

Module 1: Who are the NEETs? Factors contributing to being NEET

SustaiNEET

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

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Contents

I. Introduction	2
II. Overview of NEET	3
III. NEETs in Europe	4
IV. Composition of NEET	5
V. Prerequisites for joining NEETs	8
1. Family and social environment as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET.....	9
2. Education as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET	11
3. Qualification and experience, labor market experience as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET.....	14
4. Motivation as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET	15
5. Economy and Youth Unemployment as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET.....	17
6. Gender as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET	19
7. Health as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET	20
VI. Conclusions	22



I. Introduction

The current materials serve as E-learning (online educational materials) within the KA2 project “SustaiNEET” which is a Strategic Partnership in the field of youth in cooperation between organizations from Bulgaria, Spain, Estonia and Italy. Within the project implementation the consortium of partners launched project survey to measure the level of knowledge as well as identify the needs and challenges that youth workers, leaders and volunteers face while working with NEETs group.

The e-learning modules will provide youth workers working with young NEETs, the necessary knowledge to be able to understand the different NEET realities and to reduce the numbers of young people at risk and in NEET situation by creating better opportunities for them. The e-learning modules will develop cognitive skills on participants, which involve applying methods in new situations to solve problems (thinking skills).

Moreover, this current e-learning module offers guidance to understand who are the NEET and what are the different factors contributing for being categorized as NEET.



II. Overview of NEET

The global crisis of the early 21st century has caused turnover in all sectors and affect the fate and life prospects of many people. The effects of the crisis have also had a painful effect on young people, confronting them with new challenges, including increasing the risk of dropping out of school, long-term unemployment, marginalization and social exclusion. More and more young people are not engaged in education, employment and training and fall into the category of NEETs (Not in Employment, Education and Training).

The term NEET first appears in 1990s in political discussions in Britain in connection with the need for re integration of young people aged 16-18 years that have dropped out of education system, but have not been transferred to the labour. For the first time, the representatives of NEET are formally included in European political discussions on the flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 strategy "Youth on the Move".

The group of NEETs (neither in employment nor in any education or training) includes young people aged 15-24 who are unemployed or economically inactive (according to the definitions of the International Labor Organization) and do not participate in any form of training or qualification course (Employment Committee of the EU).

The term NEET is used to define young people who are outside the employment, education or training systems. The term has been widely used as an indicator to inform youth-oriented policies on employment, education, training and social inclusion in the 28 EU Member States since 2010.

As said before, NEETs were specifically mentioned for the first time in European policy discussions in the Europe 2020 flagship initiative "Youth on the Move". The age category covered by this period was 15-24 years and was later extended to include people between the ages of 15 and 29. The concept is already central to political rhetoric at EU level. Currently, 14.2% of the population aged 15-29 falls into the NEET category.

In April 2013, the European Commission's proposal to the Council of the European Union to implement the Youth Guarantee Scheme in all Member States was adopted. An explicit political goal of this scheme is to reduce the number of NEETs. The scheme aims to ensure that all young people between the ages of 15 and 24 receive high-quality job offers, continuing education, vocational skills or internships within four months of losing their job or leaving the formal education system. The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the Member States through the Youth Employment Initiative has helped to improve the situation on the ground by reducing the number of NEETs.

On December 7, 2016, the European Commission launched the initiative Investing in European Youth, a renewed effort to support young people. Given the positive impact of the Youth Guarantee scheme so far, the Commission aims to increase and expand the funds



available for the Youth Employment Initiative by 2020 in order to promote its more effective promotion among young people.

Under the Youth Guarantee scheme, the number of NEETs aged 15-29 fell slightly from 14 million at the most critical moment of the crisis to 12.5 million in 2016 (14.2%). However, Eurofound research still estimates a significant loss for European economies, amounting to around € 142 billion per year (2015) - in terms of gains and unrealized income and taxes. This has a significant impact on the economic and social development of the EU.

III. NEETs in Europe

Since the onset of the recession, NEET has become a frequently used term at the international level, and international organizations have made much use of the NEET indicator. At European level, the term NEET has caught the attention of policymakers as a concept and useful indicator for monitoring the labor market and social situation of young people.

The need to focus more on NEETs has become evident in a number of policy documents from the European Commission. The Europe 2020 flagship initiative Youth on the Move aims at 'unleashing all young people's potential' and clearly emphasizes the importance of focusing on the NEET problem. It is considered essential to reduce the 'astonishingly' high number of NEETs in Europe, by providing pathways back into education or training, as well as enabling contact with the labor market. Special emphasis is also put on ensuring labor market integration of people with disabilities or health problems. Making use of NEET as an indicator, one of the key actions is to 'establish a systematic monitoring of the situation of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) on the basis of EU-wide comparable data, as a support to policy development and mutual learning in this field'. NEETs also became central to the new set of integrated guidelines for economic and employment policies proposed by the European Commission. In these new guidelines the Commission stated that in order 'to support young people and in particular those not in employment, education or training, Member States in cooperation with the social partners, should enact schemes to help recent graduates find initial employment or further education and training opportunities, including apprenticeships, and intervene rapidly when young people become unemployed'. Equally, NEET has been introduced as a key statistical indicator for youth unemployment and social situation of young people in the framework of the Europe 2020 growth strategy, alongside the youth unemployment rate and the unemployment ratio.

NEET rates in the EU Member States for people aged 20–34 with a low level of education ranged between 17.4 % (Luxembourg) and 48.7 % (Greece) in 2019, with a rate higher than 50 % in Ireland (51.1 %), Bulgaria (51.5 %), Croatia (55.9 %) and Slovakia (66.2 %). Looking more closely at these figures, these NEET rates were in the range of 20-40 % for half of the



EU Member States in 2019, which was also the case in the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland.

Among young people aged 20–34 with an intermediate level of education, NEET rates ranged from 5.8 % in Malta and 6.3 % in Sweden up to a peak of 24.1 % in Italy. For this level of education, four countries recorded a NEET rate higher than 17 % (Poland, France, Greece and Italy) while the majority of countries were within a range of 10-16 %.

Concerning people aged 20-34 with a high level of education, their NEET rates were overall lower than for the other levels of education, from 3.7 % in Sweden to 23.2 % in Greece, a large majority of EU Member States recording rates of 6 to 14 %.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
European Union - 27 countries	16.6	16.8	17.3	17.5	17.0	16.6	16.0	15.1	14.4	14.0
European Union - 28 countries	16.4	16.6	17.1	17.2	16.6	16.1	15.6	14.7	14.1	13.6
European Union - 15 countries	16.0	16.1	16.6	16.7	16.1	15.7	15.2	14.5	13.9	13.4
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2011)	16.6	16.7	17.3	17.5	17.1	16.6	16.1	15.3	14.6	14.1
Belgium	13.7	14.5 ^(b)	15.1	15.6	14.8	15.5	14.2	13.7 ^(b)	13.0	12.8
Bulgaria	24.0 ^(b)	25.6	25.4	26.1	24.7	23.0	22.8	19.5	19.1	17.5
Czechia	15.7	15.0 ^(b)	15.8	15.6 ^(b)	15.0	14.9	13.6	12.4	12.5	13.2
Denmark	8.7	9.1	9.3	8.9	8.9	9.1	9.2 ^(b)	10.5 ^(b)	10.2	10.0
Germany (until 1990 former GDR)	12.5 ^(b)	11.3 ^(b)	10.9	10.4	10.4	10.2	10.5	10.0	9.6	9.3
Estonia	19.4	16.6	16.5	15.3	15.2	13.3	14.9	12.6	12.6	11.6
Ireland	22.2	23.1	22.4	20.0	18.4	17.1	15.6	13.9 ^(b)	12.7	12.6
Greece	20.4	25.0	29.1	30.8	29.5	27.1	25.6	24.2	22.3	20.7
Spain	20.9	21.7	23.6	24.0	22.4 ^(b)	20.9	19.5	17.9	16.7	16.0
France	15.4	15.6	16.1	14.7 ^(b)	15.1 ^(b)	15.7	15.6	15.0	14.5	14.0
Croatia	18.2	20.4	21.7	23.2	22.2	21.1	20.6	18.9	16.2	15.0
Italy	23.3	23.7	24.8	27.2	27.4	26.9	26.0	25.5	24.8	23.8
Cyprus	12.9	15.0	17.4	20.3	19.5	18.7	18.8	18.0	15.4	14.6
Latvia	21.4	20.2	18.2	16.3	16.6	14.7	14.4	13.8	12.7	12.0
Lithuania	18.4	16.1	15.3	14.1	13.5	12.6	12.0	11.5	10.6	11.6
Luxembourg	7.7	7.4	8.4	8.5	8.1	8.4 ^(b)	8.1	7.7	8.3	6.9
Hungary	20.6	20.2	20.9	20.4	18.1	16.9 ^(b)	15.8	15.0	14.7	14.6
Malta	14.9	14.2	13.9	12.9	13.1	13.2	10.6	10.4 ^(b)	9.3	9.1
Netherlands	7.0	7.0	7.7	8.8 ^(b)	8.8	8.1	7.9	7.3	6.8	7.0

In general, although the term NEETs has crept into the policy vocabulary and NEETs are framed as the group ‘most at risk’, they are often problematized in relation to youth unemployment and limited participation in the education system. Seldom is the NEET challenge discussed and tackled individually. NEETs are mostly positioned in an overall debate on youth unemployment

IV. Composition of NEET



-Short-term and long-term unemployed

-NEET due to family responsibilities





DISABILITY (?)



-NEET due to illness or disability

-Youth who do not want to work



-Specific reason cannot be determined why they fall into this category

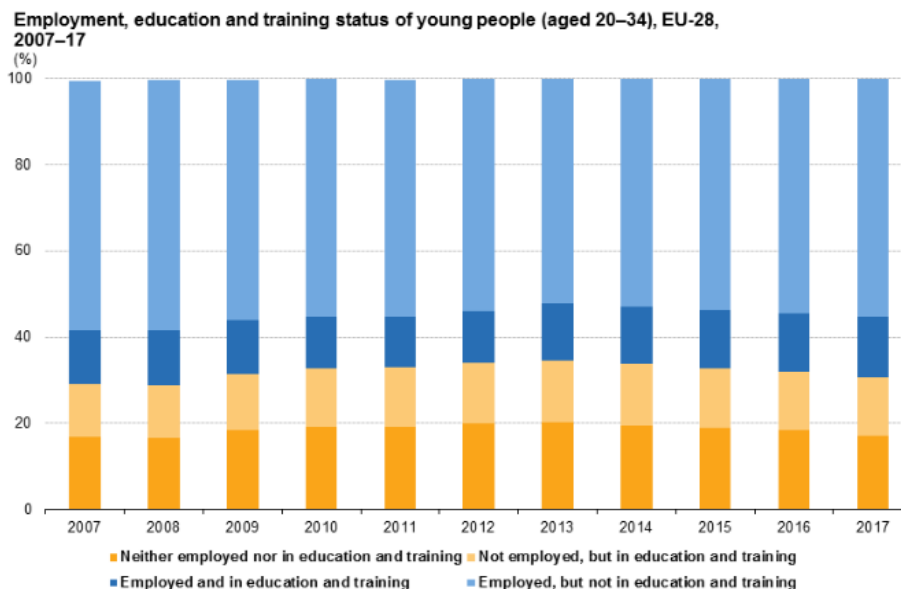


Differences between countries: Representatives of NEET differ depending on the specific elements in each different Member State. Scandinavian, Western and Continental countries, the largest groups are usually short-term unemployed, while in some southern and Mediterranean countries the largest share of the long-term unemployed and those unwilling to work. In Eastern European countries, the largest share of NEETs are women fall into this category due to family responsibilities.

Although not perfect, the NEET indicator is an important tool for determining the degree of multilateral vulnerability of young people in terms of their participation in the labor market and the risk of social exclusion. Through the establishment of seven subgroups for the European ones NEET makes it possible to identify specific problems and features with needs to be handled carefully by political initiatives.

Socio-demographic factors: Several studies show that the share of NEET increases by age and young women are most at risk become NEET.

Educational achievements: The largest group NEET consists of young people with a degree secondary education - the so-called “missing environment”, which is often overlooked in political debates. However, like exclude absolute values, probability young man to become NEET decreases with increase the level of education: that's why it is believed that education is the best protection against unemployment and social exclusion.



Note: the shares do not quite add up to 100 % due to the category of young people for which the employment and/or education and training status is not known.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_18)



V. Prerequisites for joining NEETs

NEETs are a heterogeneous group that is formed both under the influence of socio-demographic characteristics and under the influence of various other factors. The complex interaction of factors of institutional, systemic and individual nature increases the risk of joining NEETs for each young person. Here are few main factors which contribute to young people falling into the category of NEET.

The NEET rate for young people is closely linked to economic performance and the business cycle. With a record number of NEETs following the financial and economic crisis, there have been concerns among policymakers that a whole generation of young people in the EU could remain out of the labour market for years to come. The implications of this are **two-fold**: on a personal level, these individuals are more likely to become disenfranchised and to suffer from poverty and social exclusion, while at a macro-economic level they represent a considerable loss in terms of unused productive capacity.

Family and
Friends/Social life

Education

Qualifications
work experience

Motivation



Economy

Gender

Health
status

The more problems there are in each of these areas for the particular young person, the more obstacles there are for him / her to continue studying or to be realized on the labor market. For the most vulnerable groups - minorities and people with low education - there could be problems in each of the several areas and removing them from the group of NEETs is extremely difficult.

1. Family and social environment as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET

Disorders in the family and social environment are the first and most important prerequisite to join the group of NEETs. The family and the specific characteristics of its members, the community rules and the environment in which everyone grows and develops (including the type of settlement in which he lives) are decisive for the formation of his attitudes towards training, work and development and his behavior in general in the future.



Family environment

The composition of the family environment predetermines the development of young people and represents a key prerequisite for falling into the group of NEETs. The riskiest to



create NEETs environment includes people who are abusive or addicted, to which young people are negative, as well as permanently unemployed. This is due to the tendency of adolescents and young people to learn and reproduce the behavioral patterns of people who play an important role in their lives.

Disorders in the family environment are the second risk prerequisite for the formation of the group of NEETs related to the environment. There are "violations" in two directions. On one hand, "violation" can be spoken of in a narrower sense - young people in single-parent families (with one parent) or without parents (raised by relatives, guardians and Foster families). Several studies show that they are at greater risk of falling into NEETs than those raised by two parents. On the other hand, "family disorder" may have a broader definition. According to the qualitative research, it also includes the lack of attention to the children in the family, due to constant commitments of the parents, the process of gradual alienation between children and parents, the reduction of communication to "a fairy tale" - a time that is not enough to share opinions and intentions.

As a disturbed family environment can be perceived and the situation in which one or both parents are absent for a long time, due to the so-called economic emigration. Early marriage, especially for young children at an early age, is another key prerequisite for falling into the group of NEETs related to the environment.

Their parents decide how long they stay in school, given when it is best to get married. Marriage limits their development prospects and they practically remain with the status of NEETs until they leave the age group of young people. The situation with boys is different - they must first learn, "to become something of them.

Social environment and way of life

The attitudes and behavior of young people are influenced not only by the family and the community, but also by the specifics of the environment in which they communicate informally and the peculiarities of the way of life in the respective settlement.

The studies identify several key specifics of the social environment and lifestyle, which often become a prerequisite for the accession of young people in the NEETs group:

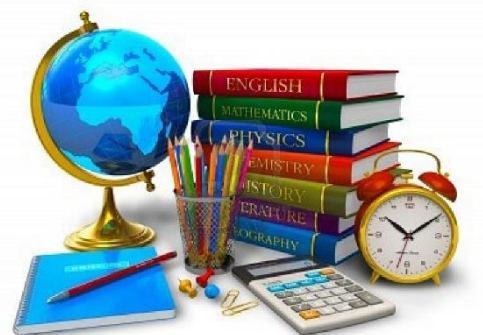
- The low standard, which places barriers to the expansion of worldviews and contacts, as well as to the continuation of education and job search.
- Limited opportunities for meaningful leisure time in the small settlements.
- The tranquility of small or underdeveloped (also depopulated) settlements, which "put youth to sleep" and imposes on them a rhythm of life that does not stimulate them to think, to make quick decisions and overcome their problems.



- The concentration of business, educational institutions and prospects in the capital and several larger cities, which limits the opportunities of young people living elsewhere.
- Higher requirements for job seekers in the capital and major cities, due to severe competition, discouraging young people who migrated from villages and smaller towns when they cannot meet expectations.
- After several attempts to find a well-paid job, they became economically inactive, but did not return to their native places.
- Housework, which engages a large part of young people's free time, especially the NEETs. For some minorities, housework or fieldwork often takes so long thus, can become a reason for early school leaving and hence - a prerequisite for joining NEETs.

2. Education as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET

Joining the group of NEETs is largely a function of the degree of completed education. This is clearly seen in the profile of the group, according to which 47% from NEETs drop out of school prematurely, i.e. remain with primary or lower education.



In view of the fact that NEETs are largely formed by young people who have not completed their education, it can be argued that the role of school and teachers in early identification of potential NEETs and prevention of group inclusion is key.

Difficulties at school are a serious indication of the presence of young people at risk and are among the prerequisites that directly contribute to the formation of the group of NEETs. The results from a national representative survey in Bulgaria done by UNICEF show that almost half of the NEETs are encountered difficulties, with 17% indicating that they had many problems (in the control group, only 5% had difficulties). The greatest difficulties in school are faced by people from minority ethnic groups, especially the Roma.

Young people who later have a problem with realization usually face difficulties with the material (such as content and volume) - 83%, and with homework - 60%. At the heart of the difficulties at school are two significant problem areas in the education system, registered by both young people and institutions working directly with them. The first is related to the teaching material and teaching, and in particular - the weak orientation of teaching to practice, the large volume and lack of focus and structure of the learning content, the passive model and the lack of an interactive approach in teaching.



The second concerns the way in which schools are financed. The formula "more students = more money" is valid for both schools and universities. It leads to the vicious practice of admitting to higher classes / courses persons who do not have reached the required level only for the purpose of remaining in the school / university. This leads to a decrease in the overall quality of education, as it is lacking competition (anyone can "pass"). The most extreme dimension of the problem is the paradox educational degree to be acquired by illiterate young people. In the long run, the desire to keep students at all costs leads to a constantly declining confidence of young people in the education system and its potential to be the basis for their development.

One of the extremely worrying results due to the problems in the secondary school education is the high share of functionally illiterate students. Functional illiteracy has been identified by stakeholder representatives as a fundamental problem for the education system and a major factor in acquiring the status of NEETs.

In the topic of education as a factor for joining the group of NEETs an important emphasis should also be placed on vocational education and training, with a view to its important role in the formation of a skilled workforce and a competitive knowledge-based economy. There is a general consensus among stakeholders that it is being seriously monitored discrepancy between what is offered by vocational schools and market demand of labor. Moreover, vocational schools are lagging behind in offering new professions, and some produce staff whose implementation is problematic. In many cases, the acquired specialties turn out to be inapplicable, especially in the smaller settlements places where the business is represented by 1-2 operating companies. This imbalance is one the reasons why young people who have graduated from high schools or colleges with a certain profession remain "offboard" and fall into the group of NEETs. Although continuing education at the university is actually a way out from the NEETs group, the university alone is no guarantee of a better future either - and graduates often go to job fairs and join the ranks. of the long-term unemployed.

Continuing education is especially problematic for young people from small Settlements/rural areas. There are two reasons for this: poorer school preparation, which does not give them the necessary knowledge base, and the lack of resources, forcing them to work, which shortens the preparation time and prevents them from coping.

Stakeholder representatives also commented on higher education from another point of view - in relation to the needs of the labor market and the need from long-term planning (horizon of 5-10 years) of public procurement in universities. According to them, the autonomy of higher education, which is also related to the responsibility for financial self-sufficiency, stimulates the "appetite" for more students and in many cases leads to



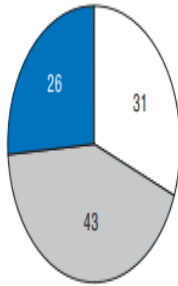
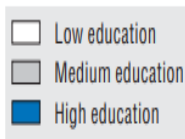
"Overproduction" of certain professions and qualifications.

The educational gap in NEET rates varies significantly from country to country. As the educational attainment levels of young people rise over time, the absence of qualifications becomes an ever more important impediment to employment. Poorly educated youth in Germany are, for instance, almost 7 times more likely to become NEET than the highly educated. In a word, a good education helps protect young people from becoming NEETs, while leaving school early puts them at considerable risk especially when most other young people attain upper secondary or higher education. Education begets skills, and skills beget educational attainment. It follows, therefore, that leaving school early may result in low levels of literacy and numeracy, while students who have struggled from an early age with basic literacy and numeracy may also be more likely to drop out as they fall behind their peers. And poor literacy and numeracy also make it more difficult to find a job. Policies should seek to help young people master basic skills to reduce the risk of becoming NEET.

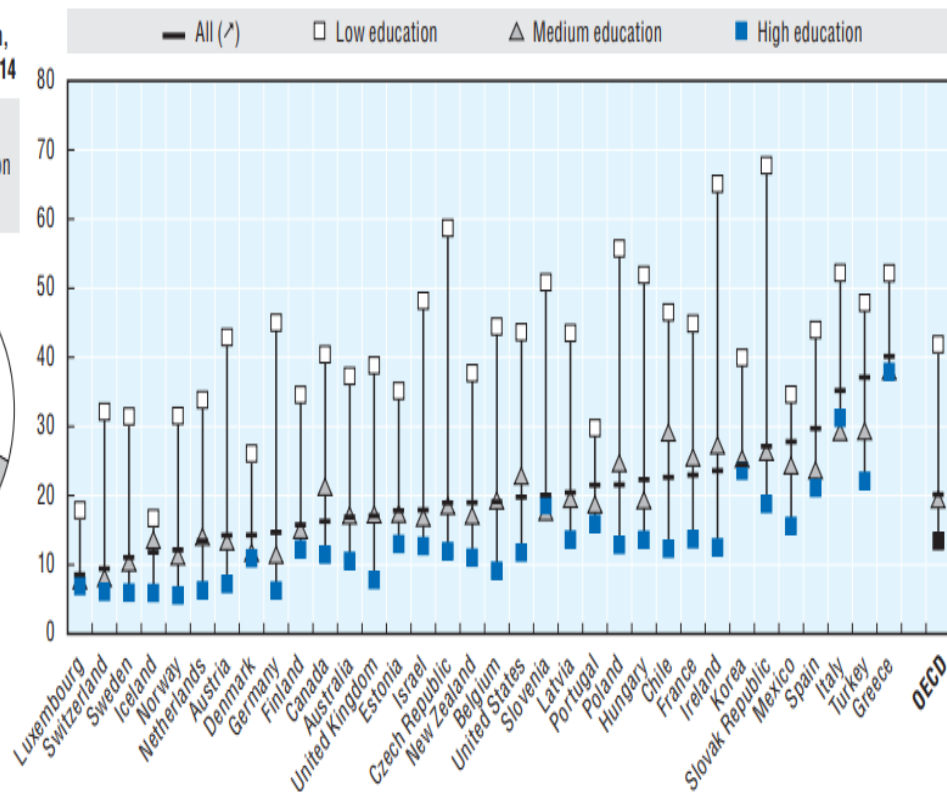
Fighting early school leaving is essential for tackling the NEET challenge to tackle the NEET challenge effectively, governments must ensure that all young people obtain at least an upper-secondary degree that entitles them to pursue their studies or gives them the vocational skills to succeed in the labour market. OECD countries have made considerable progress over the past decade in reducing rates of early school leaving, i.e. the shares of young people who fail to complete upper-secondary schooling. Yet, around one in six 25-to-34 year-olds still do not have an upper-secondary qualification, and the rate is substantially higher in Southern European countries such as Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey.



Panel A. Breakdown of NEETs (15-29) by level of education, as percentages, 2013-14



Panel B. NEET rate as percentages, 25 to 29 year-olds, by level of education, 2013-14



3. Qualification and experience, labor market experience as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET

The comparison between the share of NEETs and the unemployment rate shows that the risk of falling into the group of young people who do not study or work and are not training is higher in areas with high unemployment and vice versa - as much lower the unemployment rate is, the fewer young people fall into in the group. Apart from the current state of the labor market, one of the most serious barriers to starting a job for NEETs is the lack of qualifications related to low education. Such data give grounds to claim that young people without a specialty are one of the most at-risk groups among NEETs with the fewest opportunities for realization on the labor market. They remain the longest in the NEET situation, which leads to a loss of motivation and work habits and ultimately - to go out of the workforce (the so-called. discouraged unemployed).



Lack of experience

The next key prerequisite for acquiring the status of NEETs is the lack of experience. While lack of qualifications is a major obstacle in front of people with low education, the lack of



experience is a barrier especially for people with secondary education. However, lack of experience is not just a problem for NEETs. Young people in some European countries find it difficult to find work, precisely due to the fact that they leave the education system without practice/education is considered to be very theoretical with little to zero practice/.

One of the possible solutions is to participate in internship programs. They are expected to complement what is learned in school / university with practical knowledge to support finding a job and help the learner to orientate whether the job he or she also likes whether he/she has the necessary qualities and skills to deal with it in the future. However, young people rarely benefit from this type of program - probably because of lack of information, but also because in small settlements and those with declining economic functions there are no such programs.

4. Motivation as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET

Lack of motivation is an extremely important barrier for the realization of young people - this opinion is shared by many stakeholders. Problems with motivation lead to apathy, limitation of interests and professional and life goals.



Representatives of the institutions believe that the reasons for the lack of motivation are diverse: the conscious reaction to the limited opportunities for professional realization, the discrepancy between the educational qualification and the requirements of the labor market, low pay and unwillingness to work or study. Young people themselves often state as a reason not to work and / or not to study “I want to rest / now I have finished” and “I don't want to work / study”.

There are three possible reasons for these answers.



The first is that the reluctance to work and study stems from financial security and parental support that allows the young person to do whatever he or she sees fit without encouraging him or her to develop.

The second possible reason is that behind the denial lies an excuse for the unfavorable situation in which the young person has found himself and a cover for the feeling of failure in terms of professional realization. Thus,



the situation is presented as personal choice, not as a lack of opportunities and a bad coincidence.

The third possible reason is a lack of desire to work or study as a result of the negative influence of the family environment and the environment, when role models they do not stimulate development, on the contrary, they give ideas for other possibilities.

Data from the national representative survey show that lack of motivation (whatever the reason) is not common to all NEETs, although much of them show a great deal of disbelief. While for young people outside the NEETs group, continuing / completing education is one of the main priorities, for NEETs it is last in the ranking. For the coming years, although low educational attainment is a key obstacle for leaving the group. This observation is particularly important in terms of measures to address the phenomenon of NEETs, as it shows that urgent action is needed to motivate adolescents and young people in this group to continue their education and thus to improve their chances for professional and personal realization.

Finally, it is important to mention that personal motivation is a function of the character of the young person, in addition to the objective circumstances in his or her environment. Active and combative natures have a much better chance of realizing themselves, especially if they are supported by their families. In contrast, they are more passive young people, with less ambition and less clear goals threatened with a longer stay in the group of NEETs. They often expect help to come from outside and do not take action to change the situation in which they find themselves. Thus the role of NGOs and youth workers in this particular field is pretty important. Youth work can play a significant role in motivating young people through non formal education, prevent them from falling into NEET group.

Undoubtedly at risk of falling into the group of NEETs are young people with health problems, putting them at a disadvantage. The share of NEETs among those who say they have a disease that prevents them from living the way they want is quite high.

Stakeholder representatives also believe that young people with disabilities, physical and mental illnesses are at greater risk of becoming NEETs. This is also confirmed by the Euro found study, according to which people with disabilities or health problems are 40% more likely to fall into the NEETS group, in comparison with those in good health / Euro found, NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe, 2012 /. Young people under institutional protection are also at risk of falling into the NEETs group or leaving such institutions. However, they remain outside the scope of the state at the time they leave the institution.



5. Economy and Youth Unemployment as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET.

Youth employment is an important factor for social cohesion. From a macro-economic perspective, persistently high rates of unemployment or inactivity are a substantial loss of economic opportunity and income. They undermine trust in political institutions and policies while, from an individual viewpoint, under-employment can inflict scars on youth that last for many years. Indeed, there is ample evidence that even short spells of inactivity and unemployment at the outset of a career can have lasting effects. Young people who experience a period of early unemployment are more prone to unemployment later in their careers and have been shown to earn less.



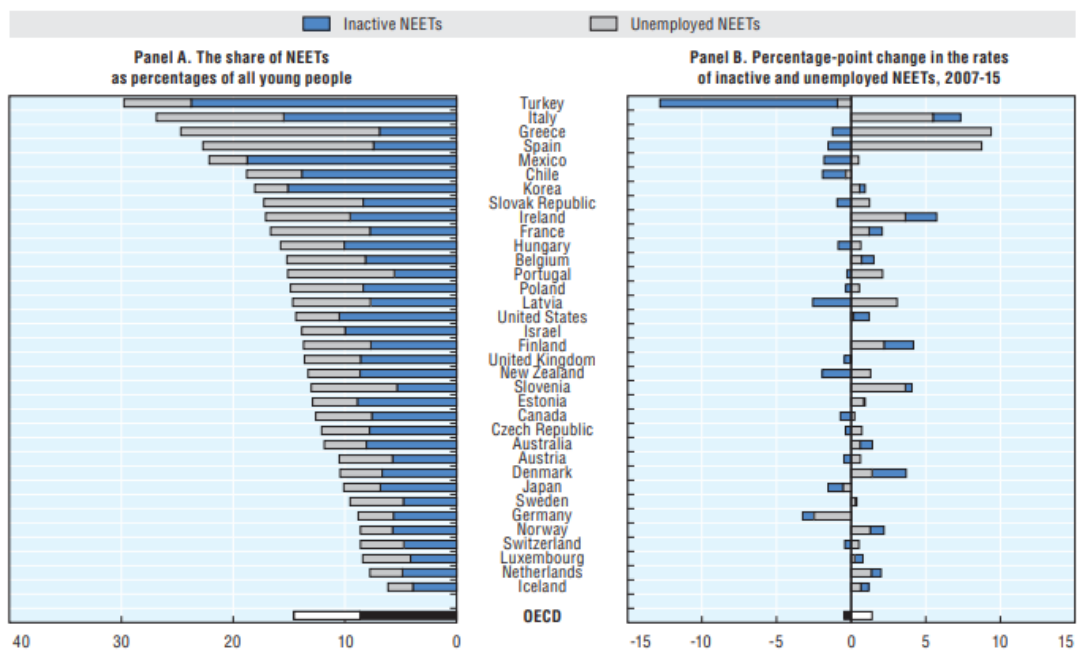
They are more likely to work in temporary and atypical contracts that are easier to terminate – in other words, they are what the concept of labour market duality describes as “outsiders”. Moreover, in times of weak labour demand, young people with little or no work experience struggle to find a job. The slow recovery in many countries since the crisis has failed to reverse trends in youth employment and restore it to pre-crisis levels.

The smooth transition of young people from study to work is one of the hot policy issues in all developed and transition countries. Youth unemployment rates exceeding 2-3 times the overall average rates are worrisome. However, the conventionally measured unemployment rate has the total labour force size as the denominator which usually is not numerous in these ages. This inflates unemployment estimates and ignores large non-participation. Meanwhile, many young people are engaged into full-time education or training and therefore are legitimately out of the labour force. In this context, the variable counting those young people who are not in employment, education or training – the so-called NEET group – becomes an alternative to the conventional definition of unemployment. The size of the group varies from 7% to 20% of those aged 15-24 in different countries. NEET status may have a number of long-term consequences for life trajectories. Among them are poorer chances of finding permanent employment, a higher risk of poverty and lower levels of well-being. It can also lead to problems with physical and mental health, increase the propensity for criminal activities, substance abuse, and lower the level of trust in social institutions. For example, half of young NEETs in the UK have never worked; they have a very high risk of remaining unemployed in the medium term and being low paid in the long term. In this respect the NEET category marks various forms of youth exclusion, i.e. “joblessness”, “youth left behind” and problems in the transition from school to work.



While many countries have experienced bouts of recovery, they have generally been too weak to drive up youth employment rates significantly. Indeed, the Southern European countries that have been severely affected by the crisis – such as Spain, Italy and Greece – experienced a second recession in 2011-12, and the share of employed youth is only just levelling out. Other countries – such as Estonia, Hungary and Iceland – have already recovered, or are on their way to recovering, their pre-crisis levels of youth employment. The average share of youth in employment OECD-wide has stagnated since 2010.

Rising NEET rates mostly reflect higher unemployment among young people



Note: Countries are arranged, from top to bottom, in order of overall NEET rates. Data on Israel are not comparable before and after 2011, so the percentage point change is not presented for Israel. Data for Chile refer to 2006-13, for Korea to 2008-13, and to 2014 for Israel. Source: OECD calculations based on national labour force surveys and OECD National Educational Attainment Classification (NEAC) Database 2015, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=EAG_NEAC# (Australia, Israel, Korea and New Zealand).

The rise in NEET rates since the beginning of the crisis has been driven wholly by an increase in the share of unemployed NEETs, while the share of inactive has been steady or even declined.

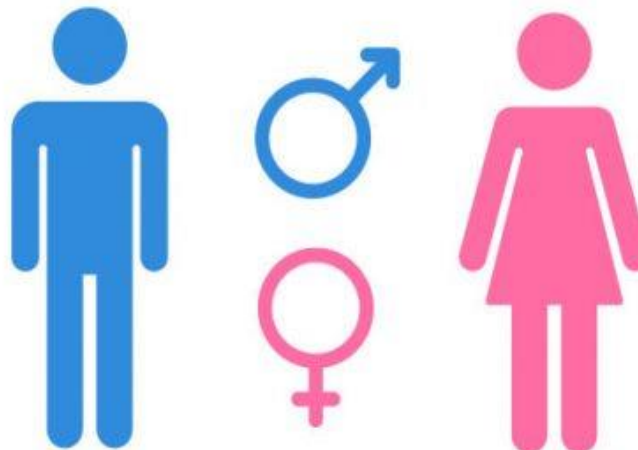
Migrant youth are more at risk of being NEET

Similarly, a relatively small proportion of NEETs – 13% on average across the OECD – are foreign-born youth. Nevertheless, individually foreign-born young people are significantly more exposed to the risk of being NEETs than the native-born. In most OECD countries, youth born outside their country of residence are 1.5 times more likely to be NEET than native youth. Foreign-born young people are more at risk of becoming a NEET.



6. Gender as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET

By various researches done at European level, as well as according to our experience with working with NEET we can definitely point out the Gender as an element contributing to the young person becoming NEET/especially in some societies/.



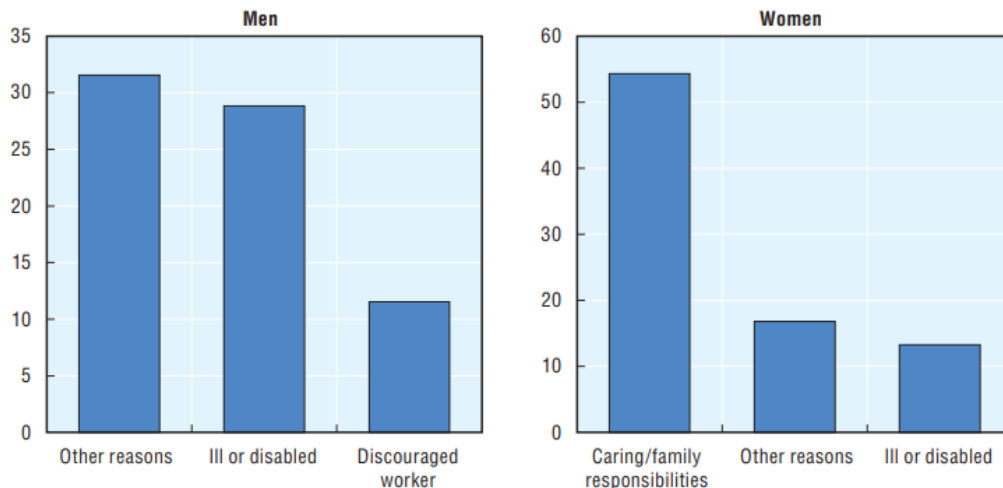
Cultural differences aside, the main reason for inactivity among women most often relates to childcare

responsibilities. More than half of women ascribe their inactivity to care-giving and family responsibilities which probably means looking after small children, as employment rates are generally low among mothers of very young children – only about half of those with children under 3 years of age are in employment in OECD countries. Some might simply prefer caring for children at home while they are young – more mothers take up employment as children get older. Others, however, have no choice because they cannot access or afford childcare for their small children.

In order to help NEETs with children, particularly females, into employment or facilitate a return to education and training, it is therefore essential that childcare costs are kept to an affordable level, and that childcare, including after-school care, is easy to access. The provision of childcare services may also have an equity role to play – high-quality, formal childcare, particularly at an early age, has been shown to have a positive effect on social development and child cognition and these effects have been found to be stronger for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Young women are especially vulnerable. The inference may be that, in some OECD countries at least, women may be more prone to long-term NEET status when they have children and little opportunity to resume or take up employment later on.



Panel B. Top three reasons for inactivity among male and female inactive NEETs, as percentage, 2014



7. Health as a factor to contribute to youth falling into category of NEET

Young people with poor health are four times more likely to be NEET. A relatively small proportion of NEETs – 7% on average across the OECD – report being in poor health while a larger proportion, just over one fifth, report limitations in their daily activity



due to health. But even if a minority of NEETs report poor health, at the individual level illness or disability is a strong predictor of the NEET status, especially among males. Physical or psychological problems often represent serious obstacles to finding employment and accruing work experience. NEET youth are over five times more likely on average to complain of poor health than their non-NEET peers and more than twice as likely to report limitations in their daily activity due to their health. Indeed, a substantial proportion of male and, to a lesser extent, female inactive NEETs state that ill-health or disability is the prime reason for not working. Some NEETs may be permanently unable to work, some able to do only certain types of jobs or a certain number of hours, while others may require special workplace adjustments. They may also have to contend with practical difficulties such as physical restrictions or a lack of flexible working arrangements. Illness and disability may also make going to school or university more difficult if they affect attendance and performance.

As for mental disorders, they are widespread among young people – about one in four 15- to-24 year-olds are affected. Onset often occurs well before any labour market transition –



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before 14 years old in half of all mental illnesses. Mentally unwell young people are more prone to dropping out of school.

Given the link identified above between early school leaving and drifting into unemployment or inactivity, it is essential that policy measures support mentally unwell young people and keep them fully engaged in education.



VI. Conclusions

Given the extent of youth unemployment, there is a renewed sense of urgency for a better understanding of the problem and for immediate interventions aimed at promoting youth employment and at preventing the disengagement of youth from our societies. In this context, with traditional indicators for labor market participation displaying limited relevance for youth, the concept of NEETs, young people Not in Employment, Education and Training, entered the policy arena. It is meant to better describe and analyse the vulnerability of young people.

While from a statistical point of view NEETs are very easy to capture, they represent a heterogeneous population which include vulnerable and non-vulnerable subgroups with different characteristics and needs. However, despite this heterogeneity, young people who are NEETs share some common and fundamental characteristics: they are all in a status in which they do not accumulate human capital through formal channels, they are more likely to cumulate several disadvantages and more likely to experience future poor employment outcomes. As the risk factors that increase the chances of becoming NEET are often a combination of personal, economic and social factors, NEET can be in many cases described as both an outcome and defining characteristic of the disadvantaged youth who are at a much greater risk of social exclusion.

Fostered by increasingly high youth unemployment rates and the economic and societal consequences associated with NEETs status, there is a renovated sense of urgency to develop and implement policies to bring young people (back) into employment, education or training across Europe. As a consequence, in recent years European Union member states have been more actively engaged in designing and implementing policy measures aimed at increasing the employability and promoting higher employment participation of young people.

Finally, while governments have been very active in promoting policies for re-engaging young people into labor market or education, questions remain about how effective these measures are, how good they perform in meeting their targets and what strengths and weaknesses of different approaches are. Evaluation of the effectiveness of policy measures is crucial and it constitutes an essential input for the policy making process. This is especially true in times of austerity when available resources are diminishing. The absence of formal evaluation or the lack of measurable targets in many of the analyzed cases calls for better monitoring and evaluation of employment measures to inform policy-makers in this area in the future.