

Deliverable 5.4: Policy handbook for the better implementation and fine-tuning of NEETs' a) training-reskilling programmes, b) counseling and vocational guidance and c) psychological supportive activities

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Abstract

NEETs (Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) represent a heterogeneous but definitely vulnerable social category. At time, it is a category – and a corresponding *problématique* – that bring to the fore various critical problems and challenges in the current operation of our economic and social systems. If left unchecked, NEETs could represent a complex and serious challenge for social cohesion and social reproduction. Problems and challenges (including the very real risk of witnessing the emergence of a new social margin) that call for a rethinking of our institutional forms of education, training and employment.

The present project has confirmed the hypothesis that there are features associated with NEETs in Greece that vary - at least to a degree - in relation to other EU member states. There have been various recent policy initiatives at EU aiming to address the phenomenon. In the context of the present project, our main focus is on the optimal implementation, fine-tuning and coordination of a) training & reskilling programs, b) counseling and guidance actions and c) psychological supportive activities for NEETs. All three dimensions receive a thorough investigation and result in a corresponding set of policy proposals.

Although the role of the policy handbook for the better implementation and fine-tuning of the NEETs – related programs will be crucial, success and effectiveness of the proposals will of course depend also on the general economic and social environment (which is beyond the scope and/or influence of this project) but they also depend on the coordination and systematic implementation of the different aspects of the proposed actions. The proposed activities are built on the notion that integration into labor markets and social inclusion are both crucial facets of the approach that aims to tackle and – to the extent possible – eradicate NEETs as a social category with

substantial weight. Of course all this takes place in the context of labor markets. A labor market – functioning as it does with the demand and supply of labor – will depend in part by changes in conditions associated with skills, expectations, and the bargaining power of interested parties. A related point is to encourage labor market efficiency. An efficient labor market will – in principle – tend to match workers with the most suitable jobs for their profile and skills. An efficient labor market will also provide incentives for both employees and employers to act in ways that increase human capital productivity. In general, efficient labor markets can encourage productivity by promoting the accumulation of human capital and the appropriate use of skills and talent. This entails (a) attracting and retaining the best talent in the country, (b) increasing workers’ efforts, and (c) increasing employers’ efforts at training and retraining employees. As rates of youth unemployment and NEETs remain alarmingly high, we need to aim at developing a comprehensive social inclusion strategy and a corresponding framework of both preventive and compensatory measures and actions. This will have to include mobilizing all relevant actors, public and private, social partners, the educational community, as well as businesses and potential employers.

A package of actions that aims to be at the same time as comprehensive as possible and pragmatic in its interventionist rigor may be able to halt the expansion of NEETs. It hardly needs emphasizing that reverse developments may require more general policy developments in economic and social conditions and in the policy mix prevalent at both country and EU levels. At the same time, however, our research has demonstrated that institutional gaps do exist and a number of applicable policy recommendations can be formulated, explained, and tested. Social research contributes within a given environment by researching the field, taking initiatives and trying policy recommendations, i.e., by aiming to both explain and help halt the expansion of NEETs.