

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

ON YOUNG ADULTS
NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT,
EDUCATION AND
TRAINING

Assessing Competences for Reintegration - CORE Project

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This project is funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme (KA204 - Strategic Partnerships for adult education).

Project code: 2019-1-DE02-KA204-006193

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List of abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
AEC	Adult Education Centre
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
E4E	Education 4 Employment
ESA	Employment Service Agency (North Macedonia)
ESoRS	Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia
FB&H / B&H	Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina
ILO	International Labour Organization
MOES	Ministry of Education and Science
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PISA	The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (examines and assesses the proficiency in reading, mathematics, science and an innovative domain and on students' well-being)
SEI	State Educational Inspectorate
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YG	Youth Guarantee

Erasmus+ project Assessing Competences for Reintegration – CORE Project

Assessing Competences for Reintegration – CORE project, financed by Erasmus+ program, Key Action 2 – Strategic partnerships for adult education focuses on exploring mechanisms for recognition and validation of competences of young adults neither in employment, education and training (NEETs), bringing them closer to the labour market. The Project is coordinated by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) in partnership with the Lifelong Learning Center from Skopje, Macedonia, Andragoški zavod Ljudska univerza Velenje (AZ LUV), Slovenia, Laris from Serbia and the Association for Competency Development “S.K.I.L.L.S.” from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It helps vulnerable and disadvantaged NEETs to find their way back into education and/or employment using the ProfilPASS tool for competence assessment.

Background of the Comprehensive Report of Assessing Competences for Reintegration

This report was prepared to serve as starting point for improvement of the ProfilPASS and its adjustment to the needs of NEETs. It provides analysis of the state of play with NEETs in the project partner countries, including a summary of examples of good practice and recommendations for further development of the ProfilPASS.

From methodological point of view, it is based on a combined approach using quantitative and qualitative data. The desk review provided input on the institutional framework and available reports, published researches/analyses and data received from relevant institutions. Quantitative data obtained were analysed and presented through tables and figures. Qualitative method encompassed focus groups with experts and NEETs. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to selected experts. The participants in the focus groups for experts were professionals working with NEETs engaged in areas of education, employment and social protection, from public and non-governmental sector. Participants in NEETs focus groups were young people who re-entered the education system by attending primary school for adults and NEETs living in rural areas (cf. annex 1 for the focus group/interview guideline). The aim of the focus group meetings/interviews was to gain a broader view of the needs targeted in the CORE project, to get an assessment of the measures already available and to identify concrete needs from different perspectives.

The activity was led by the Macedonian project partner Lifelong Learning Center from Skopje.

The guiding questions were:

- » What measures, initiatives or programmes geared towards assisting and supporting young NEET-adults already exist?

- » What measures exist for assessment and validation of competencies?
- » What examples of good practice are already available?
- » How to make competences of NEETs visible?
- » What should be included in addition to an adopted ProfilPASS?

All findings of the national research activities were gathered in a national report template (cf. annex 2). All project partners provided national needs reports¹.

Key findings

The concept of NEETs refers to young adults who currently do not have a job, do not participate in training or are not students. These young people are considered 'at risk' as they are jobless and/or inactive and lack access to learning opportunities. They also risk disengagement from the labour market and often from society in general (European Training Foundation, 2014). Unemployment in early stages of life can have long-term negative effects on later employability and chances of employment (Arulampalam, 2001).

The share of NEETs increases with age. Majority of NEETs are women, mainly due to family responsibilities. Women with children have the highest risk for longer NEET-phases and the biggest risk of long-term negative effects (scarring effects) of their NEET-phase, such as low income or more unemployment in the future. Other high-risk groups are people with immigration background, low education level or disabilities. In North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia young Roma are an especially vulnerable group.

Recognition and validation of existing knowledge, skills and competences in adjusted applicable manner is an imperative both for NEETs, in order to find their place in society, but as well for the countries to anticipate the quantum of applicable skills in national context.

Adequate attention needs to be given to the career counselling on all education levels. Access to structured forms of information or information providers should be made easier and adopted to the needs of NEETs.

A toolkit composed of non-formal sources of education and training as well as mechanisms and tools for the assessment of competences acquired through informal learning would be very useful for the counselling of NEETs. Although the ProfilPASS was evaluated as very helpful in the counselling of young people, it has to be further adopted to fit the needs of especially vulnerable groups. Possible adaptations involve extending the content by adding specific chapters (e.g. a career exploration and application support chapter, a specific part for young mothers) or additional support (e.g. biographical examples to motivate and guide them) as well as reducing and slimming the content (e.g. simplify complex paragraphs).

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 1 - If you have interest on a national report from the different countries please contact us

NEET definition and demographic data related to the targeted group

Definition of NEET and NEET subgroups

The term NEET - “not in employment, education or training”, refers to young people, who do not work (unemployed young people and young people economically inactive, i.e. young people who are not working and not available or not looking for work) and are not in education or training. For the purposes of this project and consequently, this report the target group is defined to NEETs at the age between 15 to 24. Eventually, we present data relevant for the older NEETs to illustrate how trends develop and to highlight the importance of early interventions to prevent NEET rates.

Among NEETs, five main subgroups were identified (Eurofound, 2012):

- » the conventionally unemployed as the largest subgroup (long-term and short-term unemployed),
- » the unavailable, which includes young carers, young people with family responsibilities and young people who are sick or disabled,
- » the disengaged: young people not seeking jobs or education, discouraged workers as well as other young people who are pursuing dangerous and asocial lifestyles,
- » the opportunity-seekers: young people who are actively seeking work or training, but are holding out for opportunities that they see as befitting their skills and status,
- » the voluntary NEETs: those young people who are travelling and those constructively engaged in other activities such as art, music and self-directed learning.

In 2011, 7.5 million young people aged 15–24 and an additional 6.5 million young people aged 25–29 were excluded from the labour market and education in Europe. This corresponds to a significant increase in the NEETs rate: in 2008, the figure stood at 11% of 15–24-year-olds and 17% of 25–29-year-olds; by 2011 these rates had increased to 13% and 20% respectively. There is huge variation between member states, with rates varying from below 7% (Slovenia, Germany and the Netherlands) to above 17% (Bulgaria, Italy and Spain) (European Training Foundation, 2014). According to [Eurostat](#), the rate of NEETs throughout the years at EU level for this age group slightly decreases reaching 10.5% in 2019, following the same trends in variation of respective EU countries, while the countries relevant for this report as well note very high NEET rates: North Macedonia (24.1 %) and Serbia (16.5%) .

However, if age groups are analysed in sequences, Eurostat indicated that the vast majority of young people aged 15–19 in the EU remain within education and training and relatively few people of this age were NEETs — 5.8 % in 2018. In addition, the age group 20–34 NEETs phenomenon is most prevalent, namely, in 2018 there were about 15 million NEETs (aged 20–34) in the EU (almost double than the in the age group 15-24), again, the percentage strongly differs among member states. The lowest rates were below 10.0 % in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden, while there were 10 Member States that recorded NEET rates above the EU average of 16.5 %, such as Italy and Greece, where more than

a quarter of all young people aged 20–34 were NEETs (28.9 % and 26.8 % respectively); there were also very high NEET rates in North Macedonia (36.3 %), Turkey (33.2 %), Montenegro (27.5 %) and Serbia (24.1 %).

Share of young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training, seasonally adjusted, 2018 Q1 (%)

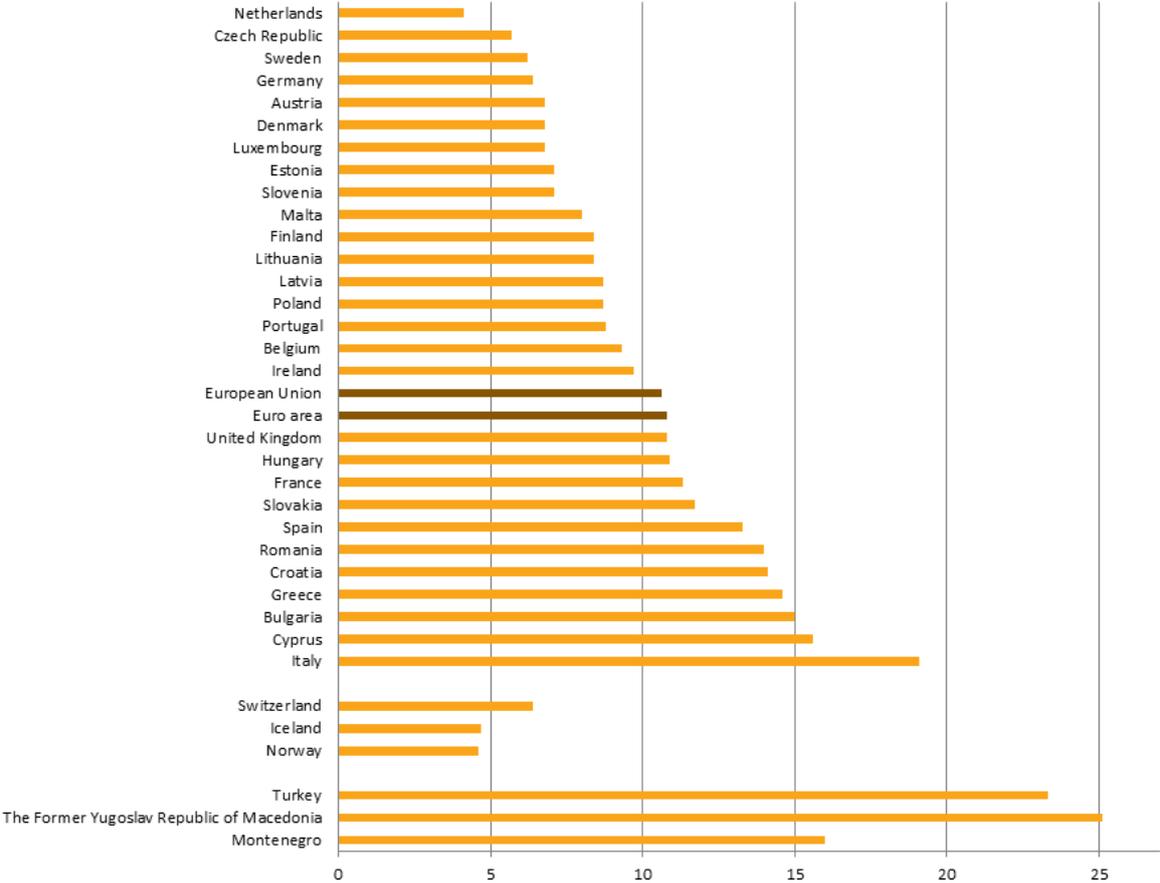


Figure 1 - Young people (aged 15-24) neither in employment nor in education and training, Eurostat

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 suffer from poverty and social exclusion, while at a macro-economic level they represent a considerable loss in terms of unused productive capacity and a considerable cost in terms of welfare payments.

Concerning the gender criteria, young women are more likely to be NEETs. There is a considerable difference between the sexes in relation to the proportion of young NEETs. In 2018, more than one fifth (20.9 %) of young women (aged 20–34) in the European Union (EU) were NEETs, while the corresponding share among young men was 12.2 %. There are a range of factors that may explain this gender gap (Eurostat, 2019), among which:

- » social conventions or pressures, which tend to place a higher importance on women’s

role within the family and on men's role in the workplace;

- » careers advice, which may reinforce gender segregation and direct women into a relatively narrow range of occupations;
- » labour market issues, such as: employers preferring to hire young men over young women; young women facing assimilation difficulties when returning to work after childbirth; young women being more likely to have low-paid jobs or precarious employment.

There is a range of social, economic and personal **factors** (Eurofound, 2012) that increase the chances of an individual becoming a NEET. Results of a carried-out survey 2008 European Values Survey show which factors have an impact on the probability of becoming NEET as illustrated below.

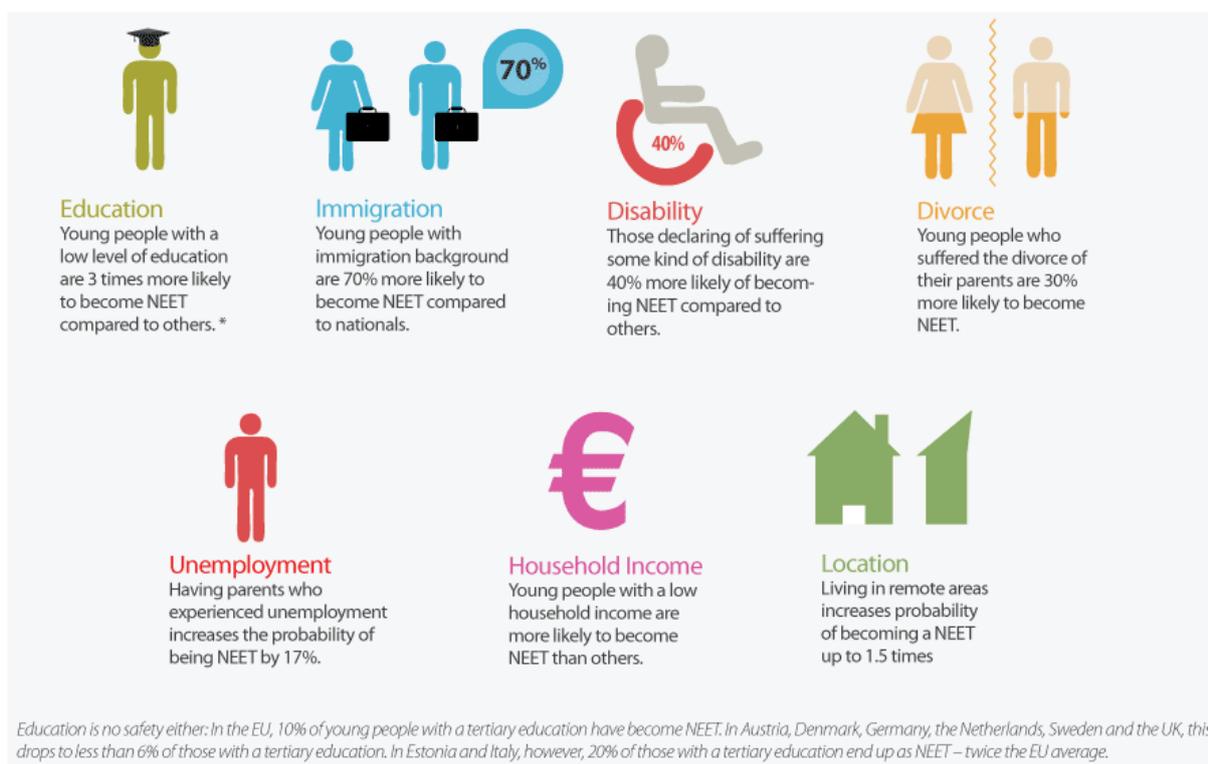


Figure 2 - Risk factors which have an impact on the probability of becoming NEET (Eurofound, 2012)

Some statistics provided in the CORE national reports further underline the significance of the state of play in the project partner countries:

In **Germany**, in 2018, the NEET rate (15 to 24-year-olds) is at 5.9% and therefore is lower than the EU average (10.5%). The % varies between the counties with higher values in Berlin (9.1%), Bremen (8.3%), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (8.0%) and lower ones in Bavaria (4.2%), Thüringen (4.7%) and Baden-Württemberg (4.9%). Young females seem to be at a slightly higher NEET risk than males – 6.5% vs. 5.4% (EU: 10.9% vs. 10.1%) (Eurostat, 2018). Especially, women with children have the highest risk for longer NEET-phases with accompanying long-term negative effects, such as low income or unemployment in future². These gender differences are also shown in the respective German counties, with the exception of Berlin, where men are more often NEETs (8.4% vs. 9.9%) (Eurostat,

2 - Results are not yet published – The information was given by a project researcher during an expert-interview.

2020). However, there is a significantly higher NEET rate of young migrants/third country nationals as compared to that of nationals (21.1% vs. 5%) (European Commission, 2018). Low NEET rates, among others, come as a result of the dual schooling system, the well-established social work and multiple options of youth welfare organisations funded by federal or EU funds. Especially youth centres, often located in social disadvantaged areas, support young people on their way into the labour market. The counselling within those low-threshold services is quite successful since the teenager often decides to join the programmes due to interests (e.g. football at RheinFlanke described below).

In **North Macedonia**, youth is categorised in two age groups: between 15-24 and between 15-29. Young people aged between 15 and 24 in 2018 make up 13.41% (male 145,716/female 136,444) (Index Mundi, 2018). The NEET rate for woman for the 20-34 age group is 36.7% against 26.5% men (2018). The NEETs are slightly denser located in rural than urban areas (34.2% and 30.1%, respectively) (Mojsoska-Blazevski, 2016).

A young person in 2018 in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is at an average age of 22, living in a community/village with no more than 2,000 inhabitants, he/she is a student in secondary or tertiary education or unemployed and is not actively seeking employment (L. Turčilo, 2019). Due to the low birth-rate and the trend of young people leaving the country, the aging of the population is accelerating.

Young people in **Serbia** (age 15 to 29)³ represent about 17.15% of total population which is facing a pronounced aging process. NEETs share was 20.1% in 2018. The NEETs are invisible, very difficult to reach and integrate into the labour market. Most NEETs live in rural areas, and some of them are early school leavers. There are no valid and detailed data on the exact number and characteristics of NEETs. In addition, there are no systematic solutions for identifying and supporting the NEETs.

In **Slovenia**, in 2018 there were 12,800 NEETs age 16 to 26. The reasons why they are NEETs are not collected. The share of all 18 to 24-year-olds with an ISCED2 or lower level of education (completed or incomplete elementary school or no schooling) NEETs was 4.3% in 2018.

Box 1: Excerpt of data on NEETs elaborated in the CORE national reports

Unemployment

Unemployment seems to be the burning issue related to NEETs, even more emphasized as the country is less developed. Inactivity is as well a very important point to consider. According to Eurostat, a slightly higher proportion of female NEETs (aged 15-24) were unemployed in relation to male NEETs of the same age group (10.8% compared to 10.1%), while 5.1% male NEETs were inactive compared to 7% female NEETs. This percentage is even more emphasized in the “older” age groups. NEET men (age 20-34) in 2018 in the EU, 6.4% were unemployed compared to 5.9% who were inactive. In contrast, 5.6% of females were unemployed NEETs while 15.3% were inactive. This gender difference may be attributed, in part, to family structures, as a higher proportion of young women spend time caring for children and/or other family members. Female NEETs are 2 times *more likely to become inactive by turning 20*

3 - According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)

years, and 3 times more inactive than their male NEETs. This ratio rose considerably higher in a number of EU Member States: with more than 4 times as many young female NEETs being inactive in Slovakia, the UK, Malta, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania and up to 10.8 times as many in Czech Republic. (Eurostat, 2019)

In **Germany**, the labour market situation of young people compared to other EU countries is quite good with low youth unemployment and NEET rates (European Commission, 2018). This goes in line with Germany's [Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan](#) presented in 2014. The youth unemployment rate (15 to 24-year-olds) dropped from 7.7% in 2015 to 5.9 % in 2019⁴. Germany shows the second lowest rate in EU after the Czech Republic (4.4%). Given that the overall unemployment rate is 2.7%, there is still potential for lowering the rate of unemployed of young adults. Regarding to gender differences and labour activities (unemployed versus inactive) NEETs in Germany show a similar picture as other EU countries with women at a slightly higher percentage than men unemployed (6.5% versus 5.4%) or inactive (5% versus 3%) in the age group 15 to 24-year-olds whereas later on female NEETs are predominantly inactive (13% at age 20-32). (Eurostat, 2019). Besides women, young migrants and native-born with foreign born parents (i.e. second-generation) still face serious challenges in employment in Germany (European Commission, 2018).

In **North Macedonia**, about 28,841 NEETs aged 15-24 were unemployed (53% male and 47% female) and 170,640 were inactive (48% male and 52% female) (State Statistical Office, 2019). In the long run, the unemployed have the largest share in NEETs (43.4%), followed by 26.2% young people with family or caring responsibilities. They are primarily young women aged 25-29 with completed primary or secondary education from rural areas. Discouraged long-term NEETs are predominantly men, while family responsibilities are almost exclusively borne by young women. Two-thirds of the NEETs are unemployed non-students and one-third is inactive. In 2018, 2,148 (49.79%) of young people (up to the age of 29) registered as unemployed at the Employment Service Agency (ESA) underwent a motivational training. [ESA](#) provided motivational services to unemployed 606 (53.87%) young Roma (up to the age of 29) to inform them about the employment and opportunities for improving employability (Employment Service Agency, 2018).

Bosnia and Herzegovina has one of the highest youth unemployment rate compared to western EU of 46.66% (78,009 registered unemployed young people) at the age 15 to 29. Out of them, young women are more likely to be unemployed than men. Young people register as unemployed mainly to get health insurance and/or obtain an employment record. The trend is also noted in Republika Srpska, where young adults aged 16 to 26 make 17.65% of the total number of unemployed registered persons. Male NEETs are more likely to be unemployed than female NEETs, the majority having completed VET school. The period from completing education to first employment is rather long, so young people lose self-confidence, knowledge and skills. In addition to unemployment, inadequate educational system, the depressing political situation and a sense of lack of perspectives for the future cause mass departure of young people abroad.

4 - Destatis <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbslosigkeit/Tabellen/erwerbslose.html>

Almost one fifth of the total number of unemployed in **Serbia** are young people of 15 to 29⁵. Within youth, the position of women in the labour market is significantly less favourable than of their male peers especially considering the employment rate (15.3% for young women compared to 26.1% of young men). The young adults who completed only primary education are the most likely to be unemployed, while the persons who completed VET more easily find jobs (Stojanović, 2019). Almost a quarter of all unemployed people have tertiary education, indicating a significant gap between skills acquired and labour market demand. [Labour market indicators](#) note that the number of unemployed youths at the age 15-29 had been declining, 24.5 % for 2018 and fell by 2.2% compared to 2017. The employment rate in 2018 was 48.1% and increased by 0.5% with respect to 2017. This “positive trend” comes as result of an increase in the number of employed youths by 9,644 or 2.6%, but also of a negative demographic trend affecting 15 to 29-year-olds (by 20,813 or 1.8% in 2018 compared to 2017). As well, methodology for calculation of unemployment has been changed. The “employed” are those who worked even 1 day per year, or “deleted from unemployment register” are those who were late even for a day in registering with the Employment Service. There are as well, several indicative trends into youth employment issues relevant for NEETs: the largest number of newly employed, almost 80%, entered into some forms of part-time (temporary) work engagement. State bodies and educational institutions hire people under part-time agreement thus creating a problem of insufficient skilled workers in specific sectors such as social welfare, education and health care (Sarita Bradaš, 2019). As well, as many as 54% of respondents is not employed in the profession for which they were educated (Dragan Popadić, 2019). The unemployment rate among Roma is 49% accompanied with high level of illiteracy. The Roma population is in a worse socio-economic situation and very often they are exposed to multiple marginalization.

In **Slovenia**, unemployment among young people aged 16-26 was higher in persons with completed only elementary education, secondary vocational and intermediate professional, intermediate general education. In the first two categories, men were unemployed more than women, while at intermediate level; women are more unemployed than men.

Box 2: Excerpt of data on NEET unemployment elaborated in the CORE national reports

Education system and educational attainment

When it comes to education and training, there are big differences among European countries concerning both the systemic approach into raising the levels of motivation of NEETs to enter, re-enter or continue their education, and into the “openness” of the system to recognize, validate and up-grade the skills of NEETs. In European terms (Eurostat, ISCED, 2017), NEETs are divided into three major groups: NEETs with less than primary, primary or lower secondary level of education, NEETs with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education and NEETs with tertiary education. 95% of all children in EU from the age of 4 and the starting age of primary education attend school⁶, while one out of 10 young people have completed at least lower secondary education and are not in further

5 - According to official data of the National Employment Service

6 - https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Pre-primary_education_2016-01.jpg

education and training (aged 18-24)⁷. Given that the vast majority (89.7 %) of young people in the EU aged 15 to 19 continued to participate in some form of education and training, NEET rates were always highest for young people with a low level of education. In 2018, the NEET rate for 20 to 34-year-olds in the EU was 37.2 % among those with a low level of education, compared to 14.7 % among those with an intermediate level of education and 9.5 % among those with high level of education. The biggest differences between the levels of education are found in Malta and Lithuania, where the NEET rate for those with a low level of education is respectively 6 and 7 times higher than the one for those with a high level of education.

Box 3 gives overviews on the education systems of the different partner countries:

Education in **Germany** is primarily the responsibility of individual German counties (Länder) thus causing some differences between the counties but in general, the German education system is divided into 5 levels: (1) *Early childhood* Education, age 0-6, optional, often run by private day-care centres, such as 'Kinderkrippen' or 'Kindergarten'. By the age of 6, children are obliged to attend the compulsory education system for at least 9-years full-time schooling at Gymnasium or 10-years full-time at other general education schools. First, they attend (2) *Primary education* called 'Grundschule' until completing grade 4 (or 6 in some counties). After that they enter (3) *Secondary education* which is separated into lower secondary level 'Sekundarstufe I' and upper secondary level 'Sekundarstufe II'. The Secondary education contains many different schools which are either prepping for (4) *Tertiary education* like Grammar school ('Gymnasium') ending with 'Abitur' as a certificate to enter University, or preparing for further VET in a dual system form. The last level of education is (5) *Continuing education* ('Weiterbildung') and combines formal and non-formal education with informal learning.

The education system in **North Macedonia** comprises a mix of pre-school, primary (age 6-14), secondary (age 15-17/18) and higher education. The **primary education** lasts for 9 years and is compulsory and free. Gross enrolment rates 63%, and net enrolment rate is 91%. However, a number of children (mainly Roma) are not reflected in the statistics as they are not registered in any official system. The **secondary education**, also compulsory and free, is divided into four streams: general secondary education (gymnasium), secondary VET, art schools and education for pupils with special educational needs. Secondary VET may be of 3 or 4-year duration. At the end of 3-year VET the students take a final exam, without the right for university entrance. Graduates of the 4-year secondary education can choose between the final exams and state or school *matura* depending on whether they wish to continue education. The Public Institution [Adult Education Centre](#) promotes functional Adult learning and education system (in line with EU standards) that provides high-quality learning opportunities for acquiring qualifications, increases employment and develops entrepreneurship, meets the needs of the labour market, contributing to economic, social and personal development of individuals. There are 241 active accredited service providers, offering a total of 516 verified training programmes leading to nationally recognised Certificate. Since 2012 around 40 participants have become professional trainers. In the last decade, several educational reforms were undertaken at all levels of education (e.g. mandatory secondary education, free textbooks, reforms of curricula, training for teachers etc). Those reforms have produced large improvements in educational attain-

7 - https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:2018data_Early_school_leavers-02.jpg

ment and large reduction in the number of dropouts. However, developments are not that positive in terms of the quality of education (Nikica Mojsoska-Blazevski, 2013). Several donors are active in supporting enhancement of the education system and labour market entrance, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).

The education system in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is highly decentralized with each canton having its own ministry of education⁸. Nine-year *Primary education*⁹ is free and compulsory for all children between 5 ½ and 6 ½ years. However, due to lack of funds, this provision is carried out selectively and usually by the criteria of the social status of the child or of belonging to national minorities, mostly Roma. Only Brcko District provides all students free textbooks and transportation to school. *Secondary education* (at the age of 15) is provided by general, VET and technical schools. General secondary education lasts 4 years and secondary VET lasts 3 or 4 years. By completing secondary education, pupils obtain Certificate and are able to enrol in any faculty by passing the entry qualification examination. *Higher education* is organized through three cycles: The *first* cycle (3 or 4 years of study) and it is valued with 180/240 ECTS credits, leading to Bachelor degree or equivalent. The *second* cycle studies last one or two years, and they are valued with 60/120 ECTS credits. The *third* cycle studies last 3 years, and they are valued with 180 ECTS credits. According to the [Agenda 2030](#), Sustainable Development Goal 4 is Quality Education in B&H, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In **Serbia**, *preschool education* is intended for the children from six months old to primary school, organized in 3 levels: nursery, kindergarten and preparatory preschool programme, which is compulsory. *Primary education* is obligatory for all children, organized in 2 cycles, each lasting four years: 1-4th grade (one teacher oversees one class and is responsible for teaching all subjects except the language) and 5-8th grade (each subject is taught by the different teacher, specialized in particular area). *High school/Secondary education* is optional for students at the age of 15. Public secondary education is free. Secondary education system includes: gymnasiums, schools for gifted students, specialized schools for students with learning disabilities and/or disabilities and VET schools. Higher Education is organized at 3 levels: first degree (basic studies), second degree (master studies, specialist studies) and third degree (PhD studies). The percentage of high school attendance is lower among children from vulnerable groups. Among the poorest, only 74% (68.2% boys and 83.3% girls) attend high school. Only 21.6% of Roma children in this age group (14.9% of the girls and 28% of the boys) attend secondary education (UNICEF, 2014). For poor students, financial support plays serious burden in entering schools, as it focuses on success rather than social needs, and poor children who are average students have limited access to scholarships and loans. As a result, they attend the least attractive VET schools, with poor job prospects and at high risk of dropping out of the system (Đokić, 2014). Out of all students who completed secondary schools, a bit over a quarter (26.5 %) completed gymnasium and three-quarters completed a VET school. Young people are the most interested in the area of “economy, law, and administration” (14.3%), “health and social care” (10.5%), “electrical

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8 - In sum total 12 ministries (10 cantonal, 1 in RS and 1 in Brcko District) are in charge of education in B&H. There are also 2 ministries that play a coordinating role at the national level: the Ministry of Education in the B&H Federation and the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

9 - According to the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in B&H

engineering" (10.1%), "trade, catering, and tourism" (9.1%) and "mechanical engineering and metal-working" (7.8%) A total of 57,478 students completed the 4-year high school, of which 46,350 have enrolled in a higher education (Serbia, 2019). *Adult Education and Training* can be *formal* - for persons who have not completed general or VET programmes, and *non-formal*: for persons who wish to improve their skills or to retrain into another occupation. Three types of institutions implement adult education and training: licenced regular general, VET and specialized schools, public services, and publicly recognized providers, such as NGOs, cultural institutions, career centres, private schools etc. Young women stay longer in the education system than young men, and are much more prone to completing higher educational levels. However, the proportion of young NEET is slightly higher in women than men, as well as more than half of NEET women are not active in the labour market. Since secondary education is not compulsory, by-laws stipulate a number of affirmative measures for enrolment of students from vulnerable groups, such as favourable entrance conditions, access to accommodation facilities, state scholarships for Roma and support from teachers/mentors.

In **Slovenia**, there are three levels of education: basic, secondary and higher education. The basic education (at the age of 6-15) is compulsory and free. At the end of the 6th and 9th grades, schoolchildren have to pass the National Knowledge Assessment Test. There are 4 types of secondary education: minimum VET (2 years) ending with a final examination, as an entry to Secondary VET school (3 years) and master applied professions such as carpenter, mechanic, glazier, hairdresser, baker, etc. VET schools offer apprenticeship programmes. If the country lacks qualified personnel in a certain field, students are offered training at real employer. At the end of studies, students have to pass a final examination. General Final Examination (Slovenian language, Mathematics and a foreign language) is needed to enter higher education. Third option is Secondary Technical and VET (4 years) aimed at obtaining in-depth knowledge within a specific technical or economic profession finishing with a Professional Final Examination. The result of this exam involves enrolling in a vocational college or university for a professional Bachelor's degree programme. The higher education is conducted according to the Bologna system, with an increasing number of universities introducing study programmes in English. Training in vocational colleges is available to graduates of gymnasiums and secondary vocational schools, who have already worked for 3 years and passed exams. Students who have completed secondary education and successfully passed the General Final Examination can enter a university and receive a Bachelor's degree in Management, Marketing, Business, Construction and other majors. There are university and vocational Bachelor's degree programmes. Bachelor's degree programmes usually last 3 years, and after graduation, students can continue their studies and receive a Master's degree (2 years). Some programmes offer the "4+1" system, which is 4 years of Bachelor's degree and 1 year of master's degree studies. Students can receive PhD degree for 2-4 years. In Slovenia, there are: state universities, private universities, international universities and private institutes.

Box 3: Excerpt of information on the education systems in the partner countries described in the CORE national reports

Dropouts

In 2018, an average of 10.6 % of young people (aged 18-24) in the EU were early leavers from education and training, they had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training. In EU, the proportion of early leavers in 2018 ranged from 3.3 % in Croatia to 17.9 % in Spain. Young men are more prone to leaving school (12.2 %) than women (8.9 %) in nearly all EU Member states with particularly large differences in Estonia, Spain and Portugal (Eurostat, 2019). Early school leaving is linked to unemployment, social exclusion, poverty, and poor health (European Commission, 2010). The way the education system is set up, school climate and teacher-pupil relations are also important factors. Since there are complex, interconnected reasons for children not completing secondary schooling, policies to reduce early school leaving must combine education and social policy, youth work and health-related aspects.

In **Germany**, school drop-out rates are varying depending on criteria used. Given that attending school up to 18 years is mandatory, it is interesting to analyse at what level of education students' drop-out instead of the age of drop-out. According to the [Caritas](#) more than 52.000 youths (or 6,9%) left in 2017 the formal school system without a "Hauptschulabschluss" which means they reached only primary level of education. The rates vary between the different counties whereas the rates are lower in Bavaria, Hessen and Hamburg (4-6%), Sachsen-Anhalt, Bremen and Berlin show with >10% the highest rates within Germany. Especially, young migrants and native-born with foreign born parents (i.e. second-generation) still face serious challenges in employment due to school drop-out. The proportion of early education and training leavers among foreign-born students (23.2%) was almost three times higher than of students born in Germany (8.2%) in 2016 (European Commission, 2018).

In **North Macedonia**, certain number of children (mainly Roma) is not reflected in education statistics as they are not registered in any official system (Education Strategy, 2018). Children, who do not enter up to the age of 10, lose their right to attend formal primary school. As the inclusion in adult education processes is allowed from 15 years and above, there is a gap of almost 5 years, leaving many persons outside of the education system for a long period, after which they never return to school (Concept for primary education of adults, 2017). Imposing mandatory secondary education and undertaking supporting measures such as: free books and transport, penalties for parents not sending their children in schools, in-school counselling and mentoring have resulted in less drop-outs. Motivational measures include Conditional cash transfers and financial payments to children from families who are social assistance beneficiaries for regular attendance at schools, scholarships for talented Roma pupils as well as mentoring and tutoring of Roma pupils. Schools are obliged to register and report each dropped out pupil. The reasons behind drop-out may vary a lot – from an individual's story, to family reasons, to the community environment and the school context. About 60% of the total number of students are enrolled in the first year. The dropout ratio of the school is 3.4% out of which only 0.3% of the students drop out for unknown reasons. Most of the dropouts occur among pupils in the 1st year of study when students usually are uncertain about where to continue education (Concept for primary education of adults, 2017) or, in VET, an inappropriate choice of occupation. However, a large number of Roma pupils drop-out due to insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language, low degree of education of parents, poor socio-economic status (Education

Strategy, 2018), lack of finances, frequent trips abroad and lack of necessary documentation (MCGO, 2017). Even the EC recommends certain mechanisms for systemic collection of data for the children on the street and the Roma children (European Commission, 2019, p. 32) since lack of data on what happens with these children after they leave schools is still a big challenge. In 2016 the Roma Education Fund and the MoES launched a so-called scholarship cycle, envisaged to support Roma students enrolled in high school to complete secondary school. Mentors/tutors were recruited and capacitated to support and guide the Roma school students throughout their studies¹⁰.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, in the school year 2017/2018, 320 pupils discontinued their schooling in primary education, and so did 904 (343 female, 561 male) students in secondary education (Agency for Statistics of B&H, 2019). 2% of young people did not complete primary education, mostly Roma. Every third young person drops out the education system (compared to 13% at EU level). The high school dropout rate is 0.78%, 250 students leave high school during one school year. This number has been constant over the past few school years. The reasons for dropping out include disciplinary measures by the school, marriage or relationship, unspecified family circumstances, illness, pregnancy, unjustified absences, low grades, poor behaviour, with higher incidence in VET three-year schools. Twice as many boys drop out of school than girls. Girls from rural areas drop out of high school more than girls from urban areas.

In **Serbia**, regular secondary students who do not pass the correctional exam can finish the grade during the next school year, by retaking the exam with the obligation to pay the real costs. Passing the exam, he/she can continue education as a part-time student and pay for his/her education individually. Students who drop out of school before graduating high school are struggling more to find a job, are more likely to commit crimes and thus fall into the vicious circle of social exclusion (Ž. Veselinović, 2016). Different risk factors for early school leaving could be mentioned: low socio-economic status, avoiding classes, under-achievement, behavioural problems, distance from educational institutions, and lack of information on social protection rights. Schools are developing a support network for pupils to prevent dropouts, by taking measures aimed at the individual student, parental involvement and peer support, capacity building of teaching staff, as well as cooperation with relevant institutions (Centres for social welfare and local self-governments). Roma seem to be the most vulnerable group and their participation in compulsory primary education is 80% (for non-Roma in aged 7-15 is 95%). The high school enrolment rate of young people is 90%, and 22% among young Roma (28% of boys vs. 15% girls). The employment rate of Roma is only 26% (non-Roma 43%), out of which, only 13% of Roma women are employed. The informal employment rate is 70% for Roma and only 27% for non-Roma. Financial support within the social protection system and the criteria for exercising and enjoying these rights are discouraging for their inclusion in programmes that encourage active job search. Teaching assistants are engaged in 175 preschools/primary schools prolonging the period spent in education process of children in need of additional support, especially of Roma.

Slovenia: According to the statistics of the Republic of Slovenia regarding early school leaving, the share of the population aged 18-24, with attained ISCED 2 or lower level (completed or incomplete

10 - <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/roma-education-fund-and-ministry-of-education-of-macedonia-launch-new-high-school-scholarship-scheme-for-academic-year-2016-2017/>

elementary school or without school education), not included in education or training in the year 2018 was 4.3% (5,950 people). Data on early school leaving cannot be traced. According to unofficial information, the main reasons for dropping out of education are poor family conditions (non-support, violence, separated parents,...), difficult social status of individuals, harder to follow lectures, etc.

Box 4: Overview on early school leaving in the CORE partner countries

Types of measures intended for NEETs

Considering the complexity and diversity of the NEETs and the analysis and interpretation of NEET rates, one and standardized solution may not be applied in all national contexts, not even within the same country. The heterogeneity of NEET means that both research and policy must begin by disaggregating so as to be able to identify the distinct characteristics and needs of the various sub-groups. Different studies and researches underline several most important aspects into improving the status of NEETs should focus on: *preventing early school leaving, re-integration of NEETs into educational process* and introducing policies that ensure that *school-to-work transition* is implemented in the more convenient manner. This brings up the *employability of NEETs* as one burning issue across Europe.

However, as confirmed in the CORE national reports, (un)availability of national funding limits the types, quality and quantity of measures to be implemented. It is up to the countries to develop policies ensuring that social and economic status of NEETs is high on the political agenda. High dependence on foreign initiatives and funding one-off projects with no clear state commitment to continue funding limits the sustainability and the overall impact of the intervention. Box 5 summarizes existing initiatives or programs which focus directly on NEETs in the project partner countries, aiming to highlight the diversity of actions and promote good practice examples.

In **Germany**, in 2016 a new assistance was introduced for young people under 25 to obtain an academic training-related or vocational qualification or to enter the workforce and apply for or accept social benefits. Similar approaches were piloted from 2015 as part of a federal programme called '*Respekt*' which in 2018 funded 17 projects (European Commission, 2018). Since 2010, the establishment of *youth career agencies* has been supported in various ways by the Federal Employment Agency, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the municipal umbrella organisations and the federal states. A total of 289 locations (status 2017) are working in the form of a youth careers agency to improve the transition from school to work for all people under 25 with special focus on disadvantaged groups (e.g. refugees, people without professional qualification or special needs). To achieve this close cooperation with schools and federal employment agencies as well as job centres were built up (Federal employment agency, 2017). '*JUGEND STÄRKEN im Quartier*' (*strengthen youth in the quarter*) is a federal programme offering one-stop municipal youth welfare services for young people in socially disadvantaged areas. Next to federal programmes many non-profit organisations work with NEETs in Germany, one example is *RheinFlanke gGmbH* which is since 2006 active across nine locations in Germany. Its main purpose is to support young people in developing working skills and connect them with local entrepreneurs and employers. RheinFlanke encourages young people

to participate in a variety of sports initiatives, including football, basketball and boxing. It also offers one-to-one mentoring, job coaching, language classes, volunteering and internships. It reaches more than 3,000 young people weekly (Forrest & Gonzalez-Valles, 2017). An example for alternative schooling are *Produktionsschulen* (*production schools*), which focus on school drop-outs who are already or show high risk of becoming long-term NEETs. They are not part of the federal schooling system and are led by a goal-oriented combination of systematic, VET qualification or VET training with acquisitive production. As well, several Erasmus+ projects have been implemented focusing on NEETs. 'Team Up for NEETs – Innovation for Youth Employability'¹¹ was a project where street football world together with community organisations targeted youth workers, teachers and NGOs working with young NEETs and equipped them with the necessary skills to offer and build new paths towards a sustainable livelihood. An European toolkit of best practices ([TeamUp-Toolkit](#)) has been prepared to increase youth employability through sport-based non-formal education. The project reached up to 129,353 young NEETs and engaged 43,248 in their path to employment, education or further training all over Europe. The [NEET-System](#)¹² is seeking to develop a set of educational materials and resources to support adult educators or professionals working with NEETs. 32 online escape room exercises are available to train skills from 4 key market-oriented competence areas such as “social and civic competence”, “digital competence”, “sense of initiative and entrepreneurship” and “cultural awareness and expression”. Additionally, a comprehensive in-service training programme for adult education professionals is provided to support them in using these new resources. The project „[Bringing Young Mothers Back to Education](#)” (BYMBE) focussed on young NEET mothers facing difficulties to return to education, training or labour market. It produced training tools in support of the work of social workers, teachers and trainers working with young mothers.

In **North Macedonia**, [ESA](#) provides trainings (only) to young registered unemployed persons (up to the age of 29) in order to obtain knowledge and skills demanded on the labour market. 1007 youth (58,49% women) were trained in 2018 (Employment Service Agency, 2018). The Workers' Universities/Open Civic universities for Lifelong Learning provide verified and non-verified vocational courses¹³ for basic and VET skills and offer completion of primary and secondary education to drop-outs (over 16 years). The interest to complete the primary education is only when they need to take driving license exams. In the last 10 years, there have been only around 10 adult NEETs that have attended some of the courses. The secondary schools provide opportunities for part-time schooling for adults. They need to pass 3 exams and complete secondary education within a year. The latest document prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the Revised Operational Plan for Active Programmes and Measures for Employment and Labour Market Services for 2019 so called 'Chance for All'. The Plan consists of the following programmes and measures: development of entrepreneurship, subsidies for workplaces, trainings for digital IT skills, internship opportunities, pilot training programmes for demanded occupations and crafts in Strumica region, employment services, Youth Guarantee, activation of users of minimal guaranteed support.

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11 - Project nr: 2015-2-DE04-KA205-012802. This project was named a “Good practice example” by the European Commission.

12 - Project nr: 2018-1-DE02-KA204-005034. Information from Newsletter #1 <https://www.neet-system.eu/de/news-events/newsletters/> and an expert interview.

13 - The process of verification of non-formal adult education programs in North Macedonia is not compulsory. Within verified programmes, the participants attend several modules and upon successful completion they are being awarded a certificate

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, Public Employment Services organizes trainings for registered unemployed people (including NEETs). One of them includes a mandatory “competence assessment” for each individual client. Clients who have completed some levels of higher education are eligible for financial support for a year-long internship. Occasionally, courses in IT were also delivered. Adult education programs in RS provide citizens the opportunity to complete primary education and VET. Adult education is defined by the Law on Adult Education, adopted by the Republika Srpska National Assembly in June 2009. The Institute for Adult Education monitors and improves adult education and keeps the Register of Providers. Being organized on cantonal level, the adult education opportunities do not provide standardized quality, making (re)training of staff difficult and access to information for NEETs complex. Courses and other non-formal trainings for NEETs are usually offered on a project-to-project basis, with donors’ support, including Erasmus+, thus only available to a limited number of people, periodically, mainly in bigger cities. NGOs and Youth support centres offer support to young people and marginalized groups in increasing their employability, developing life/soft/employability skills, language and IT competences, professional development and career guidance.

In **Serbia**, the National Employment Service (NES) is undertaking support measures and programmes for registered unemployed persons. Being recognized as particularly sensitive and difficult to employ, young people, especially from vulnerable groups in social protection system, young people with disabilities, without qualifications, enter into the system with the aim of preventing the obsolescence of competences of importance for competitive entering the labour market and of falling into long-term unemployment. These measures include assessment of employability, individual employment plan and employment mediation. Subsidy for employment of hard-to-employ in new job positions, foresees the one-time financial incentive for employers (from the private sector). NEETs are not specifically defined and recognized as the vulnerable one. Public works in local self-government units are organized for people without qualifications, Roma and beneficiaries of financial social assistance, as a measure of support for NEETs. However, they are mainly short-term work engagements of 3 to 6 months and young people receive only short-term financial compensation for their work. Measures stimulating employment implemented by the NES should ensure greater employability of job seekers, but their coverage is minimal and they generally do not contribute to a more permanent or significant reduction in the number of unemployed (Sarita Bradaš, 2019). According to data available, in 2017, only 4.1% of the unemployed registered by the NES used incentive measures, and the majority of employees ended up on temporary and occasional jobs or other unsafe and short-term forms of employment. With the support of external donors, various opportunities are offered to young people and NEETs. From the results of the focus groups, the conclusion is that young people recognize adult education only as a support measure in increasing employability with main aim- to receive the certificate. They are not aware of the processes of competence validation and do not recognize other institutions besides the Centre for Social Welfare (CSW) and the NES as providers. On the other hand, experts are familiar with the NES measures aimed at young people, but not with those targeting NEETs. NEETs were interested in completing mainly primary education. Experts conclude that measures and programmes are welcome, but that the approach should be tailored to each individual. The staff to work on counselling the NEET youths is insufficient.

In **Slovenia**, there are different courses offered by institutions or organizations: *PUM-o (ESoRS)* – de-

signed to help school drop-outs at the age 15 to 25 to acquire various skills through socializing and working with peers, actively participating throughout the program and preparing for reintegration into education/employment. *Verification and validation NPK/TK (ESoRS)* - National Vocational Qualification is an officially recognized qualification for the exercise of a particular profession or professional function. If an individual successfully passes the qualification exam and certification, he/she obtains a valid national certificate of professional qualification. *NEFiks* is the leading system for recording non-formally acquired knowledge, which enables young people to systematically gather all non-formal and informally acquired competences from organizations. As well, there are employment or internship programs, such as *Training on job (ESoRS)* - Aims to get to know the work procedures, tasks at specific workplace with the employer. *Innovative projects for youth employment (ESoRS)* - the program is for unemployed persons under 29. Upon completion, the employer may also employ them for a minimum of one year with a subsidy of EUR 5,000.

Box 5: Overview on measures intended for NEETs' competences in the CORE partner countries

Career guidance, counselling, coaching or mentoring services

In **Germany** vocational orientation, such as career guidance and counselling (CQaC) is embedded in the regular curriculum of secondary schools. A Germany-wide initiative for vocational orientation is the Education Chain initiative ("[Bildungsketten](#)"). As a more specific example, the vocational orientation of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is described below: Since 2007 the standard elements for vocational orientation is a binding basis in all general-education schools in NRW. This means that all students in grade 8 till 10 attend systematic career guidance (State initiative "[No graduation without connection - transition from school to work in NRW](#)"). It is financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Federal Employment Agency and the ESF (European Social Fund for Germany) and contains activities such as a mandatory portfolio instrument (e.g. "career choice pass NRW"), professional potential analysis, exploration of occupational fields, multiple practical experience in the field, guided application phase and transition support. The counselling contains in-school individual and group counselling as well as parental counselling. Additionally, it includes group and individual counselling opportunities by the vocational information centre of the National employment agency ([BIZ-Berufsinformationszentrum](#)). In general, the BIZ provides many open materials and offers, not only for students, parents and teachers to help with the transition process from school to work, but also for all unemployed people (including NEETs) to support vocational orientation. An example for a free coaching/mentoring possibility is the "[VerA initiative - Coaching by volunteers](#)" (Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbrüchen - prevention of training dropouts) which is part of the mentioned Education Chain initiative and was named a good practice example in the [VET toolkit](#) for tackling early leaving by CEDEFOP. In this project, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, retired professionals are coaching young people to help them finishing their vocational training successfully. Young people (e.g. NEETs) can profit by many different counselling, coaching or mentoring offers that are provided by youth or social workers from public and independent institutions. For example,

one-to-one mentoring or job coaching how it is offered by “*RheinFlanke*” in many of their projects (e.g. “*Kick & Start*”, “*HOPE Academy*”, “*HOPE Life*”, “*SouveränPlus*”).

In **North Macedonia** the CQaC is not given adequate attention nor does it have an institutional framework to enable its systematic implementation. The Association of Counsellors for Career Development delivered certification trainings to 80 teachers from high and VET schools in 6 cities¹⁴. Career centre corners were established and equipped in schools, currently not fully functional as career counsellors are awaiting statutory solutions for engagement by the MoES. ESA also provides career counselling individually or in groups such as providing information on specific occupations, self-support and self-assessment tools and development of career action plans (Employment Service Agency, 2018). There are no specific measures to address the needs of NEETs. Improvement of employability is achieved through involving young people in different types of training in real working conditions that seek to acquire skills required in the labour market or become self-employed, financial support to enterprises that employ young people, etc (SEGA, 2018). In 2018, the Government introduced the *Youth Guarantee (YG)* Scheme piloted it in Skopje, Strumica and Gostivar. Young people (15-29) within four months of their registration in ESA will be offered employment, continuous education or training, or will be redirected towards some of the active employment programmes and measures (Employment Service Agency, 2019, p. 58). Since the pilot phase in 2018 proved to give excellent results with over 2000 employments in just 8 months, in 2019, the YG shall be implemented on the territory of the whole country with specific emphases on the Northeast, Polog and Southwest regions with explicit focus on NEETs. The CSOs continued to be part of the collaboration with the Government with a task to locate the NEETs, to introduce them to the YG and to motivate them to use the given opportunities. The third quartal results for 2019 are 16,624 registrants to use the YG scheme, 8,763 were offered employment services out of which 5,646 young adults are employed or have completed training.¹⁵ The *coaching and mentorship* of unemployed young adults is mainly done through donor funded projects. In 2016/17, the EU funded Project *Promoting Active Inclusion of Disadvantaged Persons Excluded from the Labour Market* supported the activation of persons at risk of social exclusion in the labour market by improving their skills, education, qualification and facilitating their full integration into the society and the labour market. One of their specific outcomes referred to assisting professionals from the Employment Centres and the Centres for Social Work in developing new skills as ‘Mentors for Social Inclusion’ resulted in capacitating 80 professionals in becoming social mentors, developing their skills in mentoring social service users at the Centres for Social Work and the ESA¹⁶. The *mentorship* in the secondary education is part of the reformed curricula, where around 500 company mentors were capacitated to support and guide the students during their practical training, thus unavailable for part-time students or returning adults, who are expected to conduct their practical training at their working place without trained mentor.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, career guidance is offered by some primary and secondary schools’ staff, but remains inaccessible and insufficient for majority of youth. CQaC is most often implement-

14 - Within the frame of the USAID project Youth Employability Skills

15 - Data obtained by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

16 - Read more: <http://www.financethink.mk/promoting-active-inclusion-of-disadvantaged-persons-excluded-from-the-labour-market/>

ed on a project-to-project basis. Some examples of such initiatives include: [YES Center](#), open to marginalized youth in 2 cities; [Your Job](#) program, a two-year regional initiative of Caritas Austria with employment and counselling centres in another 2 cities; [Public Employment Services' projects](#), delivered on the entity level, offering incentives for young entrepreneurs, guidance for young professionals, help with obtaining first employment, support for internships and short-term employment counselling sessions; [YEP project](#), funded by the Swiss government, aiming to improve the quality of PES services to unemployed adults aged 18 to 30 in 48 municipalities.

In **Serbia**, CQaC is provided by secondary schools, it is not mandatory and not available in all secondary schools. The results of research conducted by the Belgrade Open School in 2013 showed positive correlation between obtaining of CQaC and increasing the employability of young people, namely, the number of young people applying for a job, internship and/or volunteering increased by 14.3%, and that 11.7% young people stated they were ready for professional mobility. In addition, the percentage of unemployed young people who have used CQaC was 64.9 %, while in the control group, the percentage of unemployed young people was 73.3. The CQaC should be positioned in facilitating a smooth transition from primary to secondary and higher education and to the world of employment. However, there is a lack of coverage of the young by CQaC services, as well as insufficient visibility of the services offered by the providers, which is a segment that needs to be further improved.

In **Slovenia**, CQaC is a service of the Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia, where an individual, with the help of a counsellor, decides on career goals and makes career decisions. There are also career centres for young (*society NOVUS*). Key project activities include: informing, developing the interests of young people and getting to know the world of work, individual career counselling with schooling youth, supportive activities for parents to help plan the careers of young people and promoting and strengthening stakeholder involvement in the provision of career guidance services. Within the *coaching or mentoring services*, there are several important initiatives. *Career club (karierni klub)* – is one of the seminars offered by Glotta Nova. The seminar lasts 24 hours and includes lessons on how to manage your career, how to develop knowledge, skills, competence, how to find a job, etc. *Program MEPI* - offers personal development for young people (age 14 to 25) and encourages them to spend creative spare time, with profound effect on what kind of person the adolescent will develop into. All the activities, challenges and goals they want to achieve in a particular field are set and achieved by the young people themselves, while adults provide them with personal monitoring, support and counselling, as well as certain specific skills they need to achieve their goals.

Box 6: Overview career guidance, counselling, coaching or mentoring services for NEETs in the CORE partner countries

Recognition, competence assessment or validation for NEETs (good practices)

The validation system has to correspond to the purpose and be appropriate to the context in which it is implemented, where it does not go to one and only “correct solution” but seeks to identify relevant activities that will create sustainable solutions (CEDEFOP, 2015). All citizens, including NEETs, need to

benefit from a well-functioning, easily accessible and understandable validation system that supports them in their personal and professional lives. Information centres need to be available in all rural and urban areas providing first-hand information. Close collaboration among all relevant actors and inter-institutional mechanisms must be set in place for well-thought-out use of expertise and capacities of all. Close linkages between the education and the labour market is of paramount importance to help reduce unemployment, particularly among young people by recognising their competences, thus improving their employability, social mobility and inclusion. The following initiatives have been identified in the CORE national reports:

In **Germany** there are already a number of approaches for formal recognition of knowledge, skills or competences acquired in different ways (Seidel, 2001), but at present there are no uniform, comprehensive and standardized ways of reliably demonstrating informally and non-formally acquired vocational competences (Bmbf, 2019). There are two different procedures to validate vocational knowledge and skills. These assessments are meant for people with job experience but without recognized vocational qualifications (e.g. no formal educational qualification due to school drop-out, migration or career change). The Federal employment agency is using a test called "[MYSKILLS](#)" (available for 30 professions and in 6 languages) to help job-seekers who do not have a vocational qualification or have not worked in their profession for a long time. Funded by the BmBF (Federal Ministry for education and research) the "[ValiKom](#)" development project aims to increase skill visibility and opportunities for on the job market. Four Chambers of Skilled Crafts and four Chambers of Commerce and Industry designed a joint procedure to assess and certify vocational skills acquired outside the formal education system for people older than 25 with relevant work experience. The "[SCOUT-Toolkit](#)" for the counselling of new immigrants was developed recently which includes a [ProfilPASS in simple language](#). The materials are available in German, Slovenian, English, Greek, Spanish and Swedish. The toolkit concludes a range of methods to assess competences of immigrants which can also be very useful for counselling NEETs with migration background and low language skills, as they are often named a high-risk group for long-term NEET phases (European Commission, 2018). The [ProfilPASS for young people](#) supports young people from age 13 on to discover their competences, strengths and interests which they have learned not only in school. So far, it has primarily been used for young adults with rather stable educational and social background and is not yet applicable for vulnerable young people. The "[Berufswahlpass](#)" (*Career Choice PASS*) supports school students in their process of vocational orientation as mentioned earlier (in CQaC). It was translated into simple language. For students with cognitive disabilities the Servicestelle Berufswahlpass offers a folder called "*Mein Ordner Leben und Arbeit*" (my folder life and work) to store and organise relevant work sheets that were filled out in school over multiple school years. "[Produktionsschulen](#)" offer informal assessment of competences especially useful in situations where the behaviour of NEETs can be observed while working in practice. "[RheinFlanke](#)", as an example for youth social work is using sport-based activities to observe a variation of skills such as social, communication, cooperation or emotion regulation skills to be able to provide an individualised job coaching.

In **North Macedonia**, validation of non-formal and informal learning system (VNFIL) is in its embryonic phase, and establishment of a system for Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF) management and inclusion of stakeholders is yet another open issue. A comprehensive approach to addressing

the challenges was adopted with the development of the Roadmap for Further Development and Implementation of the MQF (2016) (CEDEFOP, 2015). The process of VNIFL is stipulated in the [Law on National Framework of qualifications](#). Evaluating learning outcomes acquired through non-formal education and informal learning is the responsibility of the Sectoral Qualifications Committees within the MoES. 10 VNFIL assessors were trained and relevant legislation¹⁷ on validation is being prepared. In addition, within the MoES, 7 out of 16 Sectoral Qualifications Committees have been established whose aim is to promote and develop the sectors and participate in advancement and guidance of new or revision of existing qualifications. For this purpose, a *Portfolio of Competences* was developed to be used by the assessors to guide the person through the process of detailed analyses of his/her entire experience in the areas of learning and work. In 2020, this Portfolio¹⁸ will be piloted for two occupations: facade workers and waiters. Apart of the assessors, capacitated vocational professors, school psychologists and educators will take part in the assessment process. In the pilot phase a total of 20 persons (over the age of 18) will undergo skills, knowledge and competences validation (10 of each) and will be awarded a certificate equivalent to level 3 to 5a of the MQF. As of 2021, it is expected that more occupational profiles will be available for validation through the IPA 2 Budget support 2019. The Workers' Universities/Open Civic Universities for Lifelong Learning have had the practice to assess competences gained through non-formal or informal learning and issue adequate certificates (not formally recognized by the state). The participants cover these costs by themselves. Second example comes from the *BUILD UP Skills BEET - Builders' Energy Efficiency Training Project*¹⁹. The Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies, as a higher education institution, had the task to develop a system for recognizing prior knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, for which a new methodology has been developed. 5 occupational profiles with the area of energy efficiency building were validated.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, strategies and policies pertaining to youth employment on the municipal, regional, cantonal or national level often do recognize needs of NEETs and outline goals such as "Young people use non-formal education programs and opportunities for professional development or career changes to raise their employability". However, rarely do these documents mention informal education, recognition or validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills and knowledge as a systemic gap. Additionally, due to the complex bureaucratic system in the country, these policies and strategies often remain theoretical as institutions fail to implement them through appropriate programming. An example of this is the "[Strategy for the youth in Sarajevo Canton for the period of 2019-2023](#)". As the system in B&H is highly decentralized, the formal recognition of diplomas/certificates obtained through non-formal education is under the cantonal/entity jurisdiction, which makes this process difficult to access for most individuals, especially NEETs. As well, there is no systemic approach to the competency assessment or validation, being confirmed by the fact that the majority of interviewees were unfamiliar with any mechanisms and tools used for the competence assessment of NEETs. Sporadically, examples could be found in activities of NGOs, which use their own tools, tests and approaches to assess young people's competencies after training they took part

17 - To be adopted in 2019, followed by a pilot phase in 2020, full validation implementation and by-laws from 2021

18 - In collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation funded Project Education 4 Employment (E4E)

19 - Co-financed by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme of the European Union

in. PESs together with some youth CSOs such as the SHL Foundation or the Institute for Youth Development KULT in Sarajevo use their own mechanisms to assess competences of youth who enrol in their trainings. Additionally, some companies assess their potential employees' competences during the hiring process. However, all these initiatives focus on concrete set of skills and do not offer holistic approach in assessing all competencies gained through all activities in one's life up to a certain point. The only available tool for holistic competence assessment or validation for NEETs is the *Pasos kompetencija*²⁰, which requires a trained counsellor and a source of funding to cover costs of creating materials and counsellors' work. Most young people who have successfully gone through counselling and completed the Pasos kompetencija are now employed. One smaller number opted for retraining leading to employment. Another example is the case when a director of a company in Banja Luka, familiar with Pasos kompetencija, asked the counsellors to recommend him 5 young people, with concrete set of skills and abilities for the job of tailor and upholsterer, regardless of formal education. All these people are still employed in the company today.

In **Serbia**, the Law on the National Qualifications Framework (2018) regulates the procedure of assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired on the basis of work or life experience. After the assessment process, the appropriate institution issues the certificate on the competences acquired. With the adoption of the Adult Education Law, significant progress has been made in creating the conditions for recognition of prior learning gained through non-formal education and informal learning, however, it *does not recognize* the specificity of non-formal education programmes in the youth sector that are not aimed at gaining certain qualifications and vocational training. Related to youth and volunteer work, there are instruments and mechanisms for assessing youth competencies, but no specific tools for NEETs. *Competency Passport*²¹ was developed to analyse and validate lifelong learning and experience, and even not adapted to the validation of the NEET youth competencies, it was applied in working with young people where it gave good results and had positive reactions. A total of 16 counsellors conducted counselling of 400 hard-to-employ people. Within the framework of the project of the National Association of Practitioners of Youth Work (NAPOR) and the Umbrella Organization of Young People of Serbia (KOMS), a mechanism was created to identify the competences acquired in non-formal education in youth work. Within the EVS Competency for Employability project, instruments have been developed to identify the competences that young people acquire through volunteering at the European Voluntary Service. However, Serbian young adults (participants in focus groups) do not understand what competencies mean and why they are important. Experts are familiar with the legislation, but do not have adequate instruments to apply in their work. They emphasized that the first thing is to identify the NEETs, analyse their profile and then create adequate, reliable instruments. At the same time, the NEETs should be motivated to explore themselves and to have competencies that realistically have job offers in the labour market.

In **Slovenia**, *ENIC-NARIC* center is the national information centre for recognition of qualifications and

20 - A record of the ProfilPASS, developed originally through a GIZ project "Support to Adult Education" between 2012 and 2017 modeling the ProfilPASS from Germany, can be found in a yearly report by the European Training Foundation (ETF) from 2018, as well as in a [CEDEFOP yearly report in 2019](#), on topics of the European inventory on NQF 2018 in B&H.

21 - Within the project (2017-2019) "Creation of Employment Opportunities of the Deprived Groups through the Improvement of Municipal Services", funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) under the Open Regional Fund for SEE - Modernization of Municipal Services

education. There is no tool in Slovenia for recognizing the competences and skills of young people acquired through non-formal education, voluntary work or in everyday life at home. The Youth Council together with partner organizations and stakeholders in the youth sector recognizes the need to regulate the area of recognition of non-formal education. [NEFIKS system](#) provides recording of non-formal education and the effects of youth work with a view to its recognition in the wider society, for young people from the age of 14 onwards. The only limitation is that it is focused on recording and not recognizing the competences of young people. [Moje izkušnje](#) (Zavod Nefiks in e-Študentski servis) - it is a certificate - a tool for recording work experience gained through student work. The service provides a quality informative overview of past work activities. [Youthpass](#) is an instrument of the Youth in Action Program to plan, monitor, evaluate and acknowledge achievements in the non-formal learning process for all participants in the projects involved in the program. Their newly acquired knowledge is evaluated according to the system of key competences of lifelong learning, it is possible to describe other knowledge acquired during the project and it is internationally recognized. [MEPI](#) is a universal, globally recognized youth program that enables young people between the ages of 14-24 to discover, develop their potential in their free time, through non-formal learning and active participation in various fields. However, most of the respondents said that young people are not aware of their skills and competences and additionally, were not aware of good practices in the field of assessment and recognition of youth competencies or similar tools.

Box 7: Overview on good practice examples related to assessment of NEETs' competences in CORE partner countries

Available resources: educational materials, online platforms

In the last years several projects focussed on NEETs and their specific needs on their way back into education or work. These projects can support the NEETs with developed materials, guidance, future dissemination activities and possible cooperation in building up contact with the target group.

In **Germany**, the [Team Up Toolkit](#) (Forrest & Gonzalez-Valles, 2017), "increasing youth employability through football-based programmes" was developed by the members of the Erasmus+ - Project "Team Up for NEETs" (2015-2-DE04-KA205-012802). This Toolkit identifies the biggest challenges and proposes the key solutions for conquer challenges when working with NEETs. Recently, within the Erasmus+ - Project "[SCOUT – aSessing Competences fOr fUTure](#)" (2017-1-DE02-KA204-004194), a *toolkit* for the counselling of new immigrants was developed which includes a *ProfilPASS in simple language*. The materials are available in German, Slovenian, English, Greek, Spanish and Swedish. Another Erasmus+ project named "[BYMBE - Bringing Young Mothers Back to Education](#)" (2017-1-AT01-KA204-035007) produced a wide variety of tools and learning materials for young NEET mothers. A currently running project "[The NEET-System](#)" (2018-1-DE02-KA204-005034) is developing learning materials for NEETs in the form of online escape room exercises to train key market-oriented competences areas (social and civic competence, digital competence, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression). The project addresses NEETs with previous negative educational experience or early school-leavers, who have failed to complete formal education. The

escape room games will be available in several different languages: English, German, Croatian, Finnish, Greek, Czech and Polish on the learning portal of the project by March 2020.

In **North Macedonia**, there are several, however limited available resources for NEETs: list of verified training programmes and credited training centres available on the website of the Adult Education Centre, Workers' Universities/Open Civic Universities for Lifelong Learning platform where programmes, videos and tests are uploaded and available to use, Western Balkan Youth Cooperation platform, Brain drain network etc.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, resources tend to come in a traditional, hard-copy format, such as books, guidebooks and manuals focusing on working with unemployed people or on working with youth in general. Open-source publications were developed by a number of CSOs in the past, such as Kult, Kwart, Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar, etc. none of which aimed at NEETs in particular. Online platforms most often used in B&H with regards to this topic are <https://www.mreza-mira.net/> and <https://mladi.org/v2/bs/>.

There are no educational materials and online platforms for NEETs in the Republic of **Serbia**.

In **Slovenia**, educational materials are available through on-line platforms, such as <https://www.onlinerecordbook.org/fo/>. Another recourse is [ENIC-NARIC - centre](#) for formal recognition of education, the [Program MEPI](#) - program of personal development for young people (age 14–25 year).

Box 8: Available resources, educational materials, on-line platforms

Conclusions for the further development of CORE Toolkit

Problem areas and needs of NEETs regarding their competence assessment

The Box 9 summarizes research findings related to problematic situations and existing needs related to the assessment of competences of NEETs.

- » Migration, school-dropping out, poor economic and social situation, family relations, limited access to information and rural environment contribute to the **general feeling of incompetence of NEETs**. This is often combined with **low adaptability** to the work environment and a lack of strategies to solve conflicts. It is important to facilitate the process of developing initiative-taking and responsibility-taking skills, and encourage NEETs to think proactively and ask themselves “What could I do to change the situation I am in?” instead of “What has (or has not) the system done to change the situation I am in?”. This could be achieved through making notes of and focusing on **success stories** from person's past. It is important to practice and

acknowledge the human ability to transfer skills during the competency assessment process itself.

- » Many families of NEETs have a **long tradition of low education and high unemployment**. It could be difficult for young adults to break the pattern and motivate themselves to become active and “dream bigger”. A different form of problematic family situation can be in the case of NEETs with **family responsibilities** (i.e. young mothers). Depending on the area they live in, it can be very hard to find an affordable childcare in order for them to apply for education/employment. The counselling of young mothers, especially single parents, has to be very flexible because there might be other problems more pressing than getting back into education or employment (e.g. financial problems or problems corresponding to motherhood).
- » Some NEETs could have **learning disabilities**, a short attention span, cognitive deficits and/or poor communication skill. Those NEETs often **lack communication and presentation skills**, are not aware of their competencies, can't name and value them. As well, due to unsuccessful education history, many of them face specific educational needs. In these cases, **simple language and visual support** could be useful and counsellors need to adopt their communication and counselling plan to the individual deficits of the young person (e.g. smaller work packages, simple language, adopt materials, use visualizations for support etc.).
- » The education of young people in a knowledge-based society and for sustainable development has to be geared towards promoting **lifelong learning** and acquiring **key competences**. Adult education and lifelong learning should provide tailor-made opportunities relevant for the specific educational needs of NEETs. It is therefore of paramount importance for the integrated education of young people that formal and non-formal education are connected. Non-formal education usually takes place within the activities of civil society organizations and groups, but also in the workplace or within other settings. It is necessary to look at the environment not only from a physical perspective, where exactly an educational activity is taking place, but also from the perspective of who carries it out.
- » Competences that NEETs might lack are IT literacy on higher levels, using different communication tools in professional communication, critical thinking and planning. Also, NEETs need to be trained to **present their competencies to employers** and to the outer world.
- » In most cases, NEETs **relate formal education to failure** and develop “education-phobia” (Forrest & Gonzalez-Valles, 2017). Many long-term NEETs have negative experiences with the education system or VET and could react negative to a competence assessment. Counsellors have to be empathetic for these issues and possible fears of failing (again) and need to recognize all sorts of achievements regularly within the process to strengthen the self-confidence of NEETs.
- » **Involvement in counselling process** and building up **trust** can be rather difficult due to low motivation, prior negative experiences, negative self-concepts and/or situational factors as mentioned above. To tackle this problem ‘peer-to-peer support’, ‘word of mouth’ recommendations and engaging with youth organizations are still the key parts of the process (San-

tos-Brien, 2018). As an example, [RheinFlanke](#) (Germany) is solving this issue by using sports activities as a low-threshold service for a first contact to build a relationship. In the counselling process counsellor should focus on building up a trustworthy relationship and develop transparent procedures and clear goals for the competence assessment.

- » There is a **lack of tools** to assess and validate the competences acquired through non-formal education. There are methods available that accompany the informal knowledge and skills of young people, but everything stops as they are not registered and certified by experts. Therefore, **developing mechanisms for recognition** and assessment of competences of NEETs is an imperative. This refers to skills, knowledge and competences gained through formal, non-formal education and training, but as well, through informal learning in daily life, through hobbies and volunteering activities.
- » **Career guidance** and **professional orientation process** needs to be offered as a free access option provided by the employment agencies (i.e. in Germany). NEETs need to be informed that changing careers or jobs, and working in fields different than those obtained through formal education are not unusual and should not be disregarded as an option. Improving the legislation in the field of career counselling, institutionalization of a career counsellor in the workplace, utilization of the trained teachers in schools as well as using the existing infrastructure to support the guidance of the students and advices related to the validation system needs to be given immediate priority (e.g. in North Macedonia).
- » **Policy processes** need to support the assessment of competences. It is necessary to reform the education system in order to establish a closer link between education and the labor market. One of the priorities is the introduction and development of key competences for lifelong learning at all levels of education.

Box 9: Needs and key problems related to the assessment of competences of NEETs

Advice regarding the development of the CORE toolkit

During the intense research phase of CORE especially in the focus groups and qualitative interviews, several experts with long-standing experience in dealing with NEETs related fields provided input on the development of the CORE toolkit. Box 10 summarizes the findings generated in all partner countries.

- » The toolkit needs to be a simple instrument, easy to use and adjust to the variety of needs of NEETs. Besides non-formal sources of education and training, the toolkit needs to provide mechanisms and tools to evaluate competences gained through informal learning.
- » For the counselling of NEETs, it could be very helpful to not only use tools such as the Profil-PASS but also **create situations** in which the skills and competences could be visible for observation and might be possible to experience for the NEETs themselves. General counselling methods to be implemented could involve: circular questioning (systemic coaching) and working in reflecting Team – 2 counsellors (male & female) reflect in front of the NEET about their

observations of the NEETs behavior, strengths and successes.

- » There is **no online open-source** resource available for NEETs or people working with NEETs. The resources in use are in hard-copy (the case in B&H).
- » The toolkit **should not be mandatory** for use as the approach to counselling is always individualistic. Counsellors need to be encouraged to stay authentic. They have to be trained to use the tool and transform it in accordance to the current situation.
- » Possible use of the German and Croatian version of the "[The NEET-System](#)" in the CORE toolkit as a tool that could help to motivate NEETs to engage in the counselling process and to build up a productive relationship between the counsellor and the NEETs.
- » In the last years several projects focused on NEETs and their specific needs on their way back into education or work. These projects can support the CORE project with developed materials, guidance, future dissemination activities and possible cooperation in building up contact with the target group. (i.e. NEETs with migrant background and low language skills, young people etc.). For more info, please see the section examples of good practices related to competence assessment for NEETs above.

Box 10: Advice regarding the development phase of the CORE toolkit

Important challenges that could arise during the CORE project implementation

Box 11 includes key findings related to the discussion about potential challenges which the team may face during the implementation phase of the CORE project. These discussions have been conducted in all partner countries in form of focus groups or qualitative interviews in order to support the working process and prepare the CORE team in the best possible way on their upcoming tasks.

- » The methods on **how to reach** the target group are essential. Possible solutions involve cooperation with youth NGOs, juvenile court – e.g. ProfilPASS counselling as part of social hours, mothers' groups etc.
- » **Lack of motivation** of NEETs to participate and commit to the project (**risk of drop-out**) and/or **distrust** of the outcome of the counselling process. Possible solutions could be:
 - » Development and adjustment of **Counselling and assessment** mechanisms to individual needs
 - » **Informal assessment mechanisms** could be developed such as observation of social behavior during an informal walk to avoid standard "testing" procedures (i.e. Produktionschulen- Germany).
 - » **Transparency** about reasons for, importance of and benefits of counselling and competence assessment as well as transparency about the goals of the CORE project and dis-

semination of results among diverse target groups.

- » Flexible and adjustable process in terms of **approaches** used, **geographical distance** and what a NEET person is required to do.
- » The **role of the counsellor** is essential, as he/she could be the only good role model NEETs have in their surroundings, needs to be motivated and interested to work with NEETs - having a similar background (e.g. experienced NEET-phases in the past) could be helpful.
- » Important to work on the **counsellor-counselee-relationship** and build up good rapport²².
- » As a lot of NEETs are struggling with commitment, **flexible** (or better no) appointments could work better, i.e. counselling is available whenever the person shows up for another activity. This might be difficult to provide as a ProfilPASS counsellor if he/she is not working in an institution like a youth centre.
- » **Identification and selection of the counsellors.** A well-defined profile is needed and the selection should be based not just on the competences but also on the will of the person to work with NEETs and apply the ProfilPASS. A big challenge might be the funding of the work of counsellors. In some countries, the number of certified counsellors in employment services for NEETs is rather limited (B&H), thus affecting the overall time they could spend in counselling.
- » The instrument needs to be adapted to the **specificities of each country** NEETs come from.
- » The unclear and unstandardized tools for recording skills gained through non-formal education produce reluctance to their recognition as opposed to formally acquired knowledge. While the tools reach a level of recognition between individual employers and young people themselves and in the youth sector, **recognition needs to be regulated at the systemic level.**
- » Many of the focus group participants expressed an interest to be included in trainings. However, they stressed that it would be a big challenge if **institutionalization** and **sustainability** was not considered from the beginning (the case in North Macedonia).
- » **Institutionalization of the ProfilPASS**, or how the system will recognize the ProfilPASS. Raising awareness among relevant institutions primarily in identification of NEETs and then in institutionalising of the ProfilPASS could support sustainability. They need to be familiarized with the ProfilPASS and agree how, when and where it could be implemented. Possible solutions could be to address representatives of relevant institutions through implementation, advocacy and dissemination activities.

Box 11: Potential challenges that must be met, to ensure the successful development of the CORE toolkit

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22 - **Rapport** is a state that occurs when two people feel that they are truly able to connect with and communicate with one another and is usually based on shared interests, values, and other personal factors. This feeling can be promoted through mutual attention, positivity and ongoing eye contact, matching breathing rhythms and mirroring body postures. This type of relationship is one therapist's attempt to cultivate with clients. This level of honesty, trust, and mutual communication is essential for an effective therapeutic relationship. (Rapport, n.d.)

Feedback on the existing ProfilPASS and suggestions for its further development

One of the main objectives of the conducted research activities of the CORE project was to gain knowledge about possible improvements of the ProfilPASS. It is especially interesting for CORE to understand in which way the ProfilPASS has to be adjusted to fit the needs of NEETs considering the recommendations and key findings in Box 10 and 11. In the following box 12, advice related to the advancement of the ProfilPASS is summarized. These findings will support the CORE project team in developing the envisaged results.

General recommendations:

- » The document provides a **very in-depth analyses** of the person and will help identify his/her strengths and weaknesses, interests and hobbies, skills and knowledge, thus providing a clear understanding of one's competences and future career and/or education path. Practitioners share the opinion that the current ProfilPASS has proven to be very helpful through practice and implementation, but for NEETs more focus needs to be placed on **goals and future steps**.
- » The ProfilPASS needs to be **linked to the qualification standards** and could be part of the primary/secondary education, so that each student is given the opportunity to have his/her own personal competence analyses. The emphasis should be placed on knowledge and skills gained regardless of the time period of life and the educational background in which they were acquired.
- » The completion of the ProfilPASS needs to be **guided by a trained counsellor** (advisor/assessor, especially if they are NEETs or dropouts). The counsellor needs to be a trustworthy person. **Network of counsellors** could be initiated and maintained to enhance the exchange of experiences. Trained counsellors competent to use the toolkit should enter an official **data base. Info centres** that will provide information where and how these counsellors can be found and the benefits of the ProfilPASS need to be established (*similar to the ProfilPASS Servicestelle in Germany*).
- » The ProfilPASS needs to be **further promoted**. It can help those who are least integrated into the labor market to gain new learning and employment opportunities and to use all human resources to combat unemployment, increase productivity and improve competitiveness. Valuing non-formal and informal learning can help young people seeking their first job. The ultimate step in assessing non-formal and informal learning is validation, which the CORE project should aim for in the future. Especially, employers need to be informed on the ProfilPASS and be able to recognize the certificate of competency as valid.

Especially useful parts for NEETs of the ProfilPASS (for young people):

- » In general, it is very effective, as it encompassed all areas of the individual's life and enables young people to become aware of their **competences acquired in everyday life**.

- » *"People in my life"* (p.6) – useful to look for all possible resources a person has in his/her life and get to know their social background. This can be extended by the technique of circular questioning (What does your mother/father/best friend say about you/about your problem/your strengths/suitable jobs for you?)
- » The part covering the **family** is very crucial since it will reveal whether the person makes his/her own decisions or is influenced by the family. Additionally, there could be mandatory assessment field to be filled by a counselee's close friends/family members, for it to be compared to one's own view of self.
- » *"My profile"* (p.49) – especially successful if done in real body size and filled out with all the strengths; helpful visualization of what the person is capable of;
- » *"Jobs where I live"* (p.71) –to make resources in the private life visible and more accessible.

Recommended additions:

- » A chapter on **career exploration**, with more information provided about different careers. Previous experiences in looking for employment, volunteering or work should be created. Greater focus on **how to prepare documentation to apply for jobs**, interview preparation etc.
- » **Free space** (e.g. empty pages) to enable NEETs to write down ideas for research or links or referrals to other resources at which they could find more information about potential employment or careers.
- » A specific part for young mothers (or fathers) and their gained **competences from parenthood**.
- » **Testimonials** (i.e. biographical examples) as positive role models, to guide them in their work with the ProfilPASS and to motivate them.
- » A segment about strategies and coping mechanisms for **challenging situations** (to tackle low frustration tolerance) and explanation about **networking**.
- » Parts of the **ProfilPASS for adults**, however, with modification, can be successfully incorporated, (e.g. "My Personal Characteristics" and "One of My Days"). Combining elements from both instruments and any new content that would address the ability, knowledge, and skills that an individual possesses, presented in a transparent and compelling way in a new instrument, will be of great help in the future work with NEETs.
- » It could be useful to include a section on **courses and schools** attended during primary/secondary education, that were co-curricular activities outside of school (e.g. language clubs/classes, art, sports clubs, IT clubs etc.). These activities are what parents usually encourage their children to take part in, and are often undervalued although they help youth develop valuable skills.

Recommended changes:

- » The ProfilPASS was evaluated as a very **extensive document** that would require long time to complete. At least in the pilot phase, the ProfilPASS could be **reduced** i.e. all components to remain but in a shorter format and in second stage it could be used in its original format. Some of its chapters should be removed (such as the one on military experience because young people of that age could not gain experience in this field). As well, the “my strengths” (p.30f) part was evaluated the least interesting enough for young adults, especially for young people who have cognitive deficits, it is challenging and often not possible to answer easily.
- » Develop a **separate version just for the vulnerable groups**, that are not in (or have not completed) primary or secondary education with components that fit better to their situation and social position. It was also advised to develop one ProfilPASS for those coming from the formal education and one for those coming from the non-formal education, in order to make the work of the counsellor (advisor/assessor) much easier. Or to keep the document as such, but to have special recommendations which parts are more suitable for those that are in formal education and which for those that are not, like the NEETs.

Box 12: Key findings related to possible improvements of the ProfilPASS

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Annex 1: Focus Group or Interview Guideline

Agenda for focus group or qualitative interviews with experts:

- » Welcome, short presentation of key elements of CORE
 - » Introduction of participants
 - » Clarification of what is expected from participants/interviewees
 - » Discussion on questions below
1. Please give us an overview of **existing measures**, initiatives or programs geared towards assisting and supporting young adults (16-26) who are not in education, employment or training (e.g. NEET), that you know about (target group can be extended to young underprivileged adults who are still part of the education system e.g. poor socio-economic status, rural/remote areas without access to many opportunities, (learning) disabilities). Why do you think these are important? What institution(s) is/are responsible for those measures? Are they successful and in what way?
 2. Please tell us if these young people's (NEET's) competences are **assessed or validated**. If they are, how is that done?
 3. Could you give us some examples of **good practices** regarding this group's competence assessment? (Are there already measures, initiatives or programs for other groups which could be useful for the CORE target group?)
 4. What would you say are some **problem areas** related to the competence assessment of young NEET adults? If you were to assess their competencies, what possible problems, challenges or issues would you pay special attention to?
 5. In your opinion, what are some specific **needs** of young NEET adults regarding their competence assessment? Why do you think they should have their competencies assessed?
 6. Please provide us with some feedback on the **existing ProfilPASS versions (ProfilPASS/ ProfilPASS for young people / Pasos kompetencija / Competencies Passport)**. Which additional elements you think would be helpful? (For interviewers: give a brief overview of the concept and the purpose of the ProfilPASS (for young people), as well as its benefits and limitations you know of. Show interviewees or participants a copy of the instrument if they have not seen it before.)
 7. What is your opinion on the **objectives** of CORE? What challenges do you think we could face in its implementation, and how do you think we could overcome them?
 8. What kind of a **product or tools** would you use when working with young NEET adults? Do you think that a toolbox of some kind would be useful?

Annex 2: National Report Template

Demographic data related to the target group

Researcher instructions: Please conduct desk research and deliver concrete numbers on how many young adults, ages 16-26, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) there are in your country, where they mostly are (e.g. in urban or rural areas, or perhaps other important factors). Please include data related to drop-out from schools, reasons for dropping out, barriers faced by these young adults on their path to integration (e.g. difficulties accessing education or employment), if they might belong to some and which minority groups. Please describe the specifics of the school system in your country (short description of the national system to see differences between countries).

Types of measures intended for young NEET adults

Researcher instructions: Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question 1. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

Possible types of measures, e.g.:

- » Courses offered by different institutions or organizations
- » Employment or internship programs facilitated by institutions, companies or organizations
- » Career guidance and counselling
- » Coaching or mentoring services
- » Formal recognition of diplomas or certificates
- » Available resources: educational materials, online platforms

Competence assessment or validation for young NEET adults

Researcher instructions: Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question 2. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

Examples of good practices related to competence assessment for young NEET adults

Researcher instructions: Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question 3. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

Problem areas related to competence assessment for young NEET adults

Researcher instructions: Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question 4. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

Needs of young NEET adults regarding their competence assessment

Researcher instructions: Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question 5. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

Feedback on the existing ProfilPASS and suggestions for its further development

Researcher instructions: Please summarize answers to question 6. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

Important challenges that could arise during the CORE project implementation

Researcher instructions: Please summarize answers to question 7. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

Advice regarding the development of the CORE toolkit

Researcher instructions: Please summarize answers to question 8. of the interview or focus group guidelines.

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