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► Handbook on policy areas to reduce youth in NEET status

Nicolas Serrière and Sara Elder





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Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods

September 2025



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► Preface

All countries in the world have pledged to substantially reduce their shares of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) as part of their national commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in target 8.6 to be specific). Many countries have made good progress towards the target while others have unfortunately seen their youth NEET rates move in the wrong direction. According to the ILO's [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024](#), one in three young people today lives in a country that is “off track” in its progress to meet SDG target 8.6. Worse is that most of the countries that showed a regressive trend were low-income countries and situated in subregions where rates were already among the world's highest.

It seems clear then that more effort is needed to accelerate progress on the reduction of young NEETs. Driving progress in this area necessitates that countries, first and foremost, do everything in their power to boost job creation so that young people will have a fighting chance to find work. For countries with high NEET rates, it is also especially important to target the creation of jobs for young women through various demand-side interventions, including industrial policies that seek to promote growth in sectors where young women want to work.

The policies discussed in this *Handbook* are not those that would *per se* spur economic (and youth-inclusive job) growth. Rather, the policy areas here are more about making sure that every young person has a chance to maximize their productive capacities and that the bridges that connect the supply and demand for labour are strengthened and scaled up so that fewer young people are left in NEET status.

The report aims to bring clarity to the complex policy landscape required to reduce the number of young people in NEET status through targeted interventions. It offers a simplified categorization of policy measures – from profiling, outreach and engagement of youth outside of the labour market and supporting the unemployed youth. It promotes putting all elements together in an integrated youth employment (and NEET-targeted) strategy – and showcases existing national practices that others can learn from.

To soften the blow that being NEET has on the millions of young people, countries will need to increase their investment in labour market policies, labour market institutions and support services for young people. As countries continue in their struggle to keep all young people fully engaged and flourishing in their school to work transitions, this *Handbook* should serve as a key tool for the ILO and its constituency to make progress on the integrated policy framework needed to set young people on the pathway to brighter futures.

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► Acronyms and abbreviations

ALMP	active labour market policy
NEET	not in employment, education or training
NGO	non-governmental organization
PES	public employment services
VET	vocational education and training
YG	Youth Guarantee

► 1. Introduction

1.1. Context

The young NEET (not in employment, education or training) is a multi-layer construct that straddles many situations – some adverse, some less so – that young people may encounter while transitioning to employment.

To demonstrate the diversity, recall that each of the following persons has NEET status:

- a 24-year-old university graduate looking for a first career-related job;
- a 16-year-old who dropped out of school because it “wasn’t his/her thing”;
- an 18-year-old married young mother who remains at home to carry out domestic duties;
- a 15-year-old who cannot afford to go to school and does not bother looking for work since they know none exists in their neighbourhood.

Each of these young persons has a particular story and cause for falling into the category of NEET. Some are in NEET status (or NEETs, for short) for personal reasons that can be influenced by external measures (for instance, the young dropout can be contacted by social services and encouraged to follow a more personalized vocational training programme). Others are harder to influence, such as the young mother who has voluntarily withdrawn from employment to engage in unpaid care work. Some are NEET for reasons outside their control, like the 15-year-old above who is likely living in conditions of poverty and rampant unemployment and underemployment, and the 24-year-old university graduate waiting to hear back from the many job applications sent out. For the latter, the NEET status is much more likely to be a temporary blip in their transition to employment and productive adulthood compared to the former, who could find themselves in NEET status multiple times during their transition period and for long durations, with scarring effects for the rest of their lives.

Given this variety of situations of young people in NEET status and the complexity of “NEET-hood”, the policy response to NEETs is also, by nature, multifaceted.

Most countries in the world are already taking some action that aims to reduce the number of youth in NEET status. A country might be investing in a programme to re-engage school dropouts, working with a non-governmental organization (NGO) to provide entrepreneurship training to marginalized youth, or implementing a career guidance programme within schools. Each of these actions, and many more, have the potential to reduce the current number of NEETs or prevent youth from becoming future NEETs.

Recognizing which policy measures link to the reduction of young NEETs, either directly or indirectly, and making them explicit in an integrated strategy could help to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.6 to reduce youth NEET rates.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries committed, in target 8.6, “to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)”.

Unfortunately, one-third of the world's youth still live in a country that is “off track” in its progress to meet SDG target 8.6, according to the ILO's *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024* (ILO 2024). What is perhaps the most concerning here is that it is primarily low-income countries that have shown regressive progress on reducing youth NEET rates, along with countries situated in subregions where rates were already among the world's highest, such as the Arab States and North Africa (both with NEET rates above 30 percent in 2024). The average NEET rate of low-income countries in 2024 was nearly triple that of the rate in high-income countries (at 28.6 per cent and 10.4 per cent, respectively). Another troubling fact is that two out of every three youth in NEET status are female, and young women are twice as likely as young men to be NEET.

1.2. Purpose of the Handbook

Creating employment and training opportunities for all young people remains one of the top challenges for policy makers. Over the years, a wide array of policy responses to reduce the number of NEETs has been developed and tested. The main lesson learned from past policy attention to NEETs is that action must be contextualized to national contexts and to the specific identity of those who are in NEET status or at risk of becoming NEET. A young NEET who is out of school and looking for work (unemployed non-students) will benefit from different policy measures than a young NEET who is out of school and outside the labour force.¹ To cover all youth in NEET status thus requires implementing an integrated mix of interventions aimed at the reintegration of young people in educative or training schemes and/or to employment.

The main purpose of this Handbook is to highlight the measures or policies that aim to reduce NEET rates and to share existing national measures for learning purposes and to encourage accelerated action. Measures are framed in accordance with the intervention's primary objective, be it prevention, outreach and engagement, reintegration or assisting the unemployed. In providing this bird's-eye view and sharing good practices, the hope is that countries and development partners will be encouraged to do more, scaling up and integrating existing programmes and policies around an explicit NEET reduction target with a well-defined implementation action plan.

An important caveat is warranted here to acknowledge that this Handbook does not provide guidance on how to address the broader challenge that economies have in their capacity to generate sufficient jobs for all young people to transition into decent work after leaving school. Creating jobs through pro-employment and youth-responsive macroeconomic and sectoral policies is clearly essential to keeping NEET numbers down; yet advising on how to do so lies beyond the scope of this Handbook.²

¹ Until the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, held in 2013, persons who were not in the labour force (i.e. neither in employment nor unemployed) were labelled “inactive”. As of 2013, to avoid the negative connotation of this label, it was recommended to use the phrase “outside of the labour force” instead.

² One publication that offers guidance on how countries might work towards implementing a comprehensive approach to pro-employment economic growth, with integrated macroeconomic, sectoral, and labour market policies, is ILO (2023).

1.3. Methodology of the Handbook

This Handbook presents policies, programmes or interventions and organizes them into four+ policy areas that shape the organization of the document: first, **profiling** (not exactly a policy area, hence serving as the “+” in the four+ label); **early intervention and preventative measures**; **outreach and engagement**; **reintegration**; and **unemployment**. A concluding part is dedicated to the integration of these policy areas. Each of these policies or programmes is illustrated with case studies from at least one developed economy and one developing or emerging economy. Sometimes more than one case study is included to offer a broader perspective. What is expected from this juxtaposition of experiences is that it will highlight how different national settings affect the design and implementation of interventions and caution against the temptation to attempt direct replication.

Both the characterization of the typology into the four+ policy areas and the selection of case studies are the result of qualitative assessments based on a desk review of key material, the authors’ own expertise and consultations with officials specialized in the matter. Case studies were chosen on the basis of how well documented they are, rather than on their proof of effectiveness through objective evaluations.³ It is also important to caution that the choice of case studies does not endorse them as definitive solutions to the challenges identified.

The structure of the typology was a matter of much back-and-forth discussion over the course of drafting the paper. Policy areas that were initially considered overlapping, and thus to be grouped – for instance, outreach and reintegration – were ultimately treated separately due to the distinct groups they target and the interventions they necessitate. Others were grouped, such as outreach and engagement, as they were found to have similar target groups (young people most distant from the labour market or the education system).

There is no doubt that this categorization could take a different shape; however, it is one that conveys the intended message of the Handbook that there are many elements to the concept of NEETs that need to be considered for effective policy intervention. A second important message of the Handbook is that none of those policy interventions can reach all youth in NEET status if adopted in isolation. On the contrary, evidence shows that multidimensional programmes which include early prevention, re-engagement programmes and outreach measures are those most effective at reducing the size of the NEET population (Maguire et al. 2022).

1.4. Organization of the Handbook

Section 2 of the Handbook addresses the complex tasks of identifying and profiling NEETs. While not in themselves measures that will lead to a reduction in NEETs, profiling activities define an important stage within the adoption cycle of NEET-focused measures. Given the

³ A preliminary attempt was made to highlight only rigorously evaluated interventions, but it proved too challenging to locate sufficient evaluated national programmes or policies. While thousands of evaluations of youth-related policies exist and are increasingly synthesized for the generation of “lesson learnt” – see, for example, ILO and World Bank (2024) – most existing impact evaluations are for donor-based programmes as opposed to government-sponsored policies. This is admittedly a shortcoming of the Handbook and one that can hopefully be redressed in future editions.

multi-layered nature of the NEET concept, profiling young people with NEET status is a challenging process. This section offers insights into the types of information needed to document various NEET situations and gives examples of different national approaches.

Section 3 presents actual policies and policy measures and is organized around four policy areas. **Section 3.1** is about **early intervention** and **preventive measures**, which aim to keep vulnerable young people who are not yet NEET from becoming NEETs. Vulnerability in these cases is linked to the degree of attachment to education, training and employment, both current and expected for the future. **Section 3.2** is about **outreach** and **engagement**. These intervention areas have been grouped together because they relate to the challenging task of identifying and dealing with youth who are most distant from the education system and from the labour market. In this Handbook, engagement measures are distinguished from early intervention measures because they are most relevant to the situation of young persons who, whether of NEET age or not, are disconnected from all systems (labour market, education and training) and are likely to require special attention to reach them. **Section 3.3** is about improving the status of NEETs, focusing on their **reintegration**, either into the education system or into the labour market. Finally, **Section 3.4** addresses the specific case of **youth unemployment**, a major socio-economic issue that has vexed many policy efforts in countries around the world.

Section 4 brings the policy areas together. The treatment of specific measures in isolated sub-sections was meant to highlight their design characteristics as well as to zoom in on the target group they seek to support. However, it also served to emphasize the multidimensional nature of the obstacles hindering the transition to work for young people and to imply, as a result, that no single measures could ever be effective on its own when it comes to tackling the issue of young NEETs. This section makes the case for integrated sets of measures, with the European Union's Youth Guarantee as a solid example of such a system. It also acknowledges that limited institutional coordination, low levels of social spending, and the dominance of informal labour markets in many areas of the world preclude direct replication of the EU Youth Guarantee models. Nevertheless, examples exist that show that multidimensional interventions can be implemented also in developing and emerging economies.

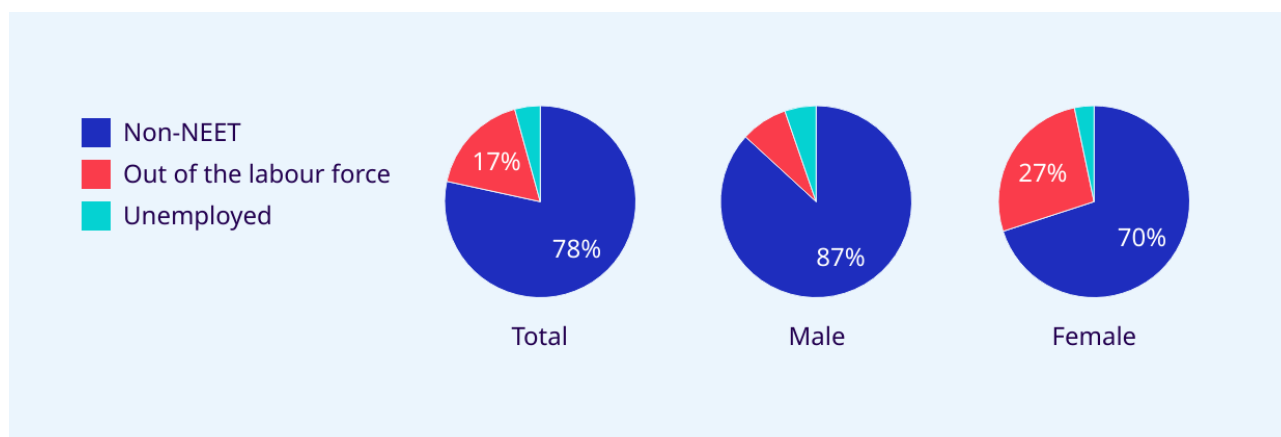
► 2. Profiling the NEETs

While not in itself an activity that will lead to a reduction in NEETs, profiling is an important stage within the design and implementation process of NEET-focused measures. This section provides insights into the types of information needed to distinguish various NEET situations. Using realistic (but fictitious) situations, this section begins by putting young people at the center, illustrating some of the realities and circumstances that may define them as NEETs.

2.1. Putting a face on NEETs

Young people with NEET status represent a highly diverse group. Their diversity stems from variations in individual characteristics such as age, socioeconomic background, education level, health condition, family responsibilities, situation in the labour market, and personal aspirations, all of which influences the causality of a young person to be NEET. **This heterogeneity makes it essential for policymakers to consider a wide range of tailored interventions that address the specific needs and circumstances of each subgroup within the NEET population.**

► **Figure 1: Global distribution of the youth population (aged 15 to 24) by NEET status and sex, 2023 (percentage)**



Source: ILO (2024).

In most countries in the world, a significantly higher proportion of those in NEET status are outside the labour force (inactive) compared to being unemployed (ILO 2024). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the global youth population by NEET status and by sex. At the global level, among the 30 per cent population share of young women that were in NEET status in 2023, only one in 10 was unemployed, which means they did not have work but were looking for a job, while nine in 10 were inactive (outside the labour force), meaning they were neither employed nor unemployed. For young male NEETs, about four in 10 were unemployed and six in 10 inactive.

The conclusion is that any successful strategy to reduce the number of youth in NEET status will need to concentrate the bulk of its efforts on reaching and (re)integrating the inactive

NEETs as opposed to targeting the unemployed.⁴ The main purpose of investing in a statistical NEET profiling exercise is to guide the prioritization of policy responses according to both the degree of vulnerability of the young person and their distance from the labour market and/or education/training engagement. Choices must be made on the policy portfolio and government agencies will want to put numbers on the subgroup of NEETs that they might effectively target at minimal cost and effort (the “quick fixes”) versus those requiring more sustained investment as the most vulnerable to disengagement and thus potentially the more valuable target in the name of social justice (the “deeper-rooted socially excluded”).

To add to the complexity of profiling young NEETs is the fact that NEET status is not static. Some young people may move in and out of NEET status as their personal circumstances change over time.

Table 1 gives an illustration of the multiple realities of NEET status, with an indication of the level of vulnerability that each situation entails.

⁴ Though of course circumstances can differ by country. Countries should invest in building the statistical profile of NEETs in the country and determine for themselves the appropriate target groups for remedial action.

► Table 1: Understanding who the NEETs are and their levels of vulnerability

Vulnerable ¹ youth population				
Youth of compulsory education age ²		Youth of NEET age ³		
① Out of school ② In school, but vulnerable to disengagement		NEETs ③ Out of school and outside of the labour force ④ Out of school and unemployed		⑤ Employed or in education/training, but vulnerable to disengagement
Textual description				
Categories ① and ② are young people of compulsory education age who have either already dropped out of school, or whose vulnerability assessment puts them at risk of dropping out. If they are younger than 15 years-old, they are not counted as NEET, but they are susceptible to joining the ranks of NEETs as they age.		Young people with NEET status are those who are not in education, training nor employment, i.e. categories ③ and ④. An important difference between the two is that those in category ③ are not looking for work (i.e. they are not unemployed) and are therefore counted as outside the labour force. However, those in category ④ are available and looking for work, so they are considered to be active in the labour force as an unemployed person. Category ③ represents those who are potentially hardest to locate and reach out to.		Those in category ⑤ are not NEET but they are teenagers and young adults who hold precarious jobs or who show signs of vulnerability while in education or training.
Fictional category depictions				
Geoffrey 13 years old, living on the streets and hustling SIM cards to fund his glue-sniffing addiction	Cara 14 years old, struggling to juggle school attendance and having to look after her siblings while her mother is away on seasonal employment	Jorge 17 years old, dropped out of school because of his disability and feels unfit to look for a job Samia 21 years old, finished school at the secondary level, could not find a job in the public sector, married and now cares full-time for her child	Jenny 22 years old with a bachelor's degree, has been looking for a job in her field of study for over a year and living with her parents Alex 24 years old, newly hired in the automotive sector, was among the first to be let go as a result of trade disputes	Tawfik 18 years old, working daily without contract at a construction site

Notes:

¹ Vulnerability in these cases link to the degree of non-attachment to education, training and employment, both currently and expected for the future. This diagram leaves out young people who have a job or are in education or training but who are not deemed vulnerable.

² In quite a few (and not just high income) countries, the minimum school-leaving age is 18; and in the EU there is the 'expectation' that young people up to 18 are engaged in education or training (in the United Kingdom this is formally mandated). More generally, the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) defines young people as children up to the age of 18 and limits the types of employment they can do.

³ For statistical purposes, and notably to report on the progress of SDG target 8.6 to reduce youth NEET rates, the age range for NEETs is defined by the United Nations as 15–24. However, for policy purposes, for instance to take into account the longer transition into employment of young people with higher levels of education, or to adapt to national contexts and definitions, this age range can be broadened to 15–29.

In **RED**: The categories of youth who are possibly the hardest to reach through policies because of their institutional disengagement (as adolescent school dropout or youth outside the labour force).

In **YELLOW**: The categories of youth who are likely in a slightly less vulnerable situation, although analysis may still reveal obstacles on their path to sustainable, gainful and decent employment.

2.2. How are NEETs and those at risk of becoming NEETs identified?

The previous section indicated the multi-layered nature of the NEET concept. It prompts readers on the importance of understanding the multiple deprivations and barriers of those who are young NEETs or at risk of becoming NEET. Building such a profile requires access to labour market data and the capacity to undertake assessments of various target groups. Evaluations of NEETs or possible future NEETs may be conducted along the lines of possible segmentations; for instance, at public employment services to assess the unemployed youth; at schools to determine youth at risk of dropping out; through social services and their assessments of vulnerabilities within households, and more.

Practices for the profiling of young people who are NEET, or are feared to become NEET, include:

► **Vulnerability assessments.** Methodologies include:

- The UNDP's Social Exclusion Index, which assesses exclusion along three dimensions: Economic exclusion, exclusion from social services and exclusion from civic participation.⁵
- AROPE, the EU's indicator of people who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. It is the main indicator to monitor the EU 2030 target on poverty and social exclusion.⁶

► **Labour market analyses** which may include the following steps to effectively zoom in on the various needs and circumstances of the NEETs:

- Screen NEETs' individual characteristics by detailed labour market status category, such as unemployment (short-term or long-term), and inactivity and reason for inactivity (illness, disability, family responsibilities, discouragement, etc.);
- Examine the geographical distribution of young people by individual characteristics. This is to understand whether there are substantial differences between regions in terms of the reason for inactivity or individual characteristics;
- Apply a probability regression model to the microdata of a labour force survey to understand what individual characteristics are determinants of inactivity (Corbanese and Rosas 2017).⁷

► **Collection of qualitative information.** This is usually done through structured or semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, stakeholders' workshops or other participatory methods. The information collected through such methods can help complete statistical analyses.

⁵ See Peleah, Ivanov and Milcher (2012) and UNDP (2011).

⁶ See Eurostat "[Glossary: At risk of poverty of social exclusion](#)", webpage accessed 20 June 2025.

⁷ A good working example of a NEET profile build on labour force survey data is O'Higgins and Brockie (2024a).

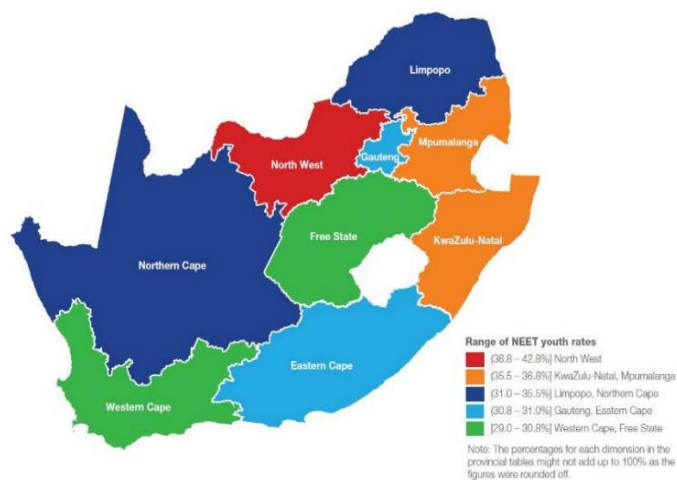
2.3. Selected country examples of NEET profiling

2.3.1. Profiling NEETs in South Africa for the Basic Package of Support

In an effort to support the design and implementation of the government's Basic Package of Support to NEETs, the South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) of the University of Cape Town was tasked to carry out a detailed profiling of NEETs.

The SALDRU team analysed data from the quarterly labour force survey and the general household survey. They used multivariate regression analysis to identify characteristics among young people who are NEET, such as age, gender, health and education levels. Figure 2 shows some resulting statistics of NEETs in South Africa by province.

► **Figure 2: Proportion of NEET aged 15–24 in South Africa by province, 2023**



Source: Mudiriza and De Lannoy (2023).

In-depth profiles published in 2023 (Mudiriza and De Lannoy 2023) and 2025 (De Lannoy 2025) showed that a significant portion of NEETs expressed a desire to work and that living in households with a higher income and with at least one employed person significantly reduced the probability of being NEET. Provinces such as the Eastern Cape and Limpopo had much higher levels of NEETs living in poverty and more discouraged youth than the Western Cape and Gauteng, while richer provinces like Gauteng had a higher proportion of NEETs with secondary education level.

2.3.2. Profiling NEETs in France from multiple data sources

To address the problem of high unemployment rates in France, the Government adopted several policies to support young people, such as the Youth Guarantee and the *Plan d'investissement dans les compétences* (Investment Plan for Skills).

To provide insights into the impact of these policies, DARES, the French Ministry of Labour's Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics [Direction de l'Animation de la Recherche, des Études et des Statistiques] produced a study on the profile of French NEETs (DARES 2020). The study used data from the 2018 national employment survey, the EUROSTAT 2018 employment survey and administrative databases from public and private employment services, chambers of commerce and the *Missions locales* (local centers assisting the social and economic re-engagement of young people).

The study addressed the diversity of NEET situations by analysing their risk of social exclusion through multiple dimensions, including employment status, training and education level,

place of residence, and social and family relations. At the time of the study in 2020, 12.9 per cent of all young people aged 16–25 in France were categorized as NEET. Young persons with lower educational attainment, those with one parent unemployed or outside of the labour force, and those with disabilities were most at risk of being NEET.

2.4. Additional resources

In addition to the sources cited in the text, these documents provide useful information:

- Valli Corbanese and Gianni Rosas, [*Guide for developing national outreach strategies for inactive young people*](#), 2017.
- ILO, [*World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025*](#), 2025.
- ILO, “[Young People not in Employment, Education or Training](#)”, Technical Brief No. 3, 2019.
- Eurofound, [*Exploring the diversity of NEETs*](#), 2016.
- OECD, [*Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit*](#), 2017.

► 3. Policy areas to reduce NEETs

3.1. Early intervention and preventive measures

What is it about?

One way of reducing NEET rates and addressing the lasting harm caused by disengagement, inactivity and unemployment, is to prevent young people from becoming NEETs in the first place. This can be achieved by adopting measures targeting youth at risk to keep them from dropping out of school or becoming unemployed for a long period. Such measures are known as early intervention or preventive measures.

Who is targeted in this policy area?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | In school adolescent vulnerable to disengagement |
| 4 | Unemployed NEET, to prevent long-term unemployment |
| 5 | Employed or in education/training but vulnerable to disengagement |

Note: The numbers and descriptions here correspond to table 1 and its depiction of youth in situations of vulnerability.

What to pay attention to

Engaging in preventive measures requires a certain level of institutional capacity and the availability of administrative data that can be analysed for the characteristics of enrolled (or not enrolled) students and their households. In countries with sufficient statistical and public administrative capacity, this information can be found in national student databases, administrative registers, and/or large-scale quantitative and qualitative empirical studies on reasons for early school leaving. The previous section (2) of the Handbook, which deals with the profiling of NEETs, also provides some examples of how administrative data can be used.

3.1.1. Possible measures in this policy area

Preventing early school-leaving

To prevent early school leaving, policies can either target the entire school system or, more specifically, the students at risk of dropping out. Interventions that affect the school system as a whole typically aim to increase the number of compulsory years of schooling and reform the organization and content of teaching and training activities. Curricula and organizational reforms are often intended to make schools more attractive to students and more relevant to the needs of the labour market.

Measures that target students at risk are mainly part of a country's social services and may include:

- early warning systems that track the inclusiveness of students at all stages of expected attendance and provide additional support when needed;
- conditional cash transfers to ensure that disadvantaged children and families do not have to choose between education and economic activity (child labour);

- second chance programmes for young people who face or have faced social or personal barriers (such as those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or have faced violence or abuse), or who have past criminal justice involvement (ex-offenders, youth coming out of juvenile detention), or who are recovering from life crises like addiction or mental health crises; and
- the provision of additional resources to schools with a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (ILO 2024).

Measures that target schools and education systems include keeping school and training curricula updated and in line with the needs of the labour market, or creating pathways between various systems of education (formal, non-formal and vocational) and training schemes (including entrepreneurship) to ensure that students facing difficulties in one system have alternatives.

Preventing unemployment and long-term unemployment

Measures to combat youth unemployment are elaborated in section 3.4. Some measures are also highlighted here since they also relate to the theme of prevention, in this case preventing youth who are currently unemployed from being long-term unemployed or vulnerable young people who are working but are at risk of job loss for whatever reason (due to a long-term health issue, for instance). The following are some preventive measures that are usually offered through public or private employment services:

- increasing access to career guidance and counselling and improving their mode of delivery (for instance, making full use of online communication tools commonly used by young people);
- strengthening work preparedness, for instance by providing training on CV writing or interviewing;
- giving access to technical and vocational training;
- improving transferable or core skills (communication, teamwork, digital and IT skills, etc.); and
- developing mechanisms for the validation of apprenticeships and other forms of non-formal and informal learning to enable individuals to leverage their expertise in their career progression.

3.1.2. Selected country examples

Identifying and tracking at-risk youth in Thailand

In 2018, Thailand set up the *Information System for Equitable Education* (iSEE), the result of collaboration among the Ministries of Education, Finance, Interior, Social Development and Human Security, Labour, and Public Health (UNICEF 2023). It covered more than 4 million underfunded and disadvantaged children and youth nationwide and collected a variety of data, including parents' income, household status and conditions, and information on children's health and educational needs, to track their personal circumstances (including prior offenses) and calculate a vulnerability score. A weakness of the system is that too few school and education authorities have the capacity to utilize it and translate data into appropriate support measures.

Preventing early leaving from education and training in Montenegro

Montenegro's approach to preventing early leaving from education and training has been guided by the *Vocational Education and Training (VET) Development Strategy 2020–2024*.⁸

The vocational education strategy focused on enhancing employability and lifelong learning by aligning vocational education and training (VET) curricula with the National Qualifications Framework, ensuring programmes were flexible, modular, and outcome-based, including professional and key competencies. Between 2017 and 2021, 65 modularized programmes were developed as part of the modernization efforts.

Those most at risk of leaving school were identified as originating from marginalized communities such as the Roma and Egyptian communities. With the assistance of a network of pedagogical and psychological services at vocational schools, a “social card” was introduced that included information about students (for instance, the number of family members, employment status of the parents, possible problems in the families, and health situation of the parents). The social cards enabled schools to monitor students throughout their education.

There are also civil society initiatives in the country that help prevent early school leaving. The non-profit association NGO Parents runs programs like *Učionica družionica*, which supports the education and social integration of children from socially disadvantaged families, ensuring equal opportunities for education and development.

Coaching for youth at risk in Austria

In Austria, the Ministry for Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, ran the youth coaching programme (*Jugendcoaching*) to keep or re-integrate young people in the education and training system. The target group included young people who were at risk of not attaining lower or upper secondary education, and young people under 19 years of age who were NEET. Youth coaching providers cooperated with schools (to identify at-risk youth) as well as with the public employment services, training providers, and organizations supporting youth with disabilities. In 2023, the programmes supported over 70,000 participants (BMAW 2024).

3.1.3. Additional resources

In addition to the sources cited in the text, these documents also provide useful information:

- UNICEF, [Early Warning Systems for Students at Risk of Dropping Out](#), 2017.
- UN ECLAC, [Preventing and Reducing School Dropout in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), 2024.

⁸ Information from this section comes from the Youth Wiki entry “[Preventing early leaving from education and training \(ELET\) – Montenegro](#)”, European Commission, website accessed 20 June 2025.

3.2. Outreach and engagement of young people most distant from the labour market or the education system

What is it about?

Some young people disengage from school before reaching the age of 15 (the lower age limit for the measurement of NEETs), as illustrated by the cases of Geoffrey and Cara in table 1. Others of NEET age (above 15 and up to 24 or 29 years, depending on the age definition used in the country) have disengaged from both school and the labour force, as illustrated by the cases of Jorge or Samia in table 1. Young people in such situations are particularly vulnerable as statistics repeatedly underline that young people with lower educational levels face negative employment and income outcomes later in their lives.

The earlier disengagement takes place and the longer it lasts, the harder it is to re-integrate the youth affected into the educational system or labour market. Because these youth represent a group of people that is the most distanced from the labour market and educational and training structures, sustained efforts will need to be taken to effectively identify and prepare them to reengage with adequate services. Outreach and engagement measures are essential initial steps to locate and prepare disconnected youth for reintegration into the educational system or the labour market.

Who is targeted in this policy area?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Out of school adolescent still within compulsory school age |
| 2 | In school adolescent vulnerable to disengagement |
| 3 | Out of school and inactive (outside of the labour force) NEET |

Note: The numbers and descriptions here correspond to table 1 and its depiction of youth in situations of vulnerability.

What to pay attention to

Identifying disengaged young people can be problematic as they are not registered with public employment services (PES) and often not served by social services or may no longer be at the households at which they were registered. Registering and keeping track of young people in this situation is a challenge for any country, and especially so in countries that have weak institutions. Therefore, it may take more time and resources to implement outreach programmes.

A common approach to identifying young people is to use the knowledge of partner organizations (see, for instance, possible partners in tables 2 and 3) that might have a better handle on where inactive young people gather and meet. This information is often comprehensively collated and shared across partners so that they have an enhanced knowledge base.

The involvement of a wide range of partners is also crucial for engagement measures. PES are a central institution when it comes to outreach and engagement of unemployed and inactive NEETs because they are by nature designed to act as an intermediary agent. But they might need to be capacitated to deal more directly with a public more isolated and vulnerable than they are used to, and with different needs that may, for instance, require the intervention of

medical services (when mental or physical health issues represent one of the main obstacles to reintegration).

In addition, establishing and working in partnership does not come naturally; it needs time and resources to build effective working relationships, and sometimes even changes in legal systems. Certain organizations, such as community-based organizations, might require additional financial support to operate beyond their currently funded work. Partnerships should be tailored to the local contexts and as far as possible, built on existing channels of cooperation or networks to maximize existing resources, expertise and experience. For identification purposes, schools and training institutions are best placed to put in place monitoring mechanisms that facilitate outreach to vulnerable young people at risk to become NEET.

3.2.1. Possible measures in these policy areas

Outreach to out of school adolescents and inactive (outside of the labour force) NEETs

Outreach is the means applied to locate vulnerable young people who have fallen through the nets of education, training and labour market participation. *Outreach measures pertain to the identification, reaching out and engagement of young people already disconnected from education, employment or training.* In addition, to the profiling measures discussed in section 2 of the Handbook, outreach measures may also involve:

- bringing measures for the integration of young people closer to them, for instance to community centers or schools, or any other environment where young people converge;
- reinstating trust in government and other youth development services;
- mapping existing programmes, partners and providers;
- establishing the characteristics of the young people based on a Social Exclusion Index framework, geographical distribution, age, gender, education level and more in order to create vulnerability profiles and determine the needs of the people concerned;
- involving various types of stakeholders such as schools, other institutions linked to education authorities, public employment services or youth agencies to track youth who are outside of the labour force (see also table 2).

► **Table 2: Means of outreach and possible partners**

Means of outreach	Possible partners
Street work (outreach work)	NGOs (such as youth centers, NGOs dealing with mental health, homelessness or social inclusion)
Creating a physical space for young people	NGOs, social services
One-stop shops	Health services, PES
Young people trained as interlocutors	Youth centers, jobs clubs
Social media	NGOs, youth organizations, youth centers

Source: ILO (2017).

Engagement

Disengaged young people represent those that are the most distant from the labour market and from educational and training structures. Usually, the longer the period of disengagement, the more uncertain, unprepared or ignorant about future options young people become. Barriers to engagement could be of a different nature, such as having full time (home) carer responsibilities. In such cases, measures should be taken to restore the confidence of the target young person, provide them with information and services that can assist with their engagement. This may for instance include activities pertaining to the social or psychological reconstruction of the targeted youth, or to reinstating their trust in government and other youth development services (De Lannoy et al. 2019).

Possible activities of engagement are listed in table 3:

► **Table 3: Examples of activities and possible partners to engage with young people**

Activities	Possible partners
Individual assessment	NGOs, social services, PES
Information	Municipalities, social services, PES
Coaching	Training providers, PES
Motivation training	Social services, PES
Health recovery	NGOs, health services
Interpersonal training including motivation, self-esteem, self-awareness	Health services (mental health), social services
Work-based/transferable skills training – communication, teamwork, specific work- based skills	Youth centers
Trial sessions of different working environments	Schools, employers
Trial sessions – non-employment focused advice and referral to specialised services	Colleges and training providers

Source: ILO (2017).

3.2.2. Selected country examples

Reaching out to young women who are outside of the labour force in rural **India**

The NEET rate for young rural women in India was just above 50 per cent in 2019. Among those, almost all (96 per cent) were outside of the labour force mainly due to personal or family-related reasons such as early pregnancy, marriage and care burdens (O'Higgins et al. 2023). A project aimed to reach out to young women aged 15–21 outside the labour force in rural districts around the Delhi area with the purpose of encouraging their labour market engagement. These young women had a low awareness of the work opportunities available to them, including in the business process outsourcing sector. When the project sent recruiters directly to the local communities to speak to young women, thousands of them were persuaded to join the labour market. Ultimately, the employment and training outcomes of young women in rural India were greatly improved, and social outcomes such as later marriages and pregnancies were also achieved.

Reaching out to school dropouts in the Netherlands

A national level agreement requires schools to provide data on school leavers to the Regional Registration and Coordination Center (RMC). The RMC also receives data from the PES on early school leavers who already have a job or are receiving social security payments. This allows the RMC to make early contact with those pupils who have no job and do not receive social security payments in order to provide them with information and guide them back to school. Since 2009, schools in the Netherlands have been required by law to register and report school absenteeism since frequent absenteeism is a risk factor for youth becoming inactive. A Digital Absence Portal was created to track absent students. In addition, since 2012, early school leaving has been monitored and evaluated by region, city and school. In theory, parents and even their children can be fined if the child does not return to school, although in practice other solutions are usually found.⁹

Engagement of hard-to-reach youth in Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, the outreach and engagement activities are delivered by various entities such as the PES, youth organizations, youth centers, childcare offices and local social offices. Dedicated Youth Guarantee teams were created within the PES, made up of social workers, psychologists and job consultants. They make information available to employers to raise awareness about the positive aspects of recruiting inactive young people and about the financial support they can receive for doing so. In parallel, the National Youth Service undertakes outreach and engagement activities for inactive young people such as workshops, events and voluntary experiences along with individual coaching. A central online platform has also been created to collate information on the Youth Guarantee and make it available at a single information point. In addition, the “Orientation Houses” (*Maison de l’Orientation*) are a one-stop-shop that bringing employment, guidance, education and career services together in one place (ILO 2017).

3.2.3. Additional resources

In addition to the sources cited in the text, these documents also provide useful information:

- European Commission, [*Effective outreach to NEETs: Experience from the ground*](#), 2018.
- Valli Corbanese and Gianni Rosas, [*Guide for developing national outreach strategies for inactive young people*](#), 2017.

3.3. Reintegration into education, training or the labour market

What is it about?

Once located and the reasons behind disengagement uncovered, the aim is to bring the inactive young person back into education, training or employment using various reintegration measures. The reintegration measures need to be tailored to many different situations; for example: the specific needs of a young drug addict unable to keep a job; a young (single) mother wishing to (re)enter the labour market despite restrictive social norms or lack

⁹ [“Eurydice: Administration and Governance at Central and/or Regional Level – Netherlands”](#), website of the European Commission, accessed 20 June 2025.

of affordable childcare (it has been found that those who are NEETs for family reasons are consistently the most entrenched, i.e. the most challenging to draw back to non-NEET status); or those of a family in need of financial assistance to ensure their adolescent can remain in school.

Who is targeted by this policy area?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Out of school youth of compulsory school age |
| 3 | Out of school and inactive (outside of the labour force) NEETs |

Note: The numbers and descriptions here correspond to table 1 and its depiction of youth in situations of vulnerability.

3.3.1. Possible measures in this policy area

Reintegration policies include all the measures aimed at removing the often-multiple obstacles in the way of young people's (re)integration into the educational system or the labour market. Measures that favour re-entry into educational pathways include tracking services to identify, support and monitor inactive young people; creating second-chance education opportunities; and the validation of informal learning (ETF 2015).

Understanding the reason(s) behind an adolescent's or young person's disengagement is key to matching them to an effective reintegration programme. The measures used to reintegrate a drug-addicted youth are different from those used to help an inactive young mother overcome her obstacles to joining the labour force, and from those that offer financial assistance to the household to keep an adolescent in school.

Supports for the transition from school to work or from inactivity to work are provided in most countries through active labour market programmes (ALMPs), which are mainly delivered by PES and conditional on registration. ALMPs include: job search assistance; counselling and placement services; labour market training and retraining; employment subsidies (hiring incentives for the private sector); self-employment and entrepreneurship support; and public works and community services. Specific training programmes can be combined with work experience opportunities, including internships, traineeships, public works and incentives for employers (ETF 2015).

More specifically, reintegration measures may include:

- establishing comprehensive entrepreneurship support systems in schools or local communities for young entrepreneurs, including specific training, mentoring and access to finance;
- promoting reconciliation between work and private and family life for women through such measures as part-time work, parental leave, telework, remote digital work and the provision of childcare and elderly care facilities;
- making labour markets more "youth/women friendly" by improving employment conditions and employment security, establishing minimum wages and upholding employment protection, anti-discrimination and anti-sexual harassment legislation; the negotiation of such conditions of work and enforcement of labour regulations should be done in full dialogue with the private sector;

- equipping PES with sufficient capacity in terms of budget and skilled staff to deal with NEETs, including developing and adapting targeting tools, recruit dedicated staff, design outreach strategies for NEETs and more (ETF 2015).

3.3.2. Selected country examples

The Built-in School Programme of the Philippines for the rehabilitation and reintegration of young drug users

In 1988, several institutions in the Philippines partnered to reintegrate young drug addicts into community life and education by introducing secondary level school programmes within rehabilitation centers (San Pedro and Ponce 1988).¹⁰ The institutions were the Dangerous Drugs Board, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports and other drug-rehabilitation centers. At the end of the first phase, 500 individuals had graduated from the programme.

The assumptions or principles underlying the preparation of the programme included the following:

- drug-dependent persons undergoing rehabilitation in the centers would benefit from an organized learning experience;
- an updated curriculum should be developed in collaboration with educators, managers, rehabilitation personnel, parents and students;
- the curriculum had to consider and address the needs and interests of not just the young beneficiaries but also those of the community.

The programme consisted of a four-year secondary curriculum and was delivered as part of the non-formal and vocational school programme. The programme covered a wide range of topics such as:

- electronics, masonry, tailoring, leathercraft and woodcraft;
- short-term seminars on personality development to facilitate reintegration;
- career guidance, orientation, motivation;
- sport and physical activities; and
- cultural and artistic activities.

Pembrokeshire Youth Guarantee Pilot Project in the United Kingdom: motivating young people back into vocational training

The Pembrokeshire Youth Guarantee Pilot Project brought together the local authority, career guidance organization, training providers, youth organizations, NGOs, PES, employers and the education sector to deliver quality and relevant training opportunities to young people aged 15–26.

For the most disengaged youth, i.e. those most discouraged or demotivated, short “taster” courses were organized for small groups by the project partners. They focused on outdoor activities such as orienteering or rock climbing to develop the participants’ interest in the local

¹⁰ The reference is old, but the programme remains relevant as a possible good practice.

area, broaden their horizons and teach them transferable skills like active listening, communication and teamwork. The partners reported that these activities nurtured motivation among young people through the discovery of new interests and through interaction with peers facing similar difficulties.

For those who were less distant from education or who had ideas about what they would like to do in the future, the project organized thematic days. For example, “motor vehicle days” would provide young people with knowledge and hands-on experience in vehicle-related professions at a go-karting track. Similar activities were undertaken for hair styling and nail art. Other youth were trained as outreach officers to better connect with young persons in difficult situations (ILO 2017).

3.3.3. Additional resources

In addition to the sources cited in the text, these documents also provide useful information:

- OECD, [Transitions Through Education and Into the Labour Market](#), 2025.
- CEDEFOP, [Helping female NEETs \(re\)integrate into education, employment or training](#), 2024.

3.4. Addressing youth unemployment

What is it about?

Unemployment happens when there is an imbalance between the number of jobs that an economy generates (labour demand) and the skills and availability of the labour force (labour supply). Causes of unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, are complex and multiple. The latest global data from the ILO show that the unemployment rates for young men and young women were comparable in 2024 (12.7 per cent and 12.4 per cent, respectively, with however vast regional differences and gender gaps) (ILO 2025). However, what these figures hide is the much lower labour force participation rates for young women than for men, indicating that many young women desiring employment are not actively seeking work, often due to systemic barriers such as limited access to education and training, societal expectations around caregiving, and discrimination in hiring practices. Decreasing unemployment entails minimizing this imbalance through a combination of demand-side (aiming to create jobs) and supply-side strategies (ensuring the labour force is equipped with the right skills for available jobs), while targeting the specific obstacles that various groups face in the labour market.

Who are targeted in this policy area?



Unemployed NEETs, to prevent long-term unemployment

Note: The numbers and descriptions here correspond to table 1 and its depiction of youth in situations of vulnerability.

Among the unemployed, some are more vulnerable than others, for instance those who have been unemployed for more than a year (long-term unemployed), persons with low educational attainment with a disability or living in situations of income deprivation.

3.4.1. Possible measures in this policy area

The 2012 Resolution “The youth employment crisis: A call for action” (ILO 2012) and the more recent Youth Employment Action Plan 2020–30 (ILO 2020) set out a framework for policy measures to guide constituents in shaping national strategies on youth employment, including reducing unemployment. The framework is structured around five policy areas: employment and economic policies to boost job creation and improve access to finance; education and training to ease the school-to-work transition and prevent skills mismatches; labour market policies to target employment of disadvantaged youth; entrepreneurship and self-employment to assist potential young entrepreneurs; and labour rights, based on international labour standards, to ensure that young people receive equal treatment and are afforded rights at work.

Table 3 below shows examples of recommended gender-sensitive interventions for each of these policy areas, each of which either directly or indirectly influences the situation of youth unemployment:

► **Table 3: Examples of gender sensitive interventions to boost youth employment, per policy area**

 Employment and economic policies to boost job creation and improve access to finance	Designing sectoral policies to be youth-responsive by identifying sectors that have the potential to create quality jobs for young men and women, including employment-intensive public investments, tax incentives for youth hires, or expanding care and green jobs
 Education and training to ease the school-to-work transition and to prevent skills mismatches	Eliminating barriers to education and training, and encouraging girls and women to specialize in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields
 Labour market policies to target employment of disadvantaged youth	Ensuring gender-responsive measures are in place, such as equal pay policies and gender-sensitive social protection, including access to affordable childcare
 Entrepreneurship and self-employment to assist potential young entrepreneurs	Integrate entrepreneurship and business formation training into skills development programmes at all levels to set young people on a path to financial viability and productive adulthood.

Source: Adapted from ILO (2024).

This mix of interventions shows that combating unemployment and creating jobs is a complex endeavour that requires integrated action on several fronts. The country examples below illustrate integrated policy interventions adopted to combat youth unemployment.

3.4.2. Selected country examples

***Jóvenes Productivos* – putting young people in employment or self-employment in Peru**

As a successor to the successful *Joven* programme, Peru implemented, through the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion (MTPE), the *Jóvenes Productivos* programme. In place since 2014, it is a national employment and entrepreneurship programme targeted at unemployed

or underemployed youth aged 15–29 years, focusing on those from low-income or vulnerable backgrounds including migrants and refugees. To improve the employability of target groups, it relies on vocational training, career guidance and job placement, entrepreneurship training, and on the certification of occupational skills.¹¹ It also focuses its interventions on regions that are poorer or have higher than average youth unemployment rates. In 2024, the ILO contributed to the programme by providing technical assistance to the MTPE to certify 650 people and train a further 150 in various occupations.¹²

Providing financial assistance to young job seekers in France

France Travail, France's PES, introduced in 2022 a time-bound and targeted allowance for young unemployed people below the age of 26 years (up to 30 years for disabled individuals). In addition to the age criteria, beneficiaries needed to be registered as unemployed with France Travail or engaged in a reintegration programme and show evidence of a monthly net income below 300 euros.

The allocation and amount of the allowance depended on the individual assessment made by the counsellor and had a cap of just over 3,000 euros over 12 months. The allocation could only be used to cover expenses related to a job search, such as transportation costs or the cost of obtaining a driving license, training costs or the purchase of professional clothing or tools. Beneficiaries were required to keep their job search active during the whole time they received the allowance.¹³

3.4.3. Additional resources

In addition to the sources cited in the text, these documents provide useful information:

- Harry Quilter-Pinner, Sarah Webster, and Henry Parkes, [*Guaranteeing the Right Start: Preventing Youth Unemployment after Covid-19*](#), Institute for Public Policy Research, 2020.
- ILO and The World Bank, [*Active Labour Market Programs Improve Employment and Earnings of Young People*](#), 2024.

¹¹ See the programme page on the website of the MTPE [here](#).

¹² ILO, [“ILO welcomes the recognition of the Ministry of Public Works \(MTPE\)'s Productive Youth Program in the Good Practices in Public Management Awards 2024”](#), 26 September 2024 [in Spanish].

¹³ See the programme page on the France Travail website [here](#) (accessed 15 July 2025).

► 4. Towards an integrated policy approach to reduce the number of young NEETs

In the previous section specific measures were discussed in isolation. Yet knowing the multidimensional nature of the obstacles hindering young people's transition to work, it is important to acknowledge that no single measures will ever be effective on its own. This section makes the case for the design and implementation of integrated sets of measures when responding to the challenge of young NEETs. The European Union's Youth Guarantee is presented as a solid example of such a system even if limited institutional and financial coordination, limited capacities for social spending and informal labour markets in many countries around the world will preclude its direct replication. For this reason, other existing examples of multidimensional interventions to address the issue of NEETs in developing and emerging economies are also presented.

4.1. The European Union's Youth Guarantee

To date, one of the most visible integrated programmes that targets NEETs is the European Commission's (EC) Youth Guarantee initiative (YG), now in its second phase.¹⁴ With funding and policy support from the EC, European Union countries that take part in the YG make a commitment to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or training within a four month period of becoming unemployed or leaving education. The ultimate aim of the YG in the EU is for countries to keep their NEET rates below 9 per cent.

The YG framework emphasizes early intervention and activation, requiring member states to establish strong partnerships among public authorities, educational institutions, training providers, businesses, and employment services to effectively reach and support young people (Escudero and López Mourelo 2017).

Since its implementation, the YG has achieved notable outcomes. By 2016, more than 14 million young people had entered YG schemes across the EU, with around 9 million of them taking up an offer of employment, education, traineeship or apprenticeship (EC 2016). The YG was likely a factor in the region's significant reduction in youth unemployment rates from a peak of 27 per cent in 2013 to 16.3 per cent in 2023.¹⁵

A review of countries that implemented YGs identified six elements that were deemed fundamental for success: early intervention, clear eligibility criteria, the provision of activation measures in a comprehensive package, appropriate institutional frameworks, sufficient

¹⁴ See: EU Council Recommendation, "[A Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee](#)", 2020/C 372/01, 30 October 2020. For various evaluations and reviews, see Escudero and López Mourelo 2017; ILO, "[The Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans: Five Lessons to Learn from the Case of North Macedonia](#)", *ILO News Blog*, 7 August 2019; and EURES (European Employment Services), "[Youth Guarantee Five Years On: Lessons Learnt](#)", News article, 1 July 2018.

¹⁵ EU Unemployment, youth total (% of total labour force ages 15-24) (national estimate) - European Union. International Labour Organization. "Labour Force Statistics database (LFS)", [ILOSTAT](#). Accessed 15 March 2025.

resources and the availability of enforcement mechanisms (EC 2018). However, in terms of challenges in the implementation of YGs, a major issue is the variability in the quality and sustainability of the opportunities offered, with some placements not leading to long-term employment. However, further reviews (e.g. Shamsuddinova 2024) warned against the mechanistic application of standardized measures that might not take full account of the diverse needs and circumstances of young people across Europe. For instance, the YG's emphasis on rapid integration into the labour market may overlook structural issues such as regional economic disparities, varying education systems, and differing levels of access to quality training and employment opportunities. Another important issue is the lack of sufficient funding and resources hindering the effectiveness of the scheme in many countries (Escudero and López Mourello 2017).

4.1.1. The YG in operation: The case of Spain

To combat youth unemployment, Spain has implemented various strategies, including the YG programme launched in line with the EU's recommendations. The initiative provides young job seekers with opportunities for employment, internships or further education within four months of becoming unemployed. Additionally, the Spanish Government has promoted vocational training and dual education models that combine classroom learning with practical work experience. Financial incentives were introduced to encourage businesses to hire young workers, such as tax reductions for companies employing individuals under 30 and grants for youth entrepreneurship.¹⁶

Still, challenges remain. Part-time work represented 58 per cent of youth employment in the country, which raises the question on whether the YG can accommodate a sufficient volume of working hours for those who want to work more. For many of them, 73 per cent, part-time employment allows them to continue their education or training courses, but other young people struggle with the lack of job security.¹⁷

4.2. Selected integrated policies similar to, or influenced by, the Youth Guarantees framework

4.2.1. Integrated youth employment programming in Thailand¹⁸

Addressing the challenge of young NEETs in Thailand was included as an objective of the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) 2023–2027. Two benchmarks linked to NEETs were included in the plan: engaging 100,000 NEETs (aged 15–24) by 2027 in training or employment and reducing the NEET rate by 0.5 per cent annually.

There are several policy measures affecting NEETs in Thailand that have been implemented over the years, and that, together, form a system of interventions in line with the Youth

¹⁶ CEDEFOP, “[Spain: Improving Youth Opportunities: The 2019 Action Plan for Youth Employment](#)”, National News, 15 November 2019.

¹⁷ Luis Paz Villa, “[La tasa de desempleo juvenil baja al 25%, la mínima desde 2008](#)”, *El País*, 28 January 2025.

¹⁸ Information from this section is from UNICEF (2023).

Guarantee framework. These can be classified into three areas: early interventions, reintegration and passive labour market programmes (such as cash transfers).

Early intervention or prevention measures include enhancing educational quality and accessibility, aligning curricula with labour market needs, and strengthening career guidance and counselling to help students make informed decisions. For example, the E-Workforce Ecosystem Platform is an innovative digital career guidance service launched by the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute in September 2022. An early warning system, the Information System for Equitable Education, has been put into place in cooperation with various ministries such as the Ministries of Education, Finance, Interior and Labour (among others) to identify and track at-risk students before they drop out. Additionally, inclusive education policies support marginalized groups, such as low-income and rural youth, through financial aid and targeted assistance.

Reintegration measures include the provision of flexible and alternative education pathways to accommodate diverse learning needs and circumstances. For instance, the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education offers non-formal education programmes that allow youth to continue their education outside the traditional school system. The Office for the Promotion of Cooperation, Innovation and Scholarships, under the Equitable Educational Fund, established Royal Vocational Training Centers that provide out-of-school youth with free vocational training and free accommodation. The project also partners with local entrepreneurs to provide job opportunities for youth who complete the training. However, the scope of this project is limited to the three southern border provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat.

The success of reintegration programmes depends on their ability to reach disengaged youth. In Thailand, local community-based organizations, such as Klong Toey D-Jung, Friends International Thailand, and the Phra Dabos Foundation, have proved to be efficient and cost-effective partners in engaging hard-to-reach youth.

Compensation measures include various scholarships and conditional cash transfer schemes, administered by the Equitable Educational Fund, such as Vocational Innovation Scholarships, Homegrown Teacher Scholarships, and more, which target economically disadvantaged children and youth across Thailand, to assist and support them in acquiring basic education and to prevent disengagement. As of 2022, over 1.3 million children and youth in Thailand had received financial support through the fund.

4.2.2. Integrated youth employment programming in North Macedonia¹⁹

Since gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of North Macedonia has faced persistently high unemployment rates: the youth unemployment rate remained above 50 per cent until 2015. By the first of quarter 2023, the rate had decreased to 25.7 per cent.

Facilitating access for young people to employment was made an important aspect of North Macedonia's national employment agenda, with a range of policy measures aimed at addressing both immediate labour market challenges and long-term structural issues. These

¹⁹ Information from this section comes from the Youth Wiki entry "[Integration of young people in the labour market – Republic of North Macedonia](#)", European Commission, website accessed 20 June 2025.

initiatives focus on enhancing employability, particularly for those with NEET status, by providing targeted support through training, counselling and financial incentives for employers.

A key pillar of these efforts has been the Youth Guarantee, designed for individuals aged 15–29. Initially piloted in 2018 in three municipalities, it was expanded nationwide in 2019 and continued to evolve. The 2023–26 implementation plan maintains a strong focus on reaching NEET youth through career counselling, professional guidance and subsidized employment opportunities. The programme is implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Economy and Labour, the Employment Service Agency, the Ministry of Education and Science and social partners such as employers’ and workers’ organizations. The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for 2023–25 allocated €55.7 million for youth employment measures, marking a significant increase compared to the €30.5 million designated for the previous implementation period (2020–22).

4.2.3 South Africa

To address its chronic problem of youth unemployment, South Africa rolled out the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) in 2021, a multi-sector programme with the stated goal of moving young people “from learning to earning”. It aimed to increase the number of earning opportunities created for young people and combined a range of priority actions to boost youth employment.²⁰

Through close partnerships with the private sector, the primary focus of the PYEI has been to coordinate, enhance and scale up existing programmes across the country and institutions. It is designed to effectively transition young people into the labour market. Since its inception, the initiative has facilitated over 1.57 million training or employment opportunities for young people through its various components: the National Pathway Management Network secured 53,000 employment opportunities, 3,800 of which were accessible through the SA Youth Platform; a further 14,500 opportunities were administered through the Employment Services of South Africa; the Youth Employment Service programme realized over 10,000 work placements; and the National Youth Development Agency and the Department of Small Business Development provided over 14,000 young entrepreneurs with financial and non-financial assistance (Ngidi 2025).

4.3. Additional resources

In addition to the sources cited in the text, these documents provide useful information:

- Niall O'Higgins and Kate Brockie, “[The Youth Guarantee, Vulnerability, and Social Exclusion Among NEETs in Southern Europe](#)”, *Politics and Governance* Vol 12, 2024.
- ILO, [Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training in Asia and the Pacific: Trends and Policy Considerations](#), 2022.

²⁰ The Presidency Republic of South Africa. “[Presidential Youth Employment Intervention](#)”, webpage accessed 20 June 2025.

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