empathy, and strengthen their interpersonal skills.

In the case of the Portuguese Community Storytelling and Role-Playing Initiative (Portuguese National Case Study), women shared their life experiences in a non-judgmental environment by participating in story-sharing circles and mural projects. These activities allowed them to connect with others, value their own narratives, and build self-confidence in group settings. Similarly, the Austrian Tyrol Community Activity Project (Austrian National Case Study) enabled participants to practice teamwork, conflict resolution, and leadership by collaborating in planning real events, all within a supportive, non-competitive framework. Italian literature (“Montessori and Social-Relational Skills”) argued that emotional security is critical for Young Adult Inactive Women, and that nonverbal emotional tools such as peer support, mindfulness, and emotion cards should be standard practice. In Turkey, the Nizip Learning Center (Turkish Case Studies) also helped refugee and local women relieve emotional tension and build solidarity through peer storytelling and breathing exercises.

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4.2 Developing Social Skills

Traditional adult education often fails to prioritize emotional resilience or collaborative learning; it frequently isolates learners with individual tasks and assessments. Social skills are assumed but not developed. Montessori environments, on the other hand, actively encourage community building by integrating collaborative projects, guided reflection, and shared responsibility into every activity. Instead of imposing rigid structures, facilitators in Montessori settings listen, observe, and adapt, allowing learners to explore social dynamics at their own pace. Through this human-centered model, Young Adult Inactive Women not only learn to communicate more effectively but also learn to value themselves and their contributions. By transforming learning spaces into inclusive communities, Montessori principles foster not only women's employability but also their sense of belonging and self-worth—gains that many traditional methods fail to achieve.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH WORKERS



"Montessori is about empowering young adult inactive NEET women to regain dignity and willpower through respectful, self-directed learning that addresses their needs at where they are—emotionally, socially, and practically."

Integrating Montessori Principles into Practice

Prepared environment

Creating hospitable spaces with real tools.

Limited freedom

Supporting elections within a structured framework.

Respect for the learner

Re-establishing the sense of worth and potential.

Applied learning practice

Gaining willpower through practical activities

To guide, not to direct

Like facilitators and empathetic guides

Emotional security, Experiential learning practice

Providing spaces for healing and inclusive communities, fostering willpower through hands-on activities.

Chapter 5 – A Guide for Youth Workers

“Montessori for Young Adult Non-Et Women is about women being met where they are—emotionally, socially and practically—and being reclaimed with dignity and will through a respectful and self-directed learning process.”

5.1 Integrating Montessori Principles into Practice

Developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, the Montessori Method is based on the belief that every individual has the capacity for inner growth when placed in a suitable, supportive, and well-structured environment. While traditionally designed for early childhood education, the core principles of this philosophy gain profound meaning when carefully adapted to the lives of Young Adult Non-Engineered (NEET) women. Applying Montessori principles to this group requires the deliberate adaptation of both physical and psychological learning environments; it necessitates recognition of these women's unique challenges, life experiences, and readiness to learn.

At the heart of the Montessori framework lies the concept of a Prepared Environment. This concept refers to a carefully arranged space with developmentally appropriate materials that encourage independence, order, and free movement, and allow for self-correction. For adult learners, particularly Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women, the prepared environment should not be limited to physical arrangements; it should also include emotional and cultural sensitivity. The environment should be calm, inviting, and respectful; and equipped with real-world tools such as job application resources, budget planning templates, and digital devices, rather than child-centered teaching materials. This environment should include both areas for individual reflection and shared spaces for collaboration, thus responding to diverse emotional and learning needs.

Another fundamental principle is the concept of Freedom Within Boundaries. In Montessori classrooms, children are given the right to freely choose their activities within a structured and respectful framework. In the context of Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women, this principle plays a critical role in rebuilding autonomy and willpower. Learners are encouraged to make choices about their own learning paths, projects, and goals; however, this process takes place within a structured system that is not controlling but offers guidance. This balance fosters a sense of responsibility and strengthens ownership over personal and professional development. Learning agreements or personal contracts formalize this sense of freedom, ensuring that the learner feels both supported and empowered.

Chapter 5 – A Guide for Youth Workers

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5.1 Integrating Montessori Principles into Practice

In the Montessori context, the role of the educator differs radically from traditional models. The teacher is not an authoritarian figure but a guide or observer; they provide support only when necessary, allowing the learner to self-correct and develop through experience. In the adaptation for Young Adult Non-Elective Women, youth workers act as facilitators or mentors, providing reflective and dialogue-based feedback while continuously observing learners through personal and empathetic interactions. Observational insights and one-on-one conversations are preferred over formal assessments, establishing a learning relationship based on trust and mutual respect.

Montessori’s concept of Sensitive Periods—phases in which children are particularly receptive to learning specific skills—resonates in adult education. While adults may not experience developmental stages in the same way as children, Young Adult Inactive NEET Women often go through significant life transitions—the end of caregiving responsibilities, efforts to re-enter the workforce, or the aftermath of personal trauma—and this makes them more receptive to learning. Recognizing these windows of readiness is critical. Facilitators should approach learners with sensitivity to their emotional and practical states, offering opportunities appropriate to this highly receptive period.

Another principle central to the Montessori approach is Autoeducation. This is the belief that individuals educate themselves through interaction with their environment. For Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs), this principle is embodied through self-directed learning plans, reflective journals, and goal-setting activities. Facilitators encourage learners to monitor their own progress, evaluate their experiences, and adjust their goals accordingly, fostering a continuous sense of willpower and self-efficacy. Error Control, one of Montessori’s most innovative contributions, is traditionally embedded within the materials; the learner recognizes and corrects their own mistakes.

For adults, particularly in the context of real-life learning, this is implemented through tasks with natural feedback loops—for example, the differences revealed by budget studies or the tangible outcomes of project-based work. The emphasis here is on learning by doing and understanding that mistakes are not failures but valuable data points.

Chapter 5 – A Guide for Youth Workers

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5.1 Integrating Montessori Principles into Practice

Adapting Montessori principles to the complex realities of Young Adult Non-Ethical Women (NEETs) requires examining the deep theoretical foundations of Montessori pedagogy and critically evaluating how they can be reinterpreted to support adult learners experiencing social and economic exclusion. Unlike children, Young Adult Non-Ethical Women often arrive in learning environments burdened with life experiences such as structural inequalities, interrupted educational processes, emotional trauma, and reduced self-efficacy. These realities necessitate not only methodological changes but also conceptual adaptations of Montessori principles that touch upon the philosophical core of adult development, autonomy, and social reintegration.

5.2 Developing Programs Tailored to Needs

Designing effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education (NEET) women requires much more than simply adapting existing youth work approaches. These women face deeply ingrained barriers such as socioeconomic challenges, interrupted education, social isolation, and rigid gender roles, and these barriers cannot be overcome with general, one-size-fits-all solutions.

Programmes that respond to these unique challenges must foster a sense of trust, autonomy, and meaningfulness, and provide resilient and respectful environments where learning is both a personal and social transformation. To realize this vision, youth workers need to possess two types of competencies: core competencies directly related to the application of Montessori principles in adult education, and general competencies that enable Young Adult Inactive NEET Women to work effectively within the complex social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which they live.

Core competencies refer to the fundamental knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable youth workers to implement Montessori-inspired practices in their daily interactions with Young Adult Non-Engineered (NEET) women. These competencies focus on creating learner-centered, emotionally safe, and experiential environments, empowering women to reclaim their agency in their learning and personal development processes.

Chapter 5 – A Guide for Youth Workers

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5.2 Developing Programs Tailored to Needs

In contrast, general competencies enable youth workers to engage with a broader context—enabling them to recognize how cultural norms, policy environments, digital tools, and systemic inequalities affect their work. These competencies support programs in being sustainable, meaningful, and inclusive, extending beyond just a direct learning environment.

Both sets of competencies are vital. Without Montessori-focused core skills, youth workers cannot deliver the impact promised by respectful, individualized, and experiential learning. Without broad competencies, programmes risk being culturally insensitive, inflexible, or disconnected from the real-world systems that shape the lives of Young Adult Inactive NEET Women.



Chapter 5 – A Guide for Youth Workers

“Montessori for Young Adult Non-Et Women is about women being met where they are—emotionally, socially and practically—and being reclaimed with dignity and will through a respectful and self-directed learning process.”

5.2 Developing Programs Tailored to Needs

CORE COMPETENCES

01

CREATING ENVIRONMENTS



- Designing inclusive and calm spaces
- Ensuring emotional safety

02

SUPPORTING LEARNER AUTONOMY



- Encouraging self-directed learning
- Offering guidance and direction

03

PROVIDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



- Planning hands-on activities
- Connecting learning to real life

04

GIVING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT



- Practising empathy and active listening
- Adapting content and pace to the person

05

OBSERVATION AND ADAPTATION



- Monitoring progress regularly
- Adapting content and pace to the person

06

REFLECTIVE FACILITATION



- Supporting self-assessment
- Giving personalised feedback



Programmes designed for Young Adult Inactive NEET Women must do more than teach skills; they must restore empowerment, dignity, and hope. Youth workers are at the heart of this transformative work.

KEY FINDINGS

Contextual Fit



Educational programs should be adapted to cultural and local conditions.

Emotional preparation comes first.



Psychologically safe environments should be created before learning begins.

Flexibility is important.



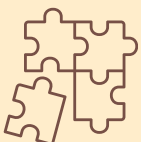
Rigid programs discourage participation, while flexible structures increase engagement.

The Power of Peer Networks



Peer support increases motivation and a sense of belonging.

Integrating Personal and Professional Development



Programs should include training aimed at building identity and self-confidence.

Chapter 6 – Key Findings

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Emerging NEET Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

6.1 Key Findings

The development process of this handbook, based on comparative research conducted in Italy, Austria, Portugal, and Turkey, has provided critical insights into the systemic challenges faced by Young Adult Non-Education (NEET) women and how learner-centered methods can overcome these challenges. The most fundamental lesson learned is that contextual sensitivity is essential. Literature reviews have shown that educational interventions are not universally applicable; rather, cultural norms and socio-economic conditions fundamentally shape how learning environments should be designed. For example, successful approaches in Turkey have been models that integrate family and community, while in Austria, structured autonomy is more easily adopted in professional settings.

Another important finding of the study is the importance of emotional readiness as a prerequisite for learning. In all countries, Young Adult Non-Education (NEET) women were found to feel a deep-seated institutional insecurity stemming from previous negative educational experiences or social exclusion. Case studies have shown that psychologically safe environments where women can rebuild their self-esteem must be created before any meaningful professional skills can be developed. Emotional resilience is not merely a complementary goal, but a fundamental step.

Furthermore, the research highlighted the critical importance of flexibility in program design. Linear and highly compulsory courses often result in dropout due to unpredictable situations such as caregiving responsibilities, health problems, or financial instability. Models offering adaptable timelines, modular learning, and multiple entry points have been far more effective in supporting sustainable participation. This was clearly demonstrated in the examples from Portugal and Italy, where flexibility directly reduced dropout rates.

One of the strongest observed outcomes has been the value of peer networks. Both in the literature and in field research, the formation of peer support groups has emerged as a catalyst for change. The ability of women sharing similar experiences, challenges, and successes has strengthened their motivation and sense of belonging. Learning has ceased to be a solitary struggle; it has become part of a collective journey, enhancing personal growth and social integration.

The final and crucial lesson is the necessity of integrating personal development with employability goals.

Chapter 6 – Key Findings

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Emerging NEET Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

6.1 Key Findings

Programs that focus solely on professional outcomes often overlook the complex interplay between identity, self-esteem, and capacity. The most promising models are those that offer holistic approaches, incorporating social skills, emotional literacy, and personal competence alongside technical training. Research has confirmed that professional development cannot be separated from personal transformation. Participants were more likely to define and pursue meaningful life goals when interventions allowed space for self-expression, creativity, and reflection.

In conclusion, the outcomes of this research phase confirm that the needs of Young Adult Inactive NEET Women cannot be met solely through access to education; learning spaces must be redefined as environments for healing, empowerment, and community building. The lessons learned offer a roadmap for future practices: contextual adaptability, emotional prioritization, structural flexibility, peer empowerment, and holistic integration are building blocks for effective and inclusive programming for this often overlooked group.

Note: The research behind this handbook reveals that empowering Young Adult Non-Elective Women requires learning environments that are emotionally secure, resilient, culturally sensitive, and that blend personal development with professional training, strengthening a sense of community through peer support.

Chapter 6 – Key Findings

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Emerging NEET Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

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TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Personal Goal Mapping



It involves setting goals in the name of personal self-direction.

Project Simulation



It creates plans for vocational skills.

Peer Circles



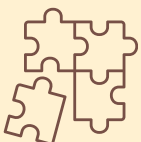
It increases emotional resilience.

Role play



It helps boost self-confidence.

Skill Sharing



They share informal skills.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.1 Entrance

To effectively support Young Adult Inactive NEET Women, it is necessary to move beyond theoretical frameworks and provide youth workers with practical, interactive tools to put Montessori principles into practice. The interactive tools presented here have been specifically selected and designed to align with core Montessori values such as autonomy, experiential learning, emotional security, and respect for individual growth. Each tool encourages active participation, personal reflection, and collaborative learning—essentially important for Young Adult Inactive NEET Women whose educational journeys are often characterized by exclusion, interrupted school life, and low self-esteem.

The selection of these tools is based on a deep understanding of the challenges faced by Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women and insights gained from national case studies and an extensive literature review that underpins this handbook. These tools are not mere exercises; they are carefully designed experiences that will enable participants to meaningfully engage in their personal and professional development. Prioritizing interaction, creativity, and peer support, the tools reflect Montessori’s belief that the most effective form of learning is spontaneous and based on real-life context. Interactive learning serves a dual function: it empowers the participant by making the learning process visible, tangible, and personal; it allows youth workers to shift to a facilitating rather than a directing role; and it enables Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women to regain control over their own development. Whether it’s personal goal mapping, simulating real projects, or participating in peer mentoring groups, each activity creates a space for exploration and learning, which is essential for fostering resilience and long-term engagement.

7.2 Vehicle List

1. Personal Goal Mapping: Fostering Self-Direction Through Visual Exploration

Personal Goal Mapping is a dynamic and reflective program designed to enhance the self-direction, personal competence, and goal-setting skills of Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs). Based on the Montessori principle, which deeply respects each participant's individual journey, this tool encourages participants to visually explore and articulate their personal and professional goals in a creative and supportive environment.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

This method aligns with Montessori’s emphasis on learning at one’s own pace, through experience. It offers Young Adult Inactive NEET Women a structured yet flexible framework that honors their experiences and provides them with a concrete, continuous roadmap for growth. Instead of externally imposed goals, this practice fosters intrinsic exploration—connecting inner strengths to meaningful goals through guided reflection, creative expression, and collaborative interaction.

Montessori Connection

Montessori education is based on the belief that learning occurs naturally when individuals are allowed to explore. Personal Goal Mapping reflects this philosophy in its structure and purpose. It respects individuality by allowing each woman to define her goals according to her own life context; it fosters intrinsic motivation by offering the freedom to decide what is important and how they want to progress. The prepared environment, enriched with visual and interactive elements, creates a safe and stimulating space for exploration, inviting participants to express themselves in both personal and profound ways.

This process transforms abstract dreams into concrete, actionable steps and reinforces the idea that each learner holds the power to shape their own path.

Using the Vehicle

The study begins with a collaborative reflection where participants are encouraged to explore their values, past successes, and current challenges. This creates a reflective environment and builds trust within the group. Each woman then moves on to a self-discovery phase by completing a Strengths and Dreams Form in which she assesses her abilities, desires, and obstacles. These insights form the basis of the visual map.

Using large sheets of paper, colored pencils, and collage materials, the map is prepared in three sections: "Current Me" in the center, representing the present situation; "Short-Term Goals" on the left, indicating steps to be taken in the coming months; and "Long-Term Goals" on the right, aiming to be achieved within one or two years. A personal journey map is created using drawings, symbols, and words, connecting current strengths with hopes for the future.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

The process deepens in peer assessment sessions. In small groups, women present their maps, receiving encouraging feedback, suggestions, and shared experiences from their peers. Colored labels are used to highlight areas of self-confidence, uncertainty, and support needs, making feedback visible.

This map is not static; it evolves with the participant, is reviewed at regular intervals, progress is tracked, achievements are marked, and goals are updated. Stars are used for completed steps or hearts for significant milestones, so that each woman can see, feel, and celebrate her own progress.

Interaction Elements and Participation

The visual and symbolic nature of the exercise is accessible and emotionally meaningful, especially for those who feel disconnected from traditional verbal or written goal-setting methods. Peer involvement strengthens the sense of community, reduces loneliness, and creates a mutually supportive environment. Tracking progress with tactile symbols reinforces the feeling of continuous movement and achievement, increasing motivation.

Purpose for Youth Workers

For youth workers, this tool offers a powerful method for guiding Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs) not only in career planning but also in personal development. It's not just a goal-setting exercise, but a journey toward regaining self-confidence, self-direction, and a sense of purpose. Facilitating this process requires sensitivity to the diverse backgrounds and needs of the participating women. Doing so embodies the core aim of Montessori: to empower individuals through meaningful, spontaneous learning and to view each woman not as someone who needs fixing, but as someone already possessing the capacity for growth and transformation.

2. Real-World Project Simulation: Developing Practical Skills Through Collaborative Learning

Real World Project Simulation is a dynamic, hands-on learning activity designed to help Young Adult Non-Engineered Women develop essential professional competencies such as problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

This method not only strengthens technical skills; it also fosters self-confidence, cooperation, and resilience; and allows women to experience leadership and critical thinking in a supportive environment. The focus is not on the outcome, but on the process, in line with Montessori's respect for the learner's journey: participation, creativity, and adaptability.

Montessori Connection

Montessori principles emphasize learning by doing, respect for individual roles within a group, and adapting in a prepared environment. In this simulation, participants take responsibility for meaningful tasks, exercise autonomy within their teams, and face real-time challenges. All of this takes place within a collaborative framework that reflects authentic social and professional dynamics.

Using the Vehicle

The facilitator presents the simulation as a collective project; this project could involve planning a community event, starting a fictional business, or developing a social enterprise. Participants are divided into small teams; each team is responsible for setting goals, assigning roles, creating a timeline, managing the budget, and presenting their final plan. Teams work independently; the facilitator acts as a mentor, providing guidance as needed. To deepen engagement, the facilitator introduces scenario changes at regular intervals (e.g., budget cuts or timeline changes) to allow teams to adapt and problem-solve. These interruptions simulate real-world unpredictability and reinforce resilience and flexibility. Finally, teams evaluate their experience: what was successful, what challenges arose, and how they adapted. This reflective process ensures that learned skills are reinforced and applicable to real-world situations.

3. Peer Mentoring Circles: Strengthening Resilience Through Shared Experiences

Peer Mentoring Circles offer a nurturing and structured space for Young Adult Non-Education Women to develop emotional resilience, empathy, and collaborative learning skills.

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“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

Based on Montessori principles such as respect, autonomy, and community-based development, this tool encourages participants to become deeply involved in each other's experiences, strengthening a sense of belonging and mutual support. These circles are not just about chatting; they are about connecting, learning, and growing together through shared leadership and responsibility. Each participant takes an active role in shaping the sessions, reinforcing Montessori's vision of a self-directed yet socially engaged learner.

Montessori Connection

Montessori education believes that meaningful learning arises from environments that respect the uniqueness of each individual and foster community bonds. Peer Mentoring Circles embody this by allowing participants to both lead and support. The “talking object” practice, reflecting Montessori's emphasis on tactile interaction and order, reinforces respectful listening and equal participation. Emotional security, self-direction, and social cohesion—Montessori's core values—are central to these peer-centered gatherings.

How to Use Peer Mentoring Circles?

Form regular groups of 4-6 people who commit to meeting weekly. Begin each session with a short focus exercise. The designated leader introduces a theme chosen from shared experiences—for example, “coping with fears” or “balancing responsibilities”—and invites each member to share their thoughts. The topic of conversation guides the flow, ensuring every voice is heard. After sharing, a simple activity is conducted to deepen the theme—for example, a visualization, setting a shared goal, or a storytelling game. Sessions conclude with personal reflection and setting intentions for the following week.

Purpose for Youth Workers

Youth workers are facilitators of trust and structuring; however, they are encouraged to remain in the background to allow Young Adult Inactive NEET Women to spontaneously shape the circle. The role is initially to provide guidance, ensure emotional security, and offer support when needed. These circles encourage continuous personal growth and reinforce Montessori's belief in self-directed, emotionally intelligent learning.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

Interaction Elements

The interactive nature of Peer Mentoring Circles lies in rotational leadership and physical participation. Each week, a different participant chooses a theme and guides the group through reflection and activities. This allows Young Adult Inactive NEET Women to explore leadership at their own pace, while enabling others to practice active listening and constructive dialogue.

The “talking object”—this could be a meaningful stone, a handcrafted symbol, or a special object—allows only the person holding it to speak, thus fostering focus and awareness within the group. This ritual reinforces a culture of respect and being present in the moment.

4. Role-Playing and Social Simulation: Building Self-Confidence Through Real-Life Application

Role-playing and social simulation is a practical and effective method designed to strengthen communication skills, boost self-confidence, and improve the ability to adapt to social and professional environments. This tool empowers Young Adult Non-Emotional Education (NEET) women by offering them the opportunity to rehearse real-life situations they might find frightening or unfamiliar in a safe environment. By assuming different roles, participants practice not only verbal expression but also body language, active listening, and emotional control skills. Through these simulations, abstract fears can be managed and transformed into familiar experiences.

Montessori Connection

In keeping with the true Montessori approach, this exercise relies on experiential, hands-on learning; theory leads action. Respecting each learner's pace and individuality, participants are encouraged to collaboratively construct scenarios based on their own life experiences, ensuring the content is meaningful and emotionally relevant. The process emphasizes core Montessori values such as autonomy and peer support. Furthermore, feedback and reflection stages reflect Montessori's approach to self-assessment and intrinsic motivation, making learning a continuous and self-directed process.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

How to Use?

Participants are asked to brainstorm about social or professional situations they find challenging or want to improve (e.g., job interviews, conflict resolution, or expressing personal needs). In small groups, participants create scenarios based on personal or shared experiences. Facilitators support the development of ideas, ensuring the process remains participant-focused. After the scenarios are created, role-playing takes place in pairs or small teams. Performances are video-recorded, allowing participants to visually evaluate their actions. Following role-playing, reflection sessions are held within the group, where feedback is shared constructively, and areas for improvement are discussed. This repetitive process encourages retry and improvement, fostering a growth-oriented mindset.

Interaction Elements

Collaborative scenario creation ensures the content is meaningful and engaging. Video recording is a powerful self-awareness tool, allowing participants to see their progress in real time. Feedback circles, using tools like supportive sentence introductions or color-coded feedback cards, create a respectful and positive environment. Optional elements, such as role-playing, allow participants to experience different perspectives and enrich learning.

Purpose for Youth Workers

For youth workers, this tool is more than just a communication exercise; it's a gateway to deeper personal empowerment for Young Adult Non-Elective Women. By facilitating these simulations, youth workers help participants confidently face real-world challenges while developing socio-emotional skills critical for professional reintegration. This approach aligns with Montessori's holistic development goals, fostering competence and self-confidence. Furthermore, shared learning within the group strengthens bonds and mutual support networks, fostering a sense of community.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

5. Skills Sharing Fair: Evaluating Informal Knowledge Through Reciprocal Teaching

The Skills Sharing Fair is a participatory and empowering initiative aimed at recognizing and celebrating the informal skills that Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs) already possess. It invites participants to both teach and learn, creating a reciprocal learning environment where existing knowledge is recognized and built upon. The fair fosters self-confidence, promotes mutual respect, and creates a dynamic space where each woman can step into both the role of learner and teacher, thus highlighting the value of experiences as a source of expertise.

Montessori Connection

This tool reflects Montessori principles such as autonomy, experiential learning, and respect for the individual learner's potential. Montessori advocates for environments where learners actively participate, take initiative, and respect each other's contributions. The Skills Sharing Fair aligns with these ideals by enabling participants to create a learning community that values real-life experience and peer-led exploration. It supports spontaneous development through practical participation and promotes social cohesion through shared teaching experiences.

How to use the vehicle?

To implement this tool, facilitators first guide participants to identify a skill they are confident in and another skill they wish to develop. Each participant writes their chosen teaching skill and the area they wish to learn on a Skill Sharing Board. The fair itself consists of short, informal workshops based on the skills participants have chosen. These workshops can vary to suit the group's interests and abilities, from cooking demonstrations to digital cueing or crafting. A symbolic exchange system is used during the exchange to emphasize the mutual value of learning. Each participant offers and receives information, reinforcing the idea that everyone can make a valuable contribution. A visual board documents these exchanges, allowing participants to review what they taught and learned. At the end of the fair, the group holds a collective reflection session to discuss the shared experiences and the impact of this process on their sense of community and self-worth.

Chapter 7 – Tools and Resources

“Effective training programs for Young Adult Non-Education Women require context-sensitive and flexible models that prioritize emotional safety and integrate personal development with professional skills.”

7.2 Vehicle List

Purpose for Youth Workers

Youth workers can use this tool to uncover hidden talent within the group and foster a stronger sense of empowerment among participants. Besides helping women recognize their own abilities, the fair strengthens group bonds, reduces loneliness, and encourages sustained collaboration. By shifting the focus from formal qualifications to experience, youth workers support Young Adult Inactive NEET Women in building self-confidence and developing a renewed interest in personal growth and learning.

Interaction Elements

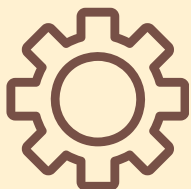
The interactive nature of the Skills Sharing Fair is shaped around live teaching sessions, the use of a barter-style approach for exchanging knowledge, and a shared Skills Sharing Board where contributions are made visible. A Reflection Wall allows participants to express what they learned and how the process made them feel, transforming individual experiences into moments of shared pride and recognition. These elements create a vibrant and engaging environment based on collaboration and mutual respect.

CONCLUSION



"This handbook offers adaptable, Montessori-inspired approaches to empowering Young Adult Inactive NEET Women and encourages youth workers to translate research into action."

Holistic Development



Learning Through Experience

Cultural Sensitivity



Chapter 8 – Conclusion

“This handbook offers adaptable, Montessori-inspired approaches to empowering Young Adult Non-Engineered NEET Women and encourages youth workers to translate research into action by creating inclusive, resilient, and emotionally supportive learning environments.”

8.1 Summary of Insights

The development of this handbook represents a significant milestone in the journey of the MAYA project. It is a synthesis of months of dedicated research, national case studies, and collaborative inquiry into how Montessori principles can empower Young Adult Non-Inactive NEET Women. Although the project has not yet entered the implementation phase, the exploratory work under the second work package has provided critical insights into the potential and necessary adaptations of Montessori-based approaches for the complex social and personal challenges faced by adult learners.

The evidence suggests that Montessori principles—respect for individuality, learning through experience, autonomy, and emotional security—have a strong potential to support empowerment among Young Adult Inactive NEET Women. However, these principles must be applied with deep sensitivity to cultural, emotional, and socio-economic contexts.

Our research emphasizes that learning should be viewed as a holistic process; professional and personal development should not be considered as separate areas, but as interconnected dimensions.

This handbook is not merely a theoretical assessment; it is a practical guide offering structured methods and frameworks for creating inclusive, responsive, and sustainable learning environments for youth workers. It emphasizes that environments focused on self-directed learning, hands-on engagement, and peer support are vital for rebuilding the self-confidence and competence of women who are often excluded by traditional systems.

Collaborative studies conducted in Italy, Austria, Portugal, and Turkey have revealed that flexibility, modularity, and emotional preparedness are fundamental elements of successful program design. Furthermore, youth workers need to be equipped not only with technical skills but also with emotional intelligence, cultural competence, and adaptive facilitation techniques.

This handbook stands as proof of the power of research-based practice and provides youth workers with a solid foundation for initiating transformative engagement with Young Adult Inactive NEET Women.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

“This handbook offers adaptable, Montessori-inspired approaches to empowering Young Adult Non-Engineered NEET Women and encourages youth workers to translate research into action by creating inclusive, resilient, and emotionally supportive learning environments.”

8.2 Call to Action

Looking ahead to the next phases of the MAYA project, this handbook invites youth workers, trainers and organisations across Europe to embrace and adapt Montessori-inspired approaches to address the need to deliver inclusive and effective education for NEET young women. The research phase has laid the groundwork; however, the success of future interventions depends on the active participation and innovation of practitioners in the field.

Youth workers are uniquely positioned to drive change; however, this requires moving beyond rigid, traditional models and embracing learner-centered and emotionally supportive frameworks. The findings of the second work package show that programs tailored to individual needs and enriched with experiential learning and community engagement can open new avenues for women who have long been systematically excluded.

Now is the time to translate these insights into action. Organizations must commit to designing resilient, culturally appropriate, and trauma-sensitive learning environments. This means prioritizing emotional well-being, integrating peer support mechanisms, and connecting learning with real-world opportunities. It also requires investing in the professional development of youth workers so they can effectively apply Montessori principles with adult learners.

This call is also directed not only to practitioners but also to policymakers and community leaders, as support structures such as accessible childcare, transportation solutions, and financial incentives for both learners and employers are vital for sustaining long-term change. Community partnerships should be strengthened and cross-sector collaboration encouraged so that the impact of this work extends beyond individual programs and permeates the fabric of local communities.

In conclusion, the MAYA project has paved a way where learning is transformed into a tool for empowerment, and youth workers are at the forefront of creating inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable educational experiences. The potential of Montessori-inspired approaches lies not only in theory but also in their capacity to transform lives when implemented with care, respect, and a vision for social change. This handbook is both a guide and an invitation: to rethink, innovate, and build a future in which all young women, regardless of their background, can thrive.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

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8.2 Call to Action

Note: The MAYA Handbook emphasizes the empowerment of Young Adult Non-Active NEET Women by adapting Montessori principles and creating inclusive, resilient, and emotionally supportive learning environments.

Appendix I Survey for Young Adult Inactive NEET Women

Mainstreaming Actions to Empower the Professional and Emotional Aspects of Young Adult NEET Women in Europe

Working Package 2: Guide to Research and Programmes

Appendix I – Survey for Young Adult Inactive NEET Women

This survey aims to identify the barriers faced by Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs), particularly those limiting their participation in the labor market. Identifying these challenges will allow us to gather fundamental data that will enable us to better understand their personal, social, and professional needs. The findings from this survey will guide our application of Montessori principles—respect for the individual, promoting independence, and creating a supportive learning environment. By matching Montessori principles with the specific challenges faced by Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs), customized strategies can be developed to support their development. Our ultimate goal is to create pathways for Young Adult Non-Engineered Women (NEETs) to realize their potential by developing their fundamental skills and abilities through a Montessori-based approach. This method aims to empower individuals, enable them to overcome challenges, and build self-confidence and resilience, thus enabling them to participate effectively in the labor market and contribute to their communities. Your participation in this survey is of great importance to this mission.

Young Adult Inactive NEET Women face numerous barriers to accessing and retaining meaningful employment. Challenges such as limited access to training programs, reliable internet, or skills development opportunities are compounded by personal circumstances like transportation issues and caregiving responsibilities. Many feel unprepared for the workforce, lacking guidance on work culture and essential tools like resumes. Social and cultural expectations, along with experiences of discrimination, further complicate their efforts to enter the workforce. Financial constraints play a significant role, alongside emotional barriers such as stress, anxiety, and lack of support. Furthermore, many YAINW women are unaware of job market opportunities or believe their skills do not match the demands of the job market.



MAYA

PROJECT