

Reducing the number of NEETs

European Social Partners' joint key messages

30 April 2019

Context

- Almost 15% of the 20-34 olds in the EU were NEETs in January 2019 - this stood for some 15 million young people across Europe. There are significant differences between Member States as far as the NEETs rate is concerned: it ranged from slightly below 8% in Sweden to almost 30% in Italy.
- NEETs (“young people neither in employment nor in education or training”) tend to be a heterogeneous population, and various subgroups exist within this category, who are sometimes difficult to reach. These are, for example, young mothers, young people with disabilities or young, unskilled migrants.
- The diversity of NEETs needs to be well documented and understood at the relevant levels in the Member States before designing and putting in place effective policy measures to reach out to the NEETs, promote their inclusion and, when needed, upskilling, to make them fit for the labour markets taking into account their individual characteristics.

Key messages

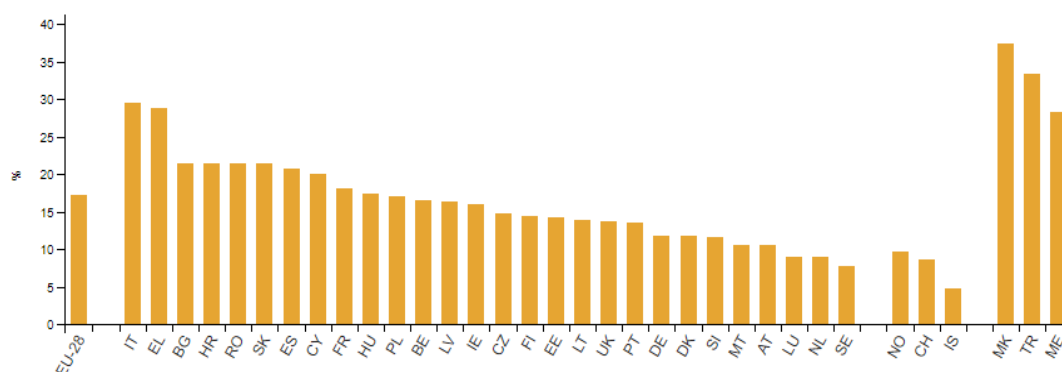
- High numbers of NEETs are a big loss for our economies and societies. The feeling of disenchantment or exclusion of the individuals concerned also bears a high political risk for the stability of our democratic societies. The incapacity of education and social systems to prevent the phenomenon or reduce the number of NEETs points to a failure of broadly supported efficient policies to promote equality of opportunities across Europe.
- Often the lack of or insufficient family support plays an important role in young people's failure at school, and their dropping out from the education system. Therefore, the transmission of poverty and/or social disadvantage across generations needs to be tackled by education and social systems at an early stage.
- European and national social policies should converge in creating information and opportunities for all young people so as many of them as possible are strongly supported and encouraged to freely choose their education and future career.
- School-to-work transition success rate needs to be increased. This first experience is usually decisive for future: either successful transitions, or potential drop outs, fragmented careers, and inactivity spells.
- Offering employment opportunities to young people with no professional experience and/or a drop out history is often not possible for enterprises. However, enterprises may offer apprenticeships that would enable gaining the very first professional experience and improve employability of vulnerable young people.

- Apprenticeships and work-based learning are a very useful means to provide young people with an experience in the real world of work and acquire skills that are in demand in companies. Quality and effective apprenticeships are those during which at least 50% of the training time is spent in an enterprise. In line with the Council recommendation adopted on 15 March 2018, each European country should come up with a supportive policy ecosystem, including the design of fair cost-sharing arrangements between employers and public authorities, while ensuring an appropriate element of commitment of the apprentices, reflecting the benefits apprenticeship brings them (e.g. professional qualifications and in-company experience, employment opportunities).
- Preventing school drop outs should be the main priority. Intervention / support at this stage is more cost effective than tackling socio-economic problems related to long-term unemployment /inactivity.
- Once young people become NEETs and are experiencing social exclusion, remedial policies are needed. Social services and NGOs / charity organisations are best placed to reach out to individuals and assist them in “personal reconstruction” to be ready for further training and access to the labour market.
- Innovative solutions are necessary to reach out to NEETs and ensure their effective re-insertion. Such approaches include alternative recruitment strategies (e.g. focusing on successes and potential rather than linear professional career) or communication campaigns (e.g. improving the image of apprenticeship in society).
- Young people need to be supported and guided to feel responsible for their professional future. From early years, they should be encouraged to observe (local/regional) labour market and its developments to know which skills are in demand and what are employers’ needs.
- When NEETs have developed adequate basic skills and are acquiring competences desired on the labour market, employment services have a role to facilitate further training, if needed, and/or job placement. They shall also provide NEETs with assistance necessary during the first phase of employment (mentoring / coaching and further training to stabilize professional career). ALMPs needs to be timely, targeted and effective.
- NEETs are difficult to reach therefore an integrated offer of social and employment services, both public (PES) and private (PRES), is necessary based on a reliable evidence/data. A cooperative attitude between relevant institutions and other stakeholders during the re-integration process is important to achieve results. Given the priority to bring the NEETs back to work, the overall responsibility of NEETs integration should be piloted by Ministries of Labour and labour market institutions, in cooperation with other relevant Ministries and institutions responsible for education, training, social protection and economic policies.
- Involving social partners in designing and delivering re-integration services is indispensable. Social partners are not best placed to prepare inactive individuals to enter labour market, but their expertise of sectors and regional and/or local labour markets usually makes interventions more targeted and effective. Additionally, employers are useful source of information about current and future skills needs. They also create jobs and apprenticeship placements and they should be supported in this endeavour.
- Diverse forms of work and flexible contractual arrangements enable employers to engage those who cannot/do not wish work full-time or are only available on temporary basis. This flexibility contributes to making labour markets more inclusive and providing specific arrangements for those who may otherwise be unemployed due to the lack of work opportunities.

Target countries

Taken into consideration diversity of national situations, “one size fits all” approach would not be effective in reducing the number of NEETs across the EU. Priority countries for policy actions to reduce the number of NEETs as part of the European semester are the following: Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Cyprus, France, Hungary, and Poland.

Young people (aged 20–34) neither in employment nor in education and training, 2017



The European social partners and the national social partners of the countries concerned are willing to engage in mutual learning activities with the Commission and the respective Member States governments to support progress towards the reduction of NEETs.

The participation of governments and social partners from some countries where NEETs rates are low could also be considered to encourage progress based on the most effective policies and practices that exist across Europe.

Inspiring national examples

- *CAP Artisanat: from inactivity to craft trades (CMA, France)*

“CAP Artisanat”, launched in September 2018, is a project addressed to NEETs (up to the age of 26). It lasts two years and offers the opportunity to discover craft trades to almost 1 900 NEETs. The project has two objectives: a/ to facilitate access to a promising job, b/ to support personal development. The support provided can be either individualised or collective. The former takes the form of 6 weeks-long sessions for maximum 12 participants who benefit from preparatory meetings, coaching sessions on life skills, socio-educational support and “laboratory” days. The latter proposes tailored coaching and training to re-enter the labour market through skilled crafts. This project is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative; its budget totals at €3.4 million.

- *Valikom: validation of informally-acquired skills (ZDH, Germany)*

Professional competencies acquired in an informal setting are usually not certified. This is often the case of NEETs: formal validation of their competences is essential for their re-/integration to the labour market. In 2015, in response to the EU Council Recommendation of 2012, the German Ministry of Education and Science – (BMBF) together with the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) and the German Association of Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) initiated the project »ValiKom« (validation of competencies). Within the framework of this project a procedure to identify non-formally and informally acquired competencies has been developed. Professional experts of chamber organisations and social partners develop, test and apply practical and standardised work-related processes to validate the informal competences. The results of this validation process then form the basis for recognised certificates on the German labour market.

- *Improving the image of apprenticeships (Medef, France)*

Too often apprenticeship has a negative image and its benefits are underestimated. In April 2018, Medef, the leading network of entrepreneurs in France, in cooperation with 17 federations and two partners, launched a campaign called “L'apprentissage, Mon Plan A” (“Apprenticeship, My Plan A”). The goal of the campaign was to change the perception of apprenticeship and put its value in evidence. There were two main actions: digital communication campaign “Les taffeurs” (“Workers”) and implementing tools for disseminating relevant information to stakeholders. Within the framework of “Les taffeurs” campaign, five apprentices have been selected to take part in the clip realized by a well-known pop star, Lisandro Cuxi, an apprentice himself. The clip was to show that apprentices have fun while acquiring technical skills and putting their brain into work. On the other hand, the tools included [“Tomyjob” platform](#) that was to facilitate cooperation between the youth, enterprises and training providers as well as a barometer to measure the CEOs’ perception of apprenticeships.

- *NeeTWork: cooperation between public and private employment services (Adecco, Italy)*

NeeTWork is a multilevel and multistakeholder integrated project with a specific goal: to provide a path to labour market inclusion for NEETs aged 18 - 24 years old, currently unemployed with little or no professional experience and a basic level of education. The first edition of the project (launched by [Fondazione Cariplo](#) in 2017) provided over 500 internships in the non-profit sector until December 2018. The follow up starts in May 2019 and is led by Fondazione Adecco and Mestieri Lombardia. It aims to offer 4-6-month-long internships in non-profit (410 programs) and for profit (90 programs) sectors. The methodology of the project includes Vocational Guidance and a Career Education path. It implies active job search and defining professional project in five steps: a) motivational interview and sharing the goals of the project, b) analysis of the professional roles in the for-profit and non-profit labour markets, c) the job culture/environment (rules, formal non-formal communication, attitudes), d) soft skills, e) job inclusion via internship with psychological support (tutorship).

- *“Shock Plan for Youth Employment” (Tripartite agreement, Spain)*

In Spain, “Shock Plan for Youth Employment” has been recently adopted and will be implemented between 2019 and 2021. The total budget of this plan is €2 mln. It is structured in six basic areas of action, with 50 measures that deal with such matters as training, information, entrepreneurship or equal opportunities. The main objective is to reduce the youth unemployment rate from today’s 33% to 23,5%, increase the activity rate from current 58,7% to 73,5% and reduce the gender gap by 20%. Today there are 45 500 more unemployed women than unemployed men under the age of 30. Number of indefinite duration contracts for young people is to be increased by 15%, i.e. to almost 3 mln permanent contracts. Measures include training for young people in linguistic and digital skills, in basic skills. i.e. mathematics for those with no degree as well as programs on strategic sectors and innovation. Additionally, the plan foresees hiring 3 000 counsellors in the public employment offices and 110 “youth mediators” of INJUVE (“Youth Institute”) to promote the employment of young people. This initiative includes possibility of a public-private cooperation in the placement processes.
