

# Synthesis report on the policies addressing 25+ NEETs in nine EU countries

OUTPUT 4.5

***Authors (Chapters 1-4.4. and 7-8): Celia Díaz-Portugal, Juan Bautista Delgado-García & Virginia Blanco-Mazagatos (Universidad de Burgos)***

***Authors (Chapters 4.5.- 6): Ede Lázár, Blanka Bálint & Balázs Telegdy (Sapientia University)***

*Peer-reviewers: Nord University, Bifröst University, HETFA Research Institute*

**2022**

**IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT 'LOST  
MILLENNIALS – TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH  
NETWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF INITIATIVES  
TARGETING 25+ NEETS'**

*Please cite as: Díaz-Portugal, C., Delgado-García, J.B., Blanco-Mazagatos, V., Lázár, E., Bálint, B., Telegdy, B. (2022) Synthesis report on the policies addressing 25+ NEETs in the beneficiary countries. Universidad de Burgos and Sapientia University of Cluj Napoca. Lost Millennials – Transnational Research Network for the Evaluation of Initiatives Targeting 25+ NEETs. Available at <https://lostmillennials.eu>*

Project summary:

*The project ‘Lost Millennials’ focuses on a regularly neglected group of the generation of Millennials: young people aged 25-29 neither in employment or education and training (25+ NEETs). This generation started their working life shortly after the economic crisis of 2008, perceiving uncertainty and lack of security for work and well-being, they are more likely to be inactive or in precarious jobs. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the successful integration of 25+ NEETs to the labour market through increasing knowledge on the effects of employment initiatives on 25+ NEETs, building capacity of stakeholders to perform impact studies and thus improving the quality of labour market interventions. This objective will be achieved through the creation of the transnational research network which will share know-how and good practices, the evaluations of governmental and community-based initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs, as well as the engagement of stakeholders to increase the policy-relevance of project results.*

For more information, please visit our [website](#), contact us on [lm.leadpartner@hetfa.hu](mailto:lm.leadpartner@hetfa.hu) and follow our social media ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#)).

*The Lost Millennials project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment.*

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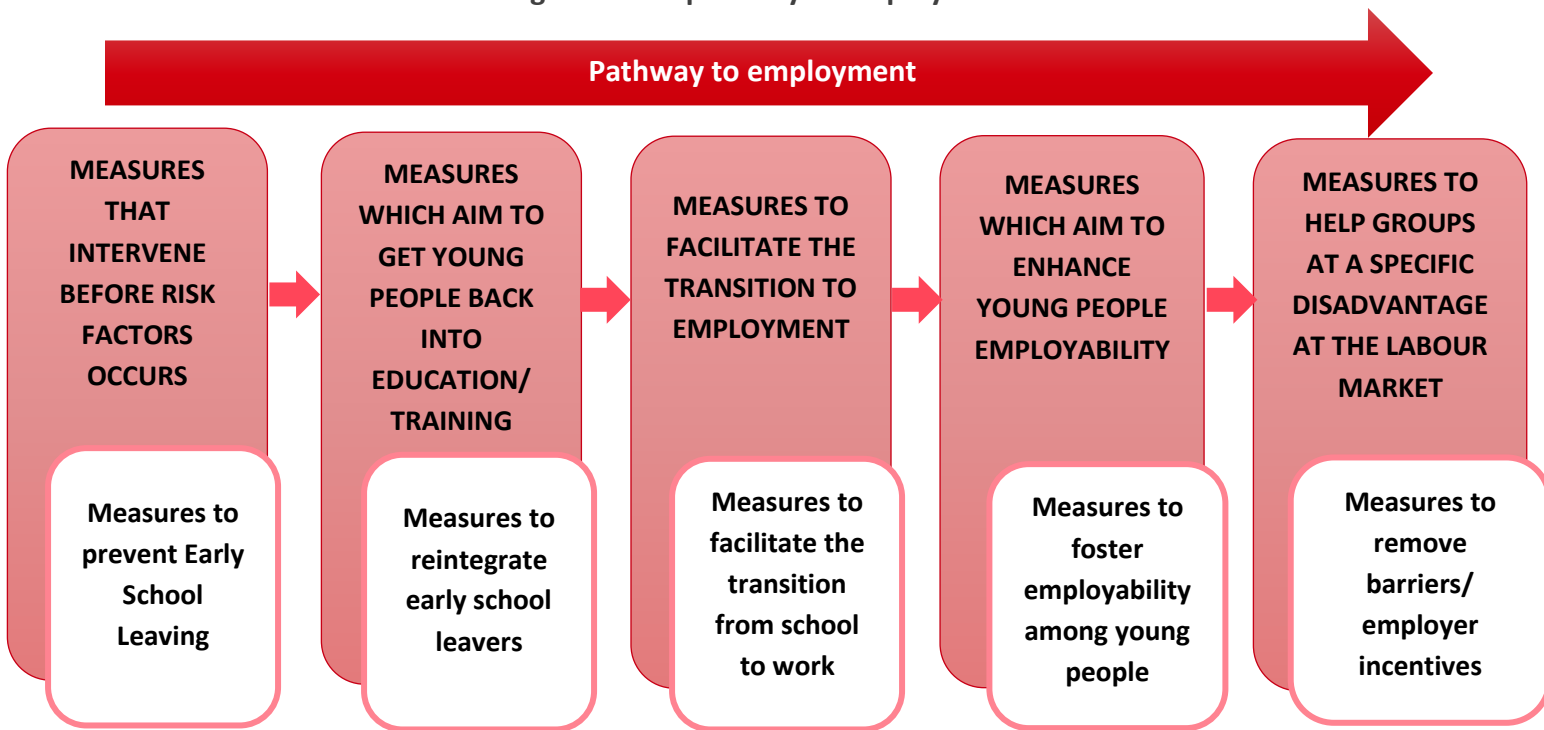
# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The NEET term was originally created to describe young people between 16 and 18 years old, to capture the situation of those who had recently abandoned compulsory education and of those who had dropped out of school years ago (early school leavers). As this term increased its scope to include those up to the age of 24, and even 29, the new definition of NEET renewed the traditional approaches focused on school dropout, and it began to include additional risk factors (e.g., being overqualified or with a degree that does not match the needs of the market, having a disability, being a young mother) (Eurofound, 2016). The NEET phenomenon now refers to a very heterogeneous group and includes not only the stages close to school dropout but also to the entire pathway to employment (Eurofound, 2016; 2012).

The *pathway to employment* by Eurofound (2012) is used to classify and analyse the measures that countries adopt when implementing their policies. This path comprises the stages/ types of measures as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The pathway to employment



Source: Eurofound, 2012

In this report, to analyse the different types of policies under review, we have employed both Eurofound reports (2016; 2012) that take into account the heterogeneity of NEETs and the different moments in which policies can intervene to face these different risk factors.

This report comprises eight chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the influence of the European-level policies on the national policies carried out by the beneficiary partners of the Lost Millennials project. It also provides a summary of the overall plans and strategies targeting NEETs and young people that set the bases to develop measures along the whole pathway to employment. This second chapter also points out the countries that establish youth employment as one of their priorities in their general employment strategies. It is followed by chapter 3, with a general idea on the model of state of the analysed countries — centralised vs. decentralised — and how this distribution of powers may impact policies on 25+ NEETs.

Chapter 4 and chapter 5 analyse the supply-side and demand-side policies of beneficiary partners, respectively. Chapter 4 refers to the policies aimed at increasing labour supply (i.e., number of workers ready, willing, and able to work) (Schweitzer, 2003). Accordingly, chapter 4.1. presents a summary of the main policies on education. The chapter starts focusing on compulsory education policies, analysed through both the policies that guarantee inclusive education and the ones that tackle early school leaving, which would correspond to the first and second stages of the pathway to employment. This chapter also analyses the country-level strategies of beneficiary partners on vocational education training and higher education.

Chapter 4.2. and chapter 4.3. focus on the stages of the pathway to employment corresponding to policies on school-to-work transition as well as on the improvement of young people employability. Thus, Chapter 4.2. analyses a) the labour market entry (e.g., upskilling or reintegration of the long-term unemployed), b) undeclared work, c) active labour market policies (ALMP) and d) passive policies or benefits. It is followed by chapter 4.3., which analyses policies on entrepreneurship and young entrepreneurship.

Chapters from 4.4. to 6 refer to the latest stage of the pathway to employment that focuses on the removal of barriers as well as on employers' incentives. The most economically and socially disadvantaged young people often face practical and logistical barriers to enter the labour market. These barriers may relate to health issues, disabilities, childcare, ethnic minorities' background, or rural areas. In chapters 4.4., 4.5. and 4.6., this report analyses beneficiary partners' policies on work-life reconciliation, health and social insurance, and other barriers respectively. As explained, chapter 5 refers to demand-side policies (i.e., policies aimed at increasing labour demand: amount of labour that employers seek to hire) (Sapsford & Tzannatos, 1993). This chapter also provides a summary of the main

incentives aiming at employers to remove these barriers. Chapter 6 summarises the main policies on orientation as a way of supporting NEETs to remove the abovementioned barriers.

Chapter 7 provides examples of good practices carried out by expertise partners based on their measures implementing policies on NEETs. This chapter analyses how these measures focus on each of the stages of the pathway to employment. The final chapter draws conclusions based on the analysis carried out along this report.

## 1.2 Methodology

The purpose of this report is to summarise beneficiary partners’ policies and expertise partners’ good practices that target, directly or indirectly, 25+ NEETs. This report has been prepared based on country reports (O4.4.)<sup>1</sup> as its main source (see Table 1):

**Table 1 Focus of the national-level policy analysis by partner institutions**

Country Report	Institution	Focus of country report analysis
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Center for the Study of Democracy	Mapping of policies
<b>Czech Republic</b>	IREAS	Mapping of policies
<b>Greece</b>	Institute for Entrepreneurial Development	Mapping of policies
<b>Hungary</b>	HETFFA Research Institute	Mapping of policies
<b>Malta</b>	Binda Consulting International	Mapping of policies
<b>Poland</b>	Evidence Institute Foundation	Mapping of policies
<b>Romania</b>	Sapientia University	Mapping of policies
<b>Slovakia</b>	Slovak Business Agency	Mapping of policies
<b>Spain</b>	University of Burgos	Mapping of policies
<b>Austria</b>	Centre for Social Innovation	Good practices
<b>Finland</b>	Demos Helsinki	Good practices
<b>Iceland</b>	Bifröst University	Good practices
<b>Norway</b>	Nord University	Good practices

Source: authors

Based on the ‘Transnational research report on the situation of 25+ NEETs’ (Koller et al., 2022) prepared under this project, our report considers the three categories distinguishing countries based on their 25+ NEETs rate (low, medium, and high; see Table 2) to analyse country policies. Considering these three categories, we have searched for patterns that may relate the 25+ NEETs rate to the number and scope

<sup>1</sup> All country reports on national-level policy-analysis are included in the References – and available at <https://lostmillennials.eu/>

of policies of the beneficiary partners. In the case of work-life reconciliation policies (see chapter 4.4.), we have taken into account the gender gap for 25+ NEETs to, again, analyse the number and scope of policies, as well as the benefits that they provide.

**Table 2 Overview of 25+ NEETs rates in partner countries, their classification and gender gap (2020)**

Country	25+ NEETs rate – classification	Exact 25+ NEETs rate in %	Gender Gap 25+ NEETs in %
Iceland	Low	8.5	2.4
Malta	Low	9.7	7.3
Norway	Low	9.7	2.2
Austria	Medium	11.9	4
Finland	Medium	11.9	5.2
Czech Republic	Medium	17.5	25.3
Poland	Medium	19.4	19.2
Hungary	Medium	19.6	17.9
Romania	High	20.2	19.2
Slovakia	High	22	21.5
Spain	High	23.7	3.3
Bulgaria	High	24.1	15.2
Greece	High	28.9	6.2
<b>EU average (EU-27)</b>	Medium	18.6	8.5

Source: Koller et al., 2022

Note: 25+ NEETs rates are categorized into low (0 – 10); medium (10,1 – 20); and high (> 20). Gender gap is calculated by subtracting the percentage of male NEETs from the percentage of female NEETs. A positive gender gap indicates more female than male NEETs.

## 2. Overall policy analysis

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At least since the early 1970s, when some directives on employment were adopted at a European level, employment protection has been a common concern for the European countries. Moreover, the structural funds reform (1988) established the European Social Fund (ESF) as the main tool to promote reforms on national labour markets (Graziano, 2012). In the same vein, the European Employment Strategy (EES) was approved in 1997 as *'a set of common objectives and targets for employment policy'* in the EU Member States. One of the main orientation principles of this EES was the 'activation' principle. According to this activation principle, Member States should modernise their social protection systems by removing disincentives to work and by creating the right conditions to make work more attractive (Commission of the European Communities, 2003). In other words, this principle implied shifting from a focus on passive policies (e.g., unemployment benefits or non-contributory benefits) to a focus on active policies (e.g., actions to improve training and adaptability to the labour market) (Ballester González, 2005; Sanz, 2016). The main efforts of the analysed countries are centred on active policies rather than on passive ones. Therefore, these countries have no strategies or plans as such to define passive labour market policies (see chapter 4.2. for further details).

After the financial crisis of 2008, the European Commission incorporated the respect to social inclusion to this focus on activation. Accordingly, it highlighted the need of *'comprehensive and coordinated services, conceived and delivered in an integrated manner'*. This new focus on social inclusion, together with the previous one on activation, lead to the promotion of the Youth Guarantee (YG). Consequently, European funding, and specifically the one coming from the ESF and aimed at funding the Youth Guarantee, has been the main driving force behind youth policies in the Member States in recent years. Indeed, **all countries** under review in this report **have emphasized a very high influence of the European-level policies on the development and implementation of their national-level policies.**

Back to 2013, Member States eligible to benefit from the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) (those whose youth unemployment rate was higher than 25%) were encouraged by the European Council to present their plans to implement the YG by the end of 2013 in order to implement these plans from 2014 (European Council, 2013). All countries that were beneficiaries of the YEI presented their YG implementation plans before March, 2014. The countries that were not eligible for the YEI were also urged to present their plans in 2014 (Escudero & Lopez Mourelo, 2017). In particular, between 2013 and 2015, Member States adopted a total of 132 reforms of their labour markets aimed at improving the situation of youth. Some countries had never targeted young people in their labour market policies before, and therefore had to create the pillars for YG implementation from scratch, while other countries did have policies and institutions to face the challenges related to youth unemployment and NEETs and just adapted their previous policy frameworks (Escudero & Lopez Mourelo, 2017).



An analysis of the European Commission (2016) categorized countries into three groups according to the number and scope of their reforms targeting youth and to the macroeconomic conditions (e.g., youth unemployment) that they had when the YG Recommendation was adopted. The first group of countries were those that already had well-established youth policies. In the case of these countries, the reforms simply followed the pace that they already observed before the implementation of the YG. Some of these countries even decreased the intensity and frequency of such reforms. Of the partners of this project, this first group would include Austria, Finland, and Malta. The second group of countries were those that already had important policies targeting young people, but in which young people faced important challenges (e.g., unemployment). This group includes partners such as Bulgaria, or Poland. The third group of countries were those whose reforms were limited despite having no prior comprehensive policies on youth and despite having a young population facing significant challenges. This is the case of partners like Czech Republic, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain (Escudero & Lopez Mourelo, 2017).

After this initial phase of implementation of the YG in which countries approved most of their reforms targeting young people and/or NEETs, youth unemployment (EU average) dropped to a record low of 14.9% by February 2020 (European Commission, 2022). Nevertheless, as it happened with the financial crisis of 2008, the COVID-19 crisis affected again young people disproportionately. To minimise the detrimental effects of the pandemic, all EU countries committed to the implementation of the **reinforced Youth Guarantee** in a Council Recommendation of October 2020. The reinforced Youth Guarantee ‘steps up the comprehensive job support available to young people across the EU, now reaching out to a **broader target group of 15- to 29-year-olds**’ (European Commission, 2022).

In addition to the commitment to the reinforced Youth Guarantee, some of the countries in the focus of this report updated their previous policies and have **new strategies on youth in effect**. That is the case for Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Bulgaria, and Greece. This recent development seems to be consistent with the urge from institutions (European Commission, 2016; Escudero & Lopez Mourelo, 2017) to encourage countries — mainly the third group of them whose reforms were limited despite their high youth unemployment rate — to further develop this type of policies targeting youth, NEETs and 25+ NEETs.

In **Hungary**, although not explicitly targeting NEETs, the policies in effect targeting young people are developed through both the ‘National Youth Strategy 2008-2023’ and the ‘Future for the New Generation framework programme’.

In **Poland**, the YG implementation plan has been updated recently with a new time frame. This updated Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2021-2027 targets people from 15 to 29 years, including NEETs.

In **Romania**, in addition to the update of the YG Implementation plan in 2021, which increased the age limit for NEETs from 25 to 29 years old, in March 2022 the Romanian Government has adopted a new Youth Strategy that replaces the 'National Strategy in Field of Youth Policy 2015-2020'.

In **Slovakia**, the YG implementation plan was not replaced after 2020, but the situation of NEETs (including those from 25 to 29 years old) is under discussion with a view to 2030. The main statement of youth policy is currently contained in the 'Strategy of the Slovak Republic for youth for the years 2021-2028'.

In **Spain**, the main strategy targeting both young people and NEETs younger than 30 years old is the 'Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021 - 2027 of decent work for young people'. The 'Action Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021' is still in effect, but it is expected to be replaced soon by a new action plan derived from the recently approved 'Youth Strategy 2030'.

In **Bulgaria**, the 'National Youth Strategy (2021 – 2030)' includes the encouragement and support of NEETs as its second main goal. Even though it does not include provisions specifically for 25+ NEETs, it is generally tailored to youth of 15- to 29-year-olds.

In **Greece**, besides the update of the YG implementation plan, with additional funding extension until 2022, the 'Youth '17-'27: Strategic Framework for the Empowerment of Youth' specifies the principles and the objectives for the design, implementation, evaluation, and continuous update of youth policies, which target people younger than 30 years old.

In the rest of the countries, there are no policies as such in effect directly relating to NEETs nor young people. However, **in their general employment strategies they include youth employment among their priorities**. That is the case of Malta and Czech Republic.

In **Malta**, the 'National Employment Policy 2021-2030' targets all population over 16 years old but prioritises youth employment and NEETs.

In **Czech Republic**, the 'Strategic Framework for Employment Policy to 2030' targets disadvantage groups in which includes young people because of their difficulties to enter the labour market.

Some of the abovementioned countries not only target young people and NEETs on specific strategies, but also, include them as a target group in their general strategies.

In **Romania**, the 'National Employment Strategy 2021-2027' also refers to young people, including NEETs, as one of its priorities in its specific objective 2 and its action line 1.

In **Bulgaria**, the ‘Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 – 2030’ incorporates NEETs-related aspects. It also refers to youth employment, but only in general terms and it does not apply specifically to 25+NEETs.

Table 3. Overview of relevant overall policies in the field of youth and employment

Country	NEETs/ Youth	Employment/ Entrepreneurship
<b>MALTA</b> Low NEET rate NEETs: 15-29 y.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Guarantee (Youth Guarantee 2.0)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Vision for Malta 2020-2025</li> <li>National Employment Policy (2021-2030)</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b> Medium NEET rate NEETs: 15-24/29 y.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Support Concept 2014 - 2020</li> <li>Employment policy strategy to 2020 (with the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (2014-2020))</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy of support for small and medium-sized enterprises in the Czech Republic for the period 2021 – 2027</li> <li>Strategic Framework for Employment Policy until 2030</li> </ul>
<b>POLAND</b> Medium NEET rate No official definition of NEETs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2021-2027</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Action Plan for Employment 2022</li> </ul>
<b>HUNGARY</b> Medium NEET rate No official definition of NEETs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2008-2023</li> <li>Future for the New Generation (FftNG) framework programme</li> <li>Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme (GINOP) - 5.2.1. Youth Guarantee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Strategy (2014-2020)</li> <li>Strategy for strengthening Hungarian micro-, small and medium enterprises 2019-2030</li> </ul>
<b>ROMANIA</b> High NEET rate NEETs: 15-24 y.o. (15-29 since 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2017-2020</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Employment Strategy 2021-2027</li> <li>National Investment and Economic Recovery Plan</li> </ul>
<b>SLOVAKIA</b> High NEET rate NEETs: 16-29 y.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Implementation Plan of the Guarantee for Young People in the Slovak Republic (2014-2020)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Employment Strategy 2020</li> </ul>
<b>SPAIN</b> High NEET rate NEETs: 15-29 y.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Guarantee Plus Plan for decent work (2021-2027)}</li> <li>Youth Strategy 2030</li> <li>Action Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spain Entrepreneurial Nation</li> <li>Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan</li> </ul>

<p><b>BULGARIA</b> High NEET rate NEETs: 15-24 y.o.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Plan for the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee (2014-2020)</li> <li>● National Youth Strategy (2021-2030)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employment Strategy (2021- 2030)</li> <li>● Plan of Action Entrepreneurship 2020 - Bulgaria (2015-2020)</li> </ul>
<p><b>GREECE</b> High NEET rate NEETs: 15-29 y.o.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth Guarantee 2013-2016</li> <li>● Youth 17-27 Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National strategic reference framework (NSRF) operational program (2012)</li> </ul>

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

Key findings

Overall policies

- ⇒ The **influence of the European Union is very high** in both the development and implementation of the national-level policies of the analysed countries
- ⇒ The commitment from the member states to improve the inclusion of young people and NEETs after the pandemic and to avoid an impact such as that of the 2008 crisis, has resulted in the creation of the **reinforced Youth Guarantee**, unifying the criteria, and setting the **age limit at 30 years of age** for NEETs who can benefit from this reinforced YG
- ⇒ Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Bulgaria, and Greece have recently approved **new strategies targeting young people targeting people up to 30 years old**

### 3. Institutional framework

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This chapter refers to the level of decentralization of the analysed countries, which may determine, in many cases, the design and scope of policies.

Most of the beneficiary partners are centralised countries (i.e., Malta, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria). In these centralised countries, the central government plays the major role in decision making and regions (in most cases defined at NUTS3 level) are only in charge of implementing policies adopted at the national level (see Table 4).

Of the analysed countries, only three have decentralised state models with different political levels: Poland, Greece, and Spain.

In terms of the scale of government, **Poland** is still 'one of the most decentralised EU countries, with strong regional and local self-governments' (European Commission, 2018, p. 785), but this process of decentralisation has started to be reversed recently (European Commission, 2018). Yet the decentralisation that remains can be still perceived and it is difficult to pinpoint one level authority responsible for the policies targeting NEETs. At a national level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy defines the priorities contained in the government's strategic and program documents (e.g., Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2021-2027) and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development monitors and reports the use of funds from both the ESF and the YEI. Lower-level government bodies have also been assigned different tasks regarding NEETs policies. Accordingly, Poviats labour offices (regional level) implement activities for the professional activation of young people and Voivodship labour offices (local level) collaborate with the regions to develop these activities (Gajderowicz et al., 2022).

In **Greece**, at a purely formal level, public administration is decentralised (article 101 of the Constitution). As an example, 'regions have the mandate for designing and implementing the Regional Strategies for Social Inclusion (PESKE) once the Ministry of Labour certifies that they are aligned with the National Strategy for Social Inclusion (ESKE)' (IED, 2022, p. 7). However, most of the public 'expenditure flows from the central government, while sub-national authorities have relatively few resources and competences' (European Commission, 2018a, p. 396). Indeed, The General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth is the main governmental body that plans, forms and issues laws that affect the national youth policy and target NEETs (EACEA, 2022).

**Spain**, in terms of both formal level and expenditure is one of the most decentralised countries in the EU 'with only 45.1% of central government expenditure' (European Commission, 2018b, p. 967). The Spanish Constitution of 1978 establishes a decentralised state model with three political-administrative levels: national, regional, and local. The main distribution of competences takes place between Autonomous Communities (regions) and the central government (Title VIII of the Spanish Constitution). Some competences belong exclusively to the central government (article 149) while some others can be taken by the Autonomous Communities (article 148) in their Statutes. The policies related to the Youth Guarantee (that targets NEETs from 16 to 29 years old) are defined at a national level, but the different Autonomous Communities (regions) have assumed some competences on youth policies in their own Statutes of Autonomy.

**Table 4. Overview of the institutional framework in the nine countries**

<b>MALTA</b>	Centralised model There is no decentralisation on the legislative level, however, services potentially targeting 25+ NEETs are provided locally
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	Centralised model General labour market policies are competence of the central government
<b>POLAND</b>	Decentralised model
<b>HUNGARY</b>	Centralised model Employment and education policies: competences of central government 19 counties plus the capital city area (NUTS-3) implementation
<b>ROMANIA</b>	Centralised model Most important competences belong to central government (only a few applied at a county level such as the County Resource and Educational Psychological Assistance Centres (CJRAE))
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	Centralised model Regions (NUTS 3 level) focused on implementing policies/strategies adopted at the national level
<b>SPAIN</b>	Decentralised model of state with 17 Autonomous Communities (regions) NEETs policies' competences are from the central government and regions only implement them. But youth, education and health are decentralised
<b>BULGARIA</b>	Centralised model Policies designed at national level, but in its implementation collaboration of 9 Regional Employment Directorates of the Employment Agency
<b>GREECE</b>	Decentralised model Strategies targeting NEETs mostly designed at national level but some regional policies in the past

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

## Institutional framework

### Key findings

- ⇒ **Most of the analysed countries are centralised, where the central government plays the major role in decision making** and regions (usually defined at NUTS3 level) are only in charge of implementing the policies adopted at the national level.
- 
- ⇒ **Only Poland and Spain have decentralised model of states** — Greece is also decentralized on paper, but the literature regards this decentralization states that it is more formal than real — with regions collaborating not only in implementation but also in decision-making.

## 4. Supply-side policies

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### 4.1 Education and qualification

#### 4.1.1 Compulsory education

This section addresses two main issues regarding compulsory education policies. First, it analyses country-level policies that guarantee inclusive education and, second, it analyses how countries tackle early school leaving.

**Inclusive education** is influenced by contextual, cultural, and historical aspects (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). To ease the comparison between countries, this report approaches inclusive education with a wider concept from Watkins (2017, p. 1): ‘inclusive education is increasingly being understood as a systemic approach to education for all learners of any age; the goal is to provide all learners with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers’.

Based on this definition, there seems to be a connection between beneficiary partners’ policies on inclusive education and their NEETs rates. On the one hand, beneficiary partners with the lowest rate of NEETs (Malta and Czech Republic) have policies that take inclusive education into account. On the other hand, countries with the highest rate of NEETs (Spain and Bulgaria, see Greece for an exception) seek to address this situation and they also have policies focused on this issue. In the countries with a medium rate of NEETs we do not identify such policies.

Additionally, to analyse the policies on inclusive education, prior literature has defined three elements (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009; Loreman et al., 2014; Ramberg & Watkins, 2020):

- Inputs of the educational system such as financial resources, teachers' education and development or curriculum.
- Education process such as school practices and climate, activities and procedures to transform inputs in outputs.
- Outputs of the educational system such as universal access, school attendance, or inclusion rates.

In **Malta**, the general policy 'National Inclusive Education Framework' defines the potential barriers of inclusion in schools (i.e., attitudinal, language and cultural, physical and environmental, training, systemic and organisational, and curricular) and sets the context for the specific policy on inclusive education 'Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools 2019'. This policy is one of the most comprehensive among those analysed in this chapter, since it focuses both on the inputs (e.g., promotion of motivation and autonomy among all educators and professionals supporting schools), on the process (e.g., creation of a sense of belonging for all learners and their families by developing a welcoming, understanding, caring, respectful and safe learning environments), and on the outputs (e.g., alternative educational routes to eliminate barriers within learning environments).

In **Czech Republic**, the 'Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+' is also very complete in terms of the three elements of inclusive policies. This Strategy establishes a framework to achieve one of its main objectives: reducing social inequalities in education. To do so, this Strategy sets strategic lines that focus on the three elements of inclusive education policies: inputs (e.g., ensuring stable funding, supporting quality teaching and teachers as its key prerequisite), process (e.g., changing education itself and increasing professional capacity, trust, and collaboration), and outputs (addressing inequalities in access).

In **Bulgaria**, the 'Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in Bulgaria (2021-2030)' establishes among its priorities the 'effective inclusion, lasting accommodation and educational integration'. This Strategic Framework, as well as prioritizing inclusive education, that could be considered as the final output, establishes other objectives regarding inputs (e.g., motivated and creative teachers) and process (e.g., united school communities and systemic work with parents).

In **Spain**, the plan for the 'Modernisation and digitalisation of the education system, including early year's education from age 0 to 3' states in its grounds that aims to promote an inclusive education with equal opportunities. However, it is mainly focused on the outputs (e.g., subsidies to private non-profit entities helping the access of students that need special educational support) rather than the process nor the inputs (only aims to improve the curricula -competences and digital skills- but not the teaching quality or motivation nor the funding).



In the rest of the analysed countries, we have not identified policies as such regarding inclusive education. They only establish provisions in laws to guarantee the right to access to education without being developed through higher-level plans or strategies.

In **Poland**, students have the right to universal access to compulsory education through the network of public primary schools. Specific measures tackle the spatial by defining the acceptable distance from a student's home to school.

In **Hungary**, the Act CXXV of 2003 on 'Equal Treatment and Promoting Equality of Chances', prescribes that all students have the right to access to high-quality public education regardless of their ethnicity, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation etc.

In **Romania**, the National Education Law grants the equal right of access for all Romanian citizens to all levels of and forms of pre-university and higher education and to lifelong learning, without any form of discrimination.

In **Slovakia**, the equal access to free education is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. To develop this right, the Act 365/2004 Coll. grants the equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination. More recently, the amendment to the School Act from 2021 has established inclusive education as one of the main principles of the educational system in Slovakia, but no further strategies nor plans have been set yet.

In **Greece**, we cannot find policies on inclusive education as such. Only in the general plan for 'School upgrading' they refer to targeted interventions to reinforce the educational work. In this vein, there are some initiatives tackle the social disparities for instance by creating Educational Priority Zones.

**Early school leaving** (ESL) is one of the main risk factors when it comes to become a NEET, as formal education is associated with better employability and reduces the chances of unemployment in the future (De Luca et al. 2020). Leaving education early can also have significant long-term consequences for society at large (Eurostat, 2022)<sup>2</sup>.

There is no pattern among the countries regarding their ESL policies and their NEETs rate. The only countries that have strategies in effect that specifically address ESL are Malta (low level of NEETs rate) and Romania (high). Hungary (medium) and Bulgaria (high) had some strategies on ESL until 2020, but they are no longer in effect. Although it has no strategy as such, Spain (high level of NEETs rate) sets

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<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the EU has recently set an EU-level target to reach a share of ESL lower than 9% by 2030 (Eurostat, 2022). Nevertheless, there are important differences between countries, with some having already met this target and some of them still needing big efforts (Eurostat, 2022). These differences in the ESL share (from 15.3 of Romania to 3.2% in Greece, Eurostat, 2022a) seem to be unrelated to the NEETs rate. For instance, Greece shows the lowest ESL rate of all beneficiary partners, yet the highest 25+ NEETs rate (Koller et al., 2022).

explicitly as the main priority goal in its policy the fight against ESL. In the same vein, Czech Republic (medium level) and Poland (medium) include partially the ESL in their general strategies on education.

In **Malta**, the ‘National holistic and inclusive approach to tackle early leaving from education and training (ELET)’ supports strategic actions towards a whole-school approach based on the three pillars (i.e., prevention, intervention, and compensation). Based on these pillars, it develops some measures to, for instance, reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, or increase student achievement mainly among children at-risk-of-poverty and low socioeconomic status.

In **Romania**, the ‘Strategy for reducing early school leaving in Romania’ aims to tackle this by targeting all early school leavers and reorienting young people and NEETs towards formal education.

In **Spain**, there is no specific strategy to tackle ESL, but the plan for the ‘Modernisation and digitalisation of the education system, including early year’s education from age 0 to 3’ establishes as one of its priority goals the reduction of the ESL. To do so, it defines some measures to reduce the high repetition rates (Spain has a high percentage of students repeating a school year) and creates an only track to get the degree on compulsory education (to avoid distinctions in terms of achievement between students coming from basic VET and other students).

In **Czech Republic**, the fight against ESL is partially part of the ‘Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+’.

In **Poland**, the strategic document ‘Lifelong Learning Perspective’, aims to cover various forms of learning (formal, non-formal, informal) at different educational levels (from ECEC to senior education) and constitutes the basis for the implementation of actions of a preventive, interventional and compensatory nature against ESL.

The rest of beneficiary partners do not have policies as such (e.g., strategies or plans) to fight ESL. This lack of policies may be due to the end of previous plans that have not been renewed or to the only existence of specific measures dispersed in laws.

In **Hungary**, the ‘Action Plan for the Fight Against Early School Leaving 2014-2020’ is not in effect anymore and now some specific measures such as the Study Halls (tanoda) program aims to provide extra-curricular afternoon lessons and tutoring mainly for disadvantaged students and non-formal learning and community-building activities for students (and their families).

In **Bulgaria**, after the expiration of the ‘Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013 – 2020)’ no new strategic document has been approved to address ESL. However, the Pre-school and School Education Act, establishes the obligation of the state to prevent ‘early school dropout’ (Art. 5(2)) and stipulates that each school’s teaching staff must adopt an early school dropout prevention programme (Art. 263(1.8)).

In **Slovakia**, despite being mentioned in the policy for the 'Youth Guarantee in Slovakia' there are no further policies to prevent ESL. The reintegration of early school leavers is only present in some programmes like the 'second-chance-education' courses that, after 2-year apprenticeship courses, offers participants a certificate of completion of primary school.

In **Greece**, the reduction of ESL was also mentioned in the national strategic reference framework (NSRF) basis of the Operational Program 'Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship & Innovation' (EPAnEK) (2014-2020). However, no further strategic policies have been developed. Only some specific measures to prevent ESL such as the creation of Intercultural Education Schools or to reintegrate early school leavers like the Second Chance School program have been carried out.

#### 4.1.2 Vocational Education Training

In addition to promoting general education (by ensuring attendance at primary and secondary education, fighting school dropouts, and reducing low qualifications), the literature on youth policies recommend countries to make an effort to smooth school to work transitions (Zimmermann et al., 2013; Biavaschi et al., 2012). To do so, they should focus on promoting vocational education training (VET) by strengthening the vocational part of school-based education systems and by matching the existing VET systems with the needs of the labour market (Zimmermann et al., 2013). Thus, countries have adopted strategies focused on promoting vocational education and improving their VET systems.

Although there is no clear pattern among beneficiary partners, most of the partners that have a high NEETs rate have strategies on VET, which seems to be consistent with the role of VET systems in the improvement of school to work transitions and youth employment and the necessary effort of countries in such improvements (Zimmermann et al., 2013; Biavaschi et al., 2012). Malta (low NEETs rate), Poland (medium), Hungary (medium), Romania (high), Spain (high), and Greece (high) are the partners that have strategies focused on VET.

In **Malta**, the 'National Vocational Education and Training Policy' aims to expose the VET sector nationally and internationally to raise awareness among young people and specially among NEETs. This policy also aims to improve employability by cooperating with stakeholders to respond to industry needs and with the private sector to design the content of courses. Moreover, the 'the MCAST (The Malta College for Art, Science and Technology) Strategic Plan 2022-2027' positions Work-Based Learning (WBL) as the heart of all professional and vocational training programmes where employers are also educators.

In **Poland**, the 'Vocational Education and Training Action Plan 2022-2025' aims to promote vocational education and to develop further professional skills, including those related to green and digital transformation.

In **Hungary**, the strategy 'VET 4.0 – Medium-term strategy for the renewal of vocational education and training and adult education, answers to the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution' emphasises

the importance of work experience and aims to improve the dual training system by further collaborating with workplaces and by increasing the number of participants in the VET system.

In **Romania**, the ‘Romanian Vocational Education and Training Strategy’ establishes as main objectives to improve the relevance of VET system for the labour market and to increase the access and participation of students, setting training programmes as strategic targets.

In **Spain**, to tackle the problem of the social stigmatization of VET and to boost the VET system, the government has approved the ‘Strategic Plan for the Vocational Training’. The aim of this Plan is to establish a single Vocational Training System (that integrates the education and employment parts of the current VET system). This new single Vocational Training System aims to reskill and upskill the workforce through the principles of digital transformation, innovation, and internationalization.

In **Greece**, the VET strategy was adopted through the Law No 4386/2016. It is also aimed at involving employers and the private sector to develop partnerships to promote apprenticeships and funding alliances. It also aims to match the provision of VET for workers with the needs of the labour market.

Other partners such as Czech Republic (medium NEETs rate) and Bulgaria (high), include the provisions regarding VET on general strategies on education that set VET as one of their priorities.

In **Czech Republic**, the ‘Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+’ also includes policies on VET. For instance, one of these policies aims to retrain people with difficulties and to reintegrate them back into the labour market.

In **Bulgaria**, the ‘Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in Bulgaria (2021-2030)’ partially refers to VET, since it establishes practical training in real working environments or accessible and quality career guidance. Furthermore, the Vocational Education and Training Act grants the dual training and creates a list of professions for VET subjects related to professions in which skilled labour shortage may be expected in the future.

In **Slovakia**, there are no policies as such regarding VET. the State Institute of Vocational Education designs some programs to raise awareness about VET. Of special note, as an instrument to match skills with labour market is the ‘National Structure of Occupations’ (NSO), defined by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, a unified information system describing standard labour market requirements for individual jobs.

### 4.1.3 Higher education

Prior literature on youth has revealed that higher education leads to greater probabilities of finding a job and having a higher salary and thus there is an inverse relationship between higher education and unemployment (Vancea & Utzet, 2018). This inverse relationship seems especially relevant among young people, since for most of them their education degree is the only way to show their skills and knowledge

to the labour market (Munsech, 2014; Vancea & Outset, 2018). In the same vein, higher educational level leads to lower likelihood of being a NEET (Vancea & Utzet, 2018).

In countries with low and medium NEETs rates, the prevalence of NEETs is generally higher among those with lower levels of education (e.g., Malta or Hungary). Lower educational attainment operates as a risk factor to become a NEET, while higher educational attainment, particularly tertiary education, can operate as a protective factor. Countries with higher NEETs rates (e.g., Spain and Greece) seem to be an exception to this inverse relationship between higher education and the likelihood of becoming a NEET (Koller et al., 2022).

This protective role of higher education regarding NEETs status seems to be related to beneficiary partners' policies on higher education. Even if we cannot identify a clear pattern, most of the partners that have strategies on higher education have a high NEETs rate. These countries are Malta (low NEETs rate), Romania (high), Spain (high), and Bulgaria (high).

In **Malta**, the 'Higher Education Strategy for Malta' aims to increase the participation in higher education, reduce gender differences in higher education, and increase employability and entrepreneurship by ensuring the relevance of education for the labour market.

In **Romania**, the 'National Strategy for Tertiary Education' encourages and supports wider participation in tertiary education, in particular for under-represented groups and aims to link higher education with the labour market and innovation/entrepreneurship.

In **Spain**, the 'Plan of Modernisation of the University System' aims to promote access to higher education through scholarships, update the organization of the university system by re-qualifying staff and guaranteeing good governance of university institutions.

In **Bulgaria**, the 'Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Bulgaria 2021 – 2030' identifies the main challenges of higher education system based on their previous achievements. To face these challenges, it sets some priorities such as improving the quality, efficacy and structure of education, internationalising the system of higher education, building an effective relationship between education, science and business.

As in policies on VET, other partners such as Czech Republic (medium NEETs rate) and Greece (high), include higher education as a priority area on their general strategies on education.

In **Czech Republic**, the 'Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+' also includes policies on higher education. For instance, it includes provisions to overcome disparities in access to education or to solve difficulties of students in finding a job according to their qualifications.

In **Greece**, the plan for ‘School upgrading’ establishes as one of its main axes, organisational and improvement adjustments in higher education. This general strategy has no further development. Only regarding VET, the Hellenic Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) operates Apprenticeships in Vocational Education Schools (EPAS), by promoting the dual education system.

The rest of beneficiary partners do not have policies as such (e.g., strategies or plans) on higher education and only present specific measures (e.g., programmes) on this matter.

In **Poland**, as an example, amendments to the Act on Higher Education abolished fees along the university studies, facilitating the access to higher education.

In **Hungary**, the Higher Education Development Programme created a system of scholarships and loans to guarantee the access of students to higher education.

In **Slovakia**, as well as the abovementioned NSO, the ‘National Structure of Qualifications’ operates as a basic tool to reflect labour market needs in the content of education, including higher education.

**Table 5. Overview of education policies in the nine countries**

Country	Compulsory Education & VET	Higher Education
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024</li> <li>● Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools - Route to Quality Inclusion (Respect for All Framework; National Inclusive Education Framework)</li> <li>● A holistic and Inclusive Approach to Tackle Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) in Malta</li> <li>● A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo</li> <li>● The Malta College for Art, Science and Technology Strategic Plan 2022-2027</li> <li>● National Vocational Education and Training Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Higher Education Strategy for Malta</li> <li>● National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2020 - 2030)</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategy of the Education Policy 2014-2020</li> <li>● Strategy of the Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategy of the Education Policy 2014-2020</li> <li>● Strategy of the Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+</li> </ul>
<b>POLAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Human Capital Development Strategy</li> <li>● Perspective of lifelong learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Human Capital Development Strategy</li> <li>● ACT on Higher Education</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vocational Education and Training Action Plan 2022-2025</li> <li>● Law on School Education</li> </ul>	
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Anti-segregation measures (Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and Promoting Equality of Chances)</li> <li>● Vocational guidance measures in Act CXC of 2011 on Public Education in Act LXXX of 2019 on Vocational Education Act CXC of 2011 on Public Education</li> <li>● Study halls programme in Act CXC of 2011 on Public Education</li> <li>● VET 4.0 – Medium-term strategy for the renewal of vocational education and training and adult education, answers to the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students' scholarships/loans on Act CCIV of 2011 on Higher Education</li> </ul>
<b>ROMANIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Education Law</li> <li>● Strategy for reducing early school leaving in Romania} Education &amp; training strategy</li> <li>● Romanian Vocational Education and Training Strategy for the period 2016-2020</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015 - 2020</li> </ul>
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amendments to the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (School Act)</li> <li>● Central financial regulation of fields of study</li> <li>● Act 61/2015 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training</li> <li>● Act 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Structure of Qualifications</li> </ul>
<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan of Modernisation and digitalisation of the education system, including from age 0 to 3 (ESL &amp; equal opportunities)</li> <li>● Strategic Plan for the Vocational Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan of Modernisation of the University System</li> </ul>
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in Bulgaria (2021-2030)</li> <li>● National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030 (Education and Qualification 1st priority)</li> <li>● Pre-school and School Education Act</li> <li>● Vocational Education and Training Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Higher Education Act</li> <li>● Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Bulgaria 2021 – 2030</li> </ul>

<p><b>GREECE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan for ‘School upgrading’ Educational Priority Zones in Law 3879/21.09.2010 about Lifelong Learning; School Life Advisor; Second Chance School, etc</li> <li>● VET Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan for ‘School upgrading’</li> </ul>
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Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

### Key findings

#### Education and qualification

- ⇒ **Only Malta, Czech Republic and Bulgaria report policies on inclusive education** and define the inputs, processes, and outputs of these inclusion processes -Spain includes inclusion as one of its pillars in its strategy for compulsory education and mentions only the outputs-.
- ⇒ **The only countries that report policies specifically addressing early school leaving (ESL) are Malta and Romania.** Spain considers fighting against ESL as one of its pillars on education, and Czech Republic and Poland include partially the fight against ESL in their general strategies on education.
- ⇒ Vocational Training is considered essential to tackle the NEETs problem and to achieve their entry into the labour market. For this reason, **most of the partners report strategies that focus specifically on VET.** Indeed, this focus is especially clear in countries with a high NEET rate.
- ⇒ **The partners that report strategies on higher education have a high NEETs rate (Malta is the only exception).** These countries are Malta, Romania, Spain, and Bulgaria.

## 4.2 Labour market policies

Concerning labour market policies, most of the beneficiary partners have general employment strategies (as explained in chapter 2, overall policies) in which they set priority areas and develop programs based on these priorities. Among these countries, we cannot identify a clear pattern that relates their policies on labour market with their NEETs rate. This is the case of Malta (low NEETs rate), Czech Republic (medium), Romania (high), Slovakia (high), and Bulgaria (high).



As an exception, some of the analysed countries do not have general employment strategies in place, but we cannot discern a pattern regarding their NEETs rate either. First, Hungary (medium NEETs rate), whose Employment Strategy is no longer in effect and develops employment initiatives as well as actions through their main operational programmes, GINOP. Second, Spain (high) that, instead of a general employment strategy, has plans or strategies in almost all types of labour market policies (e.g., long-term unemployment, undeclared work, and active labour market policies). Third, Poland (medium) and Greece (high) in which we cannot identify higher-level strategies on employment either and who base their actions on specific measures dispersed in laws.

This chapter addresses different issues regarding labour market policies. First, it analyses the labour market entry (i.e., upskilling, apprenticeship and traineeships, and reintegration of long-term unemployed people in the labour market). Second, it examines how partners tackle undeclared work. Third, it analyses active labour market policies (ALMP) and their main elements and fourth, it analyses passive policies or benefits.

**Labour market entry** reflects two perspectives: workers' perspective and their preferences for suitable, interesting and well-paid jobs, and employers' perspective and their preferences for workers with suitable and diligent qualifications and their availability for certain types of work (Gangl, 2002). Labour market and education policies and, based on this regulation, 'the degree to which the education system sends clear signals to employers about the (occupation-specific) skills of job seekers' are factors that determine employment opportunities of labour market entrants (Wolbers, 2007). This is consistent with the interest of countries to ease labour market entry through their policies. As explained, some beneficiary partners include their policies on labour market entry in general strategies on education and labour market.

In **Malta**, the 'National Employment Policy 2021-2030' contains several recommendations related to workplace learning to acquire further skills, lifelong learning and upskilling, and apprenticeship and traineeship programmes (recommendations, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 21). This Policy only refers to long-term unemployment briefly by recommending mentorship programmes for vulnerable and long-term unemployed people (recommendation 13). Furthermore, the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2020-2030 establishes in its 7<sup>th</sup> strategic goal the need for update of skills. 'The Economic Vision for Malta 2020-2025' also aims to promote apprenticeships (measure number 37).

In **Czech Republic**, the 'Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+' aims to facilitate school-to-work transitions of graduates. Additionally, the 'Strategic Framework for Employment Policy to 2030' has youth traineeships as one of its instruments. There are no specific provisions for long-term unemployment nor targeting youth either.

In **Romania**, the ‘National Employment Strategy 2021-2027’ ensures that young people, including NEETs, acquire transversal skills, with a focus on basic digital skills, identification of career paths, communication, and teamwork skills. There are no specific strategies, but laws for apprenticeship (law 279 of 2005), internships (law 176 of 2018), and traineeships (law 335 of 2013). Similarly, law 76/2002 establishes measures to stimulating the unemployed to find a job, including long-term unemployed people.

In **Slovakia**, the ‘National Employment Strategy of the Slovak Republic’ establishes as one of its main objectives the support of the supply side of the labour market through skills for better employment. More specifically, the Act 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services regulates the programme ‘Allowance for graduate practice’ that combines counselling, vocational guidance, training and/or job placement and support young people in their transition from school to employment. In connection with the employment strategy, Slovakia adopted the ‘Action Plan for strengthening the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market in the Slovak Republic’.

In **Bulgaria**, the ‘Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 – 2030’ encourages NEETs to participate actively in the labour market by promoting workshops, internships, and apprenticeships. This strategy also provides skills to NEETs to foster their employability. Nevertheless, no specific policies towards long-term unemployment have been identified.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, country reports show that some partners do not develop their policies on labour market entry from a general employment strategy.

In **Hungary**, the ‘Employment Strategy 2014-2020’ is no longer in effect and hardly addressed labour market policies targeting youth. Labour market trainings are regulated in the Employment Act and are usually part of wider-scale operational programmes such as the GINOP (EDIOP) 5.1.1 (Road to Work), GINOP 5.2.1 (Youth Guarantee), GINOP 6.1.1 (Trainings for jobseekers with a low level of educational attainment and public workers), GINOP 5.3.10 (Preventing and tackling mass lay-offs) or GINOP 5.3.13 (Trainings, scholarships and re-employment support of parents raising young children). Turning to long-term unemployment, the most common measures for long-term unemployed people are public works schemes.

In **Spain**, there is no wider-scale employment strategy as such, but there are some specific plans focused on every issue concerning labour market policies. Regarding labour market entry, the plan ‘New public policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labour market’ establishes some programs focused on dual paths in both VET and university education. Unlike other countries, Spain has a specific plan to tackle long-term unemployment: the ‘Get-Yourself-Back-to-Work Plan’. This plan is aimed at the whole population and targets the long-term (from 12 to 23 months in unemployment) and the very long-term

unemployed (24 months and more in unemployment). It specifically refers to the groups identified as particularly vulnerable (e.g., women, people over 45 years old, early-school leavers, immigrants), but it does not include young people among these groups.

In **Greece**, there is no higher-level strategy either, but the Operational Program ‘Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship & Innovation (EPAnEK)’ promotes some vocational training-related initiatives aimed at, for instance, strengthening vocational training and apprenticeship systems through dual training or introducing systematic transition-to-work programs. In this vein, Greece has adopted further initiatives regarding labour market entry such as Youth Employment Action Teams or Youth Information Centres.

In **Poland**, labour offices arrange programmes to equip young people with the skills and competencies for their first job or foster their employability. Labour offices also offer training and training vouchers with grants (e.g., OPEN initiative). Regarding long-term unemployment, the initiative POWER targets long-term unemployed NEETs between 18 and 29 years old.

When prior literature has analysed the characteristics of NEETs, it has traditionally focused on their educational level, family background, etc (Vancea & Utzet, 2018; De Luca et al. 2020). However, recent studies reveal that NEETs who do not want to declare their economic status may often be involved in undeclared work (including new types of jobs under digital economy or platform work; Eurofound, 2018; Danila & Dumitru, 2018).

**Undeclared work** (Danila & Dumitru, 2018), therefore, may be a relevant factor to study the risk factors of being a NEET and to establish policies on this matter. Furthermore, shadow economy is harmful to the ones involved, as it does not include contributions to social security benefits, precludes workers’ labour rights and puts them at risk of exploitation). Improving the processes of inspection, regulation, and institutionalization of undeclared work can represent an opportunity to shift informal workers into formal work and have a more realistic perspective of youth unemployment and NEETs rate.

The growing relevance of undeclared work regarding youth unemployment (and NEETs rate) (Danila & Dumitru, 2018) seems to be unrelated to the design of employment policies. We cannot appreciate either a pattern among countries that relates their NEETs rate to the scope and existence of policies on undeclared work. Only two beneficiary partners have strategies to inspect and regulate this undeclared work: Hungary (medium NEETs rate) and Spain (high). Other partners such as Romania (high NEETs rate) and Bulgaria (high) include measures against undeclared work within their general employment strategies, but most of the analysed countries just present once-off actions.

In **Hungary**, a new plan to improve labour inspection was established from a new and stricter regulation (Act CXXXV of 2020 on Employment Services, Subsidies and Labour Inspection). This policy aims to

provide the legal base and power for labour inspection to combat undeclared work and to enhance the transparency of the economy.

**Table 6 Labour market policies in the areas of school to work transitions, upskilling, long-term unemployment and undeclared work**

Country	School to work transitions/Upskilling/ Long-term Unemployment	Undeclared Work
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Employment Policy 2021-2030</li> <li>● Economic Vision for Malta 2020-2025</li> <li>● My Journey - Equitable Quality Education for All Strategy</li> <li>● National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2020-2030</li> </ul> Traineeship Scheme managed by Jobsplus	No policies. Investigation from the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER)
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategy of the Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+</li> <li>● Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan</li> <li>● Strategic Framework for Employment Policy to 2030</li> </ul>	No policies, just measures: Initiative Youth Employment Support Initiative for the NUTS 2 North-West Region in Ústí nad Labem Region /Karlovy Vary Region
<b>POLAND</b>	No policies, just programs spread in different laws/acts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knowledge Education Development Operational Program for 2014-2020</li> <li>● POWER initiative</li> </ul>	No policies, just programs spread in different laws/acts
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GINOP (EDIOP) 5.1.1 (Road to Work), GINOP 5.2.1 (Youth Guarantee), GINOP 6.1.1 (Trainings for jobseekers with a low level of educational attainment and public workers) or GINOP 5.3.10 (Preventing and tackling mass lay-offs) (?)</li> <li>#● Employment ACT</li> <li>#● Public works schemes for LTU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Labour Inspection under the Act CXXXV of 2020 on Employment Services, Subsidies and Labour Inspection and the 115/2021. (III. 10.) Government Decree on Labour Inspection.</li> </ul>
<b>ROMANIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Employment Strategy 2021-2027</li> <li>● Laws for apprenticeship (law 279 of 2005), internships (law 176 of 2018), and traineeships (law 335 of 2013)</li> <li>● Law No 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and employment stimulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Employment Strategy 2021-2027</li> </ul>

<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Act 61/2015 Coll. on vocational education and training</li> <li>● Act 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services</li> <li>● Action Plan for strengthening the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market in the Slovak Republic</li> </ul>	-
<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● YG Plus Plan for decent work (axis Labour Opportunities)</li> <li>● Action Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021 (axis labour Opp.)</li> <li>● Get-Yourself-Back-to-Work Plan (Plan Reincorpora-T) for LTU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic Plan of the Labour and Social Security Inspectorate 2021-2023</li> </ul>
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 – 2030</li> <li>● Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2013-2020 (Updated)</li> <li>● Employment Promotion Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 – 2030</li> </ul>
<b>GREECE</b>	<p>No policies on school to work transition, upskilling or LTU. Just spread initiatives (e.g., Youth Employment Action Teams, Youth Information Centres, Promotion of employment through the provision of services of public interest)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● YG (2013-2016)</li> </ul>	-

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

In **Spain**, the ‘Strategic Plan of the Labour and Social Security Inspectorate 2021-2023’ aims to transform undeclared work into formal employment by intensifying inspection campaigns. These campaigns will be more intense in sectors and geographical areas where there is greater fraud. Regarding fraud in hiring, this plan aims to correct the fraud in hiring and the excessive temporary hiring focused on very short-term contracts, which mainly affects young people.

In **Romania**, the ‘National Employment Strategy’, aims to transform undeclared work into declared work through their priority action no. 4. Additionally, the ‘National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for 2022-2027’ sets as an essential objective the reduction of employment in the informal

sector, focusing on reducing the number of self-employed and unpaid family workers in agriculture and those migrating for unofficial work.

In **Bulgaria**, the ‘Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 – 2030’ sets out a particular activity (Activity 10) to ‘tackle undeclared work and improve social security’. This activity comprises of measures that are aimed at, for instance, creating new contract forms to regulate remote work, fostering legalization of agricultural work or increasing sanctions for a repetitive ‘non-declaration of work’.

In **Malta**, no policy tackling the problem of undeclared work has been identified and the only information about this issue comes from investigations ad hoc from the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER).

In **Czech Republic**, there are just some regional projects with inefficient registration at the Labour Office or a higher share of socially excluded population groups. One example is the project ‘Youth Employment Support Initiative for the NUTS 2 North-West Region in Ústí nad Labem Region /Karlovy Vary Region’.

In **Poland**, the State Labour Office controls informal work and the legality of employment and runs campaigns to tackle this problem such as ‘I work legally’.

In **Slovakia**, no policy tackling the problem of undeclared work has been identified, but some violations of the Labour Code (e.g., repeated renewal of a fixed-term, or temporary contracts, employment under so-called performance agreements -on a part-time basis- and work without a contract of employment - undeclared work-) are monitored by the Labour Inspectorate.

In **Greece**, a decade ago a thematic National Social Dialogue Committee was established to fight against undeclared work, but no further progress in these policies has been identified.

The concept of **Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs)** has a long tradition, but it has just received a name recently. It refers to public interventions for the unemployed that are based on elements such as job brokerage, specific training and retraining, and wage subsidy schemes (De Koning, 2001). ALMPs also influence the share of NEETs (Aina et al., 2021). Even if these policies do not necessarily lower the chances of becoming a NEET, they are aimed at helping unemployed people to find a job and should reduce the period that youth are NEET (Van Vugt & Levels, 2022).

Despite the potential impact of ALMPs on the share of NEETs, we cannot find either a clear pattern that links beneficiary partners’ ALMPs and their NEETs rate. Of these countries, only two have higher-level plans to define ALMPs’: Hungary (medium NEETs rate), Romania (high), and Spain (high).

In **Hungary**, ALMPs are usually based on large-scale programmes such as the GINOP 5.1.1 (Road to Work), the GINOP 5.2.1 (Youth Guarantee) or the GINOP 5.1.5 (Supporting Labour Market Service

Delivery by Non-governmental Organisations). The main elements of the ALMPs within these programmes are labour market trainings, wage subsidies, start-up subsidies, and labour market services (e.g., job placement, mentoring and counselling).

In **Romania**, the ‘National Employment Strategy 2021-2027’, establishes as its first specific objective the promotion of new approaches in the provision of active measures to improve access to the labour market for all job seekers. Accordingly, the main elements of ALMPs are job mediation, vocational training, and subsidies to promote the employment among people with disabilities, people before reaching retirement age, graduates, young people at risk of social marginalization.

In **Spain**, ‘the Spanish Active Employment Support Strategy 2021-2024’ creates a common framework for the Public Employment Services to design and manage ALMPs. This strategy establishes some priorities to design ALMPs: a) making ALMPs more effective by improving evaluation and cooperation between public administrations, b) strengthening prospecting and orientation mechanisms, c) promoting a higher investment in ALMPs (so the percentage of the GDP converges with the European average), and d) supporting the creation of permanent contracts and enterprises among the millennial generation. The last priority of this strategy is very important to our analysis, as it is the only time that the Spanish government explicitly sets as a priority the design of ALMPs for millennials. This priority targets millennials and specifically those who, due mainly to 2008 crisis, have a weaker link to the labour market than that which would correspond to their age. The elements of ALMPs in this fourth priority area are related to promoting permanent contracts or the converting temporary contracts into permanent ones, designing specific training actions for employment that give priority to this generational cohort, and promoting self-employment.

Other countries like Malta (low NEETs rate) or Czech Republic (medium) include the main elements of ALMPs in their Employment Acts.

In **Malta**, ALMPs are regulated under the ‘Employment and Training Services Act’ and include elements such as career guidance, job search assistance, short courses or traineeships.

In **Czech Republic**, ALMPs are defined in the Employment Act<sup>11</sup> which defines instruments like retraining, community service (employment opportunities limited in time and intended primarily for long-term jobseekers), socially useful jobs or employment allowances.

The rest of partners have no strategies or plans as such to define and address ALMPs although they have specific interventions related to ALMPs’ elements dispersed among different laws.

In **Poland**, ALMPs’ elements include career counselling, improvement or professional qualifications, socially useful work, public work, and funds for starting a business activity. Some of these interventions

are aimed exclusively at people up to 30 years of age such as training, internship or employment voucher (that guarantee the payment of some costs and are aimed to the employee (to acquire new skills) or to the employer).

In **Slovakia**, in contrast with most of the countries, the expenditure of ALMPS is mainly focused on incentives aimed at employers. Some other elements of ALMPS such as supported employment or training or start-up incentives are also present but in a lower proportion than in other countries.

In **Bulgaria**, the main elements of the ALMPS in Bulgaria are measures focused on subsidized activities related to internships, apprenticeships, employment (e.g., first job in a person's specialty). ALMPS, though, do not only target youth, but also chronically unemployed people, jobseekers above 50 years of age, people with long-term disability, unemployed mothers, and single parents.

In **Greece**, there are no plans or strategies that design the framework for ALMPS either, but the main elements of ALMPS are job-search assistance, counselling, employment subsidies, aid for self-employment and training and are carried out through numerous programs established in the National Reform Programme.

As well as the abovementioned number and scope of the policies defining ALMPS, it is important to note that policies on ALMPS also differ regarding their elements and their targeted groups. Most of beneficiary partners have common elements in their ALMPS (e.g., training, employment subsidies or orientation, all of them being aimed at employees. Others like Poland include other elements in ALMPS (e.g., employment voucher) aimed at employers. Furthermore, in the case of Slovakia, the funding structure of ALMPS focuses on elements aimed at employers (and the incentives that they receive for hiring) rather than focusing on the traditional elements of ALMPS aimed at employees. These policies on ALMPS also differ among partners regarding their recipients. Some countries define the elements of ALMPS specifically targeting young people (i.e., Poland, Hungary, Romania, Spain, and Bulgaria), among them Spain, do explicitly refer to ALMPS targeting millennials.

The main efforts of the analysed countries are centred on ALMPS rather than on passive ones. This focus on active policies is consistent with the European Employment Strategy (EES) and its 'activation' principle (Graziano, 2011). This principle of activation was meant to change the focus of labour market policies from passive policies (e.g., unemployment benefits) to active policies (e.g., actions to improve training and adaptability to the labour market). EU countries, following the EES and its common objectives for employment policy, adopted this principle and defined their policies based on activation.



Consequently, beneficiary partners have no strategies or plans as such to define **passive labour market policies**. Indeed, some partners have specific acts and laws that regulate benefits for the unemployed, but some other partners just regulate unemployment and social benefits in different laws and acts regulated by their Labour Offices, Public Employment Services.

In **Malta**, the Social Security Act regulates provisions for unemployed persons such as the unemployment benefit, special unemployment benefit or subsidiary unemployment assistance.

In **Czech Republic**, unemployment support is regulated in the provisions of Sections 39 to 57 of the Employment Act (No 435/2004 Coll.)

In **Hungary**, the Act IV of 1991 on Promoting Employment and Providing for the Unemployed in the case of jobseekers' benefit and Act III of 1993 on Social Administration and Social Benefits regulate the major benefit types for registered jobseekers.

In **Romania**, passive labour market policies are regulated by Law 76 of 2002. These policies aim to protect people by including them in the unemployment insurance system of which the unemployment benefit is the main element.

In **Bulgaria**, the Bulgarian Social Assistance Act provides social benefits for the unemployed as well as for people in socially vulnerable positions. Additionally, the Bulgarian Personal Assistance Act sets the legal framework of the financial support for people engaged in caregiving and providing for dependent family members.

In **Spain**, the benefits in effect (both contributory and non-contributory) are spread among different laws and acts (e.g., General Act of Social Security, Royal Decree 625/1985 on unemployment protection, Royal Decree 1369/2006 which regulates the agenda of income for unemployed with special economic needs and difficulties in finding employment). The National Public Employment Service (SEPE) which is in charge of their management creates every year some guidelines to agglutinate them and inform users.

In **Poland**, unemployment benefits are managed by regional Labour Offices, but these benefits are provided only if there are no available internships, training, intervention or public jobs.

In **Slovakia**, unemployment benefits are managed by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family that specifies the requisites to access to them (e.g., certain amount of time contributing).

In **Greece**, the Labour Employment Office regulates the unemployment benefits as well as the special allowances (e.g., Special Seasonal Allowance).

Table 7 Active and passive labour market policies

Country	ALMP	Passive policies
<b>MALTA</b>	● Employment and Training Services Act	● Social Security Act
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	● Employment Act (No 435/2004 Coll.)	● Provisions of Sections 39 to 57 of the Employment Act
<b>POLAND</b>	● Programs spread in different laws/acts	● Measures spread in laws/acts
<b>HUNGARY</b>	● GINOP (EDIOP) 5.1.1 (Road to Work), the GINOP 5.2.1 (Youth Guarantee) or the GINOP 5.1.5 (Supporting Labour Market Service Delivery by Non-governmental Organisations)	● Act IV of 1991 on Promoting Employment and Providing for the Unemployed in the case of jobseekers' benefit and Act III of 1993 on Social Administration and Social Benefits.
<b>ROMANIA</b>	● National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 Elements of ALMPs spread in different laws/acts	● Law 76 of 2002
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	● Measures spread in laws/acts	● Measures spread in laws/acts such as Act 461/2003 Coll on Social Insurance
<b>SPAIN</b>	● Spanish Active Employment Support Strategy 2021-2024	● Measures spread in laws/acts
<b>BULGARIA</b>	● Elements of ALMPs spread in different laws/acts	● Contributory benefits: No policies, just measures spread in laws/acts ● Bulgarian Social Assistance Act ● Bulgarian Personal Assistance Act
<b>GREECE</b>	● Numerous programs in the National Reforms Program	● Unemployment benefits

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

### Key findings

Labour Market Policies

⇒ **Malta, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria report general employment strategies** which include youth employment among its priorities (Malta and Czech Republic) or target young people and NEETs specifically in these general strategies (Romania and Bulgaria). The general strategies of these countries include their policies on labour market entry (e.g., school to work transitions or long-term

unemployment policies) and in the case of Romania and Bulgaria they also include their policies to tackle undeclared work.

- ⇒ Hungary, whose Employment Strategy is no longer in effect, develops employment measures through their main operational programmes (e.g., GINOP). Spain instead of a general employment strategy, reports lower-level plans or strategies regarding the different types of labour market policies in which refers to young people. Both **Hungary and Spain present specific policies regarding undeclared work and ALMPs** -Spain also reports a strategy on long-term unemployment.
- ⇒ **Poland and Greece do not report higher-level strategies on employment and base their actions on specific measures** dispersed in laws.

### 4.3 Entrepreneurship

Regarding entrepreneurship policies, there is no clear pattern among the countries. As it is shown in the next table, there is no relationship between the NEET rate (or the youth unemployment rate) and the number and scope of policies. None of the countries has a specific strategy for youth entrepreneurship nor venture creation for NEETs/25+ NEETs. Half of the analysed countries, Malta (low NEET rate), Hungary (medium), Romania (high), Spain (high), and Greece (high) have youth policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship. This finding is consistent with Duell (2018) that highlights that in the YG context, start-up incentives or entrepreneurial training programs are more infrequent than wage subsidies or upskilling programs. She also states that ‘compliance with the YG Recommendation in relation to this issue<sup>31</sup> [entrepreneurship] is reported as full or partial in half (54 %) of Member States, indicating that more could be done in this area’ (European Commission, 2016a in Duell, 2018, p.21).

In **Malta**, the strategy Economic Vision for Malta 2020-2025 promotes the competitive make-up of business as one of its priorities for the whole population, but the ‘National Youth Policy 2021-2030’ sets the promotion of young entrepreneurship as its 5<sup>th</sup> strategic goal.

In **Hungary**, the Future for the New Generation (FftNG) framework sets as one of its objectives to promote entrepreneurship among youth. The Strategy for strengthening Hungarian micro-, small, and medium enterprises 2019-2030 also sets as one its goals the micro- and small enterprises (registered for at most 3 years) by young and female entrepreneurs. Moreover, start-up subsidies are granted by the GINOP (EDIOP) 5.1.1 (Road to Work), the GINOP 5.2.1 (Youth Guarantee) or the GINOP 5.2.7 (Promoting entrepreneurship among youth) programmes.

In **Romania**, besides the National Competitiveness Strategy 2014 - 2020 and the National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2014 – 2020 that have as specific objective entrepreneurship and green job creation, the National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 addresses young people entrepreneurship in its Objective 1, (Direction of Actions 2). Furthermore, the priority objective 5 of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan focus on the support for entrepreneurship programs.

In **Spain**, the general strategy Spain Entrepreneurial Nation only refers briefly to young entrepreneurship when highlights the importance of STEM disciplines and start-ups with young teams. Nevertheless, the Action Plan for Youth Employment has a specific axis (number 5) about entrepreneurship and the Spanish Youth Strategy 2030 also has a priority axis (number 2) about autonomy, decent employment, and young entrepreneurship. Further, the Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021-2027 for decent work that targets NEETs (from 15 to 29 years old) has a specific axis (number 5) about entrepreneurship.

In **Greece**, as well as the national strategic reference framework (NSRF) operational program (2012) that aims to boost entrepreneurship also among people between 15 and 35 years old, the Youth 17-27 strategy, has a specific priority goal (number 3) that focus on ‘Decent Work and Development of Youth Entrepreneurship’.

Instead of approaching entrepreneurship through policies targeting young people, some countries support it through policies that promote the creation of SMEs. That is the case of Czech Republic (medium NEET rate) and Bulgaria (high). There is no pattern either regarding this type of strategies and the NEET rate.

In **Czech Republic**, the Strategy of support for small and medium-sized enterprises in the Czech Republic for the period 2021 – 2027 targets the whole population and it has no measure aimed at youth nor NEETs. Additionally, CzechInvest, a state-funded organization subordinated to the Ministry of Industry and Trade, has the 2019+ strategy to supporting entrepreneurship.

In **Bulgaria**, the National Strategy for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 2021-2027 aims to promote youth entrepreneurship by increasing the share of the youth entrepreneurial activity. The Plan of Action ‘Entrepreneurship 2020 – Bulgaria’ targets young people but it is aimed at introducing entrepreneurship into education and training rather than promoting new venture creation among youth.

The rest of the countries that are analysed in this report do not have policies as such to boost entrepreneurship and they present some measures and programs disseminated in different laws: Poland (medium NEET rate) and Slovakia (high). Again, as it happens with the higher-level policies, these countries do not follow any specific pattern that relates the rate of NEETs to the measures on entrepreneurship.

In **Poland**, the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development offers some programs supporting entrepreneurship such as the ‘First business – support in the beginning’ program that as well as general population targets youth.

In **Slovakia**, the support for entrepreneurship among the disadvantaged (e.g., registered jobseekers) is implemented under the Act 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (§49 measure Allowance for self-employment).

**Table 8 Entrepreneurship policies**

Country	
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic Vision for Malta 2020-2025</li> <li>● National Youth Policy</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategy to support SMEs in the Czech Republic 2021-2027</li> <li>● 2019+ strategy of CzechInvest</li> </ul>
<b>POLAND</b>	No policies, just programs by Polish Agency for Enterprise Development
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Future for the New Generation (FftNG) framework</li> <li>● Strategy for strengthening Hungarian micro-, small and medium enterprises 2019-2030</li> <li>● GINOP (EDIOP) 5.1.1 (Road to Work), the GINOP 5.2.1 (Youth Guarantee) or the GINOP 5.2.7 (Promoting entrepreneurship among youth)</li> </ul>
<b>ROMANIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan</li> <li>● National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 (Objective 1, direction of actions 2)</li> <li>● National Investment and Economic Recovery Plan</li> <li>● National Competitiveness Strategy 2014 - 2020</li> <li>● National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2014 – 2020</li> <li>● National Strategy for Green Jobs 2018-2025</li> </ul>
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	No policies, just measures in laws/acts such as Act 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (§49 measure Allowance for self-employment)
<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● YG Plus Plan for decent work (axis Entrepreneurship)</li> <li>● Action Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021 (axis Entrepreneurship)</li> <li>● Get-Yourself-Back-to-Work Plan (Plan Reincorpora-T) for LTU (axis Entrepreneurship)</li> <li>● Spain Entrepreneurial Nation</li> </ul>
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Strategy for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 2021-2027</li> <li>● Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014 - 2020</li> <li>● Digital Transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2030</li> <li>● Employment promotion Act</li> </ul>
<b>GREECE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National strategic reference framework (NSRF) operational program (2012)</li> <li>● Youth 17-27 Strategy</li> </ul>

	No policies as such, on youth entrepreneurship, but programs such as Youth Entrepreneurship Support Structures Operational Programme Education and Lifelong Learning
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Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

<b>Key findings</b>	
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	⇒ None of the countries reports a specific strategy for youth entrepreneurship nor venture creation for NEETs/25+ NEETs. However, Malta, Hungary, Romania, Spain, and Greece report youth policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship.

#### 4.4 Work-life reconciliation policies

Prior literature studying NEETs shows that being a woman increases the likelihood of being a NEET (Dicks et al., 2021), but the gender gap among 25+ NEETs varies significantly among countries (Carcillo et al., 2015; Erdoğan et al., 2017). In this project, countries’ gender gaps vary from low gender gaps among 25+ NEETs (e.g., Spain or Greece) to high ones (e.g., Czech Republic, Slovakia or Romania; see Table 2).

This gender gap has been mainly explained with traditional gender roles in which childcare and household maintenance are primarily a domain for women (Erdoğan et al., 2017). The workload related to family responsibilities prevents women from entering the labour market and exposes them to a higher risk of remaining out of the labour market for longer periods (Contini et al., 2019). Consequently, motherhood and family responsibilities not only operate as a risk factor to become a NEET, but also increase the persistency of the NEET state (Contini et al., 2019). Moreover, prior literature has related this gender gap on the NEETs rate to difficulties in work-life reconciliation and insufficient social services (Carcillo et al., 2015; Bardak et al. 2015; Erdoğan et al., 2017).

Although policies on gender and work-life reconciliation have been shown to be relevant to reduce the abovementioned gender gap, only three of the beneficiary countries have strategies specifically designed to tackle this problem: Czech Republic, Romania, and Spain. Interestingly, these three countries are the ones among beneficiary partners with one of the highest and the lowest gender gaps for 25+ NEETs respectively (see Table 2).

In **Czech Republic**, the ‘Gender Equality Strategy for 2021 – 2030’, addresses gender inequalities related to the job market, risk of poverty, access to decision-making positions, sexual and domestic violence, and stereotypical gender roles in home and family care. Indeed, the first of the priority areas of this

strategy refers to 'work and care'. Furthermore, the 'Concept of Family Policy' in its second objective aims to guarantee appropriate socio-economic conditions for families by improving financial security, reconciliation with work and childcare services. As well as this specific policies on gender and families, Czech Republic also incorporates the gender perspective in general policies such as the 'Employment policy strategy to 2020' that aims to promote gender equality in the labour market as one of its priorities. Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) takes place in kindergarten from 3 to 6 years old (there is an option from the age of two, and the last year of pre-school education before starting school is compulsory). Maternity and parental leave are regulated under the Labour Code (262/2006 Coll.) (i.e., maternity leave of 28 weeks; parental leave's duration depends on the parents' decision, max. of 4 years).

In **Romania**, the 'National strategy on the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2021-2027' not only aims to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market, particularly in terms of employment rates, earnings and fields of employment, but also it aims to prevent and combat gender stereotyping in the education system and to eliminate factors leading to gender imbalances in specific areas of study, including STEM subjects.

In **Spain**, the 'Strategic Plan for Effective Equality of Women and Men 2022-2025' in its second axis 'economy and fair distribution of wealth' refers to employment and reconciliation policies. This axis aims to promote women employment in the most strategic sectors (STEM), and to promote the activity of those companies that show an effective commitment to this gender perspective. It also aims to arrange a system of public and universal childcare, face the precariousness of the care industry, and encourage the co-responsibility of men and the labour market in the workload of childcare. As well as this specific policy on gender, Spain sets gender as one of its priorities in all its general policies on youth and employment. For instance, the 'Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021-2027' in its axis 4 refers to the Equal Opportunities in Access to Employment and the gender equality principle. In the same vein, the plan for the long-term unemployed 'Get-Yourself-Back-to-Work Plan' also refers in its axis 4 to the Equal Opportunities in Access to Employment.

Regarding ECEC, the abovementioned plan for the 'Modernisation and digitalisation of the education system, including early year's education from age 0 to 3' aims to improve work-life reconciliation for parents by promoting an 'accessible, affordable, inclusive, and high-quality first cycle of ECEC' for children from 0 to 3 years old. Despite not being compulsory, the second cycle of ECEC (for children aged 3–5 years) is free of charge and takes place in the same schools than primary education. Maternity and paternity leaves are regulated under the 'Royal Decree-Law 6/2019, on urgent measures to guarantee equal treatment and opportunities between women and men in employment and occupation' (i.e., 16 weeks of leave that can be enjoyed for both parents: 6 mandatory weeks after childbirth and 10 additional weeks that can be used during the next 12 months).

Other partners include gender equality within their general strategies and acts on employment. That is the case of Malta and Hungary, where we cannot find a pattern that relates their NEETs rate nor their gender gap (see Table 2) to the scope of their policies.

In **Malta**, the ‘National Employment Policy 2021-2030’, refers to the gender-based challenges that remain in the country and in its 14th Recommendation, encourages participation of women in the labour market through high quality ECEC. To do so, this country establishes some initiatives like the ‘Free Childcare Scheme’ (i.e., free childcare for children aged 3 months to 3 years if both parents are employed or in education). The ‘Employment and Industrial Relations Act’ regulates protection against discrimination and gender equality (part IV). Parental leaves and maternity rights are regulated under the Parental Leave Entitlement Regulations (2003) and the Protection of Maternity (Employment) Regulations (2004) respectively (i.e., maternity leave of 14 weeks; unpaid parental leave additional period of 4 months).

In **Hungary**, despite not explicitly aiming to address this problem, the ‘Job Protection Action Plan’ may operate as a tool for alleviating the gender gap as protects mothers of young children returning from parental leave. ECEC takes place in kindergarten and is compulsory for children older than 3 years old. The ‘Act LXXXIII of 1997 on the Benefits of Compulsory Health Insurance’ regulates the contributory maternity leave (i.e., 24 weeks of infant-care allowance and additional child-care benefit until child’s 2nd birthday). Fathers are entitled to 5 days of paid leave. The ‘Act LXXXIV of 1998 on Assistance for Families’ regulates non-contributory maternity leave as well as the benefit for those who have consumed the previous child-care benefit until the child’s 3rd birthday.

The rest of the analysed countries do not focus on gender equality as one of their priorities when they define their policies (i.e., strategies or plans). Instead, they focus on the perspective of children and family to set some provisions on acts and laws that regulate ECEC and parental leaves. Among these countries we cannot find a pattern either that relates gender gap for 25+ NEETs their NEETs rate nor their gender gap (see Table 2) to the number or scope of their policies.

In **Poland**, there are no policies to improve work-life reconciliation apart from those related to ECEC (kindergarten for children between 3 and 7 years old, and one year of compulsory kindergarten education) and to maternity rights at the workplace (breastfeeding breaks) and parental leaves (maternity leave of 14 weeks and additional parental leave of 6 weeks that can be used for the mother or the father).

In **Slovakia**, the amendment to the ‘Act 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Training (so called School Act)’ that is in effect since 2021 made pre-primary education compulsory for all children from the age of 5. The ‘Act 481/2003 Coll. on social insurance and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts’



regulates the maternity leave (34 weeks) and the payment of its allowance. The ‘Act 571/2009 Coll. on parental allowance and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts’ regulates the payment of the allowance for the parental leave that can last until child’s 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

In **Bulgaria**, family policies focus on the perspective of children rather than women nor measures for reconciliation. As an example, the ‘Order on the Activity of Nurseries and Children’s Kitchens and their Health Requirements’ regulates the activity of nursery schools for children between 3 months and 3 years old. In this vein, the ‘National Strategy for the Child’ regulates childcare and care services in the context of alternative family care and institutionalized care. Concerning maternity and paternity leaves, they are contributory and are regulated under the Labour Code, that establishes a 15-day paid leave after the birth for the father and a period of maximum 410 days for the mother (if the child has turned 6 months, the father can use this period of maternity leave instead of the mother).

In **Greece**, the first steps on reconciliation policies came together with the modernization of the Family Law (1983). More recent provisions in this field are those included in Law 3528/2007, Law 3655/2008, and Law 3896/2010, on maternity leave, parental leave, special maternity protection, and the prohibition of the discrimination from employers after maternity leave (all these benefits are mainly aimed at mothers and are contributory. Maternity leave lasts 119 days of which 63 take place after childbirth).

**Table 9 Work-life reconciliation policies**

Country	
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maternity and paternity leave regulations (maternity leave 14 weeks; unpaid parental leave more 4 months)</li> <li>● Free Childcare Scheme 3 months-3 y.o.</li> <li>● National Employment Policy</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Education Kindergarten 3-6 (there is an option from the age of two, the last year of pre-school education before starting school is compulsory)</li> <li>● Maternity leave: 28 weeks. Parental leave until 4 years of child (the duration of parental leave depends on the parents' decision, max. 4 years)</li> <li>● Family Policy Concept policy</li> <li>● Gender Equality Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>POLAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parental leave: 20 weeks (14 compulsory mother/ 6 mother or father)</li> <li>● Kindergarten 3-7 y.o.; 1 year of kindergarten is compulsory</li> </ul>
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Act LXXXIII of 1997 on the Benefits of Compulsory Health Insurance and Act LXXXIV of 1998 on Assistance for Families (maternity leave: 24 weeks; paternity leave: 5 days)</li> <li>● Kindergarten compulsory from 3 y.o.</li> <li>● Labour Code (part-time and work arrangements)</li> </ul>

<b>ROMANIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National strategy on the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2021-2027</li> <li>● Law 210/1999 Parental leave: 8 weeks and monthly allowance until child has 2 years</li> <li>● Law 1/2011 Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) 3-6 y.o. in schools; 0-3 kindergarten</li> <li>● National Employment Strategy (Gender gap in employment)</li> </ul>
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maternity leave: 34 weeks. Parental leave until 3 years of child</li> <li>● School Act (compulsory education since 5 y.o.)</li> </ul>
<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Royal Decree-Law 6/2019 extending paternity leave (both women and men 16 weeks)</li> <li>● Strategic Plan for Effective Equality of Women and Men 2022-2025</li> <li>● Plan of Modernisation of education system: free ECEC 0-3 y.o.</li> </ul>
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Labour Code (maternity leave: 410 days; paternity leave: 15 days)</li> <li>● Pre-School and School Education Act (compulsory preschool children 4 years)</li> <li>● National Strategy for the Child (2008-2018)</li> <li>● Child Protection Act</li> </ul>
<b>GREECE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law 3528/2007, Law 3655/2008 and Law 3896/2010, on maternity leave, parental leave, special maternity protection and the prohibition of the discriminatory behaviour of employers towards parents</li> <li>● Compulsory ECEC from 4 y.o.</li> </ul>

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

**Key findings**

**Work-life reconciliation policies**

- ⇒ Although policies on gender and work-life reconciliation have been shown to be relevant to reduce the gender gap, including the gender gap among 25+ NEETs, **only Czech Republic, Romania, and Spain have strategies specifically designed to tackle this gender gap**
- ⇒ Malta, Hungary, and Romania include gender equality within their general strategies and acts on employment, but do not have specific policies

## 4.5 Health/ Social Insurance policies

After reading the country reports it can be stated that the participating countries have a multitude of policies which tackle health care and social insurance. The aim of these policies is to define the role of

the state and the citizens in the case of health care and social insurance policies to establish the rights and the obligations of the citizens and the state towards each other.

In **Bulgaria**, the health care and social security policies are implemented by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour or by the Council of Ministers if the policy tackles an issue in which both ministries are involved, like the case of the Code for Social Security, which is also the main policy which regulates health and work-related issues. The Law on Health Insurance determines the size of the contributions and the specifies the social groups which are excluded from this payment. The Law on the Integration of People with Disabilities also regulates the training and re-entrance of disabled people to the labour market.

In **Czech Republic**, the ‘Strategic Framework for the Development of Health Care’ is the leading framework of the policies until 2030. The Ministry of Health is the main governing body in this field, but as in the previous case, there is an inter-ministerial overlap, due to the complexity of these policies. Beside the regulation of the health care policies the Czech framework also has a new component: supporting science and research in this field. There are some dedicated national plans for disabled people and for people with different psychological disorders.

In **Greece**, the main law which regulates social security in the country is the Law 4387/2016. On the other hand, the Greek Organization for the Employment of the Workforce (so not a particular ministry) is responsible for planning and implementing the country level policies regarding inclusion in the labour market. The health care system in Greece is two-sided: there is the public system, which is provided by the National Healthcare Services, and which can be used by the Greek citizens, if they pay their contribution to the Social Insurance Institute. The possibility of private health care is also given.

In **Hungary**, there is also a universal healthcare system, which is funded by taxpayers through the National Health Insurance Fund. The main governing and coordinating body is the Ministry of Human Capacities. The access of health care system is free for the contributors, and for some specified socio-economic groups (e.g., students, pensioners who receive social protection benefit, etc.) The main governing body in Hungary in this field is the Central government. The main fund is public (the Health Insurance Fund), and it is covered by the central state budget. Disability and rehabilitation are also regulated by law. The main applicant of this policy is the Secretary of State for Social Affairs within Ministry of Human Capacities. The disadvantaged jobseekers consist of a specific target group in Hungarian policy as there are two specific Government Decrees (Employment Promotion and Jobseekers’ Allowances and 100/2021) which deal with these groups of people.

In **Malta**, the healthcare system is also a tax-funded system, where the National Health Service provides the universal coverage. The main coordinating body of the public sector is the Ministry of Health although there also exists a private healthcare sector. All residents are covered by the social security

legislation. The Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing is responsible for the social inclusion policies regarding the disabled persons.

**In Poland,** health insurance covers almost all social groups, as it is compulsory for almost every citizen. The system is funded through the National Health Fund and can be classified as an insurance-based system, which collects the necessary amount of money by taxing the individual income of the Polish citizens. The governing body organizing the health care system in Poland is the Ministry of Health. It must be mentioned that private sources play a major role in the Polish healthcare system. The social security is compulsory for all employees. The State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons covers the contributions towards the state, which should be paid by the employee, of a disabled employee if they are hired.

**In Romania,** the health care system is also two-fold. The basis of the system is a public one, which can be accessed (except for emergencies) by those who are directly assured or co-assured. The main authority is the Ministry of Health, which through the National Health Insurance House finances part of the expenses of the system (which is complemented by state and local budget but also out-of-pocket payments). As in the case of the healthcare system, the social security system is partly financed by the contribution of the employees, where it is mandatory to pay both – the health and the social security – insurances.

**In Slovakia,** the health care system is also publicly funded and paying the contribution to the system is compulsory for employees and employers. For those who are not employed, the state covers the contributions. There are three health insurance companies in the country, where the larger one is state owned, and one is private. The system is coordinated by the Ministry of Health. The relevant ministry for coordinating the efforts to introduce the people living with disabilities back to the labour market is the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

**In Spain,** the access to the health care system is universal and free of additional charge for citizens. The system is coordinated by the National Health System and is financed through general taxation, where the expenses are included in the budget of every region. The overall governing body is the national Ministry of Health, Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare. Social insurance is also compulsory in Spain as every employee and employer must contribute to the system.

As a conclusion, it can be stated that depending on the policy applied in the analysed countries, two groups can be created: the first one consists of those in which universal healthcare is really meant and applied by the current policies; and in the second group are those countries where 'universal' is connected to some kind of conditions—like being insured, co-insured, state insured, or the healthcare is free only when the citizen contributes with some amount of out-of-pocket fees and taxes (sometimes near the original contribution). Regarding the situation of NEETs and 25+ NEETS, none of the analysed countries explicitly reflect on this socio-economic category, but it seems like they are usually the most

vulnerable category that is being left out of the public health care system. As 25+ NEETS do not appear explicitly in these policies, laws, etc., we tried to find in the healthcare and social insurance systems the references to those other social or economic groups that are mentioned by them, and we know that the group of NEETS25+ is overrepresented in them. This way, we tried to identify those policies from which indirectly can benefit the analysed target group, so we analysed if the relevant policies have dedicated sections for the unemployed or for people living with (semi)permanent illnesses that have led to the partial or total loss of their work capacity. We also followed if there are special policies for people living with disabilities and those who suffer from some form of psychological health, with a special emphasis on the discouraged. Also, a special focus was placed on the policies dedicated to socially marginalised people. Besides the above-mentioned problems, we were looking for the possibilities of rehabilitation, which are granted by law in the analysed states, and we were also focusing on the family care programmes within the healthcare and social insurance policies. A comprehensive result is presented in the Table 10.

**Table 10: Healthcare and social security policies by countries between 2007 and 2020 dealing with social groups where the NEETs and 25+ NEETs are overrepresented**

Possible NEET25+ categories	Unemployment (and benefits)	Disability (and benefits)	Rehabilitation	Illness (and benefits)	Family care	Discouraged/psychological health issues	Socially marginalized	Dedicated policy for NEETs	Dedicated policy for 25+ NEETs
<b>BG</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no
<b>CZ</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no
<b>GR</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
<b>HU</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
<b>MT</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no
<b>PL</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
<b>RO</b>	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
<b>SK</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
<b>ES</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no

Source: Country reports

As it can be seen, our target group (25+ NEETs) does not have any specific health care or social insurance policies in the nations under analysis.

However, there are regulations that indirectly allude to a group of people where 25+ NEETs are overrepresented. As a result, the emphasis on some socioeconomic factors can be interpreted as paying particular attention to the potential 25+ NEETs group.

So, even though the term ‘universal’ is used to describe the health care system in each of the countries under study, there are almost always some restrictions on access to medical facilities, and these restrictions are solely related to the payment of contributions to the health care system (Spain is the exception). Consequently, we can learn that except for Spain, despite the ‘universality’, none of the analysed countries can cover 100% of the country’s citizens’ needs for the national health care system.

**Table 11. Health care and social insurance policies in the analysed countries between 2007 and 2020**

Country	
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Code for Social Security</li> <li>● Law on Health Insurance</li> <li>● Law on Health</li> <li>● Law on the Integration of People with Disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Strategic Framework for the Development of Health Care</li> <li>● National Plan for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2025</li> <li>● National Action Plan for Mental Health 2020 – 2030</li> <li>● National Strategy for the Prevention and Harm Reduction of Addictive Behaviours (2019 – 2027)</li> <li>● National Action Plan for Suicide Prevention 2020 – 2030</li> </ul>
<b>GREECE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law 4387/2016 (Third Memorandum of Understanding)</li> <li>● Unified Social Security Institution and Unified Auxiliary Social Security and Lump Sum Benefits Fund</li> <li>● Law N.648/86</li> <li>● Law N.2643/1998</li> </ul>
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Disability and rehabilitation benefit – Rehabilitation quota</li> <li>● Government Decrees (Employment Promotion and Jobseekers’ Allowances and 100/2021)</li> <li>● Job Protection Action Plan</li> </ul>
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Health Act</li> <li>● Social Security Act</li> <li>● Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act</li> <li>● Freedom to Live – Malta’s 2021-2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons</li> <li>● Inclusive Employment Services Unit</li> </ul>
<b>POLAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dz.U.2021 pos.1082</li> </ul>
<b>ROMANIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law of Social Assistance no. 292/2011</li> <li>● Law No 95/2006, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, No 652 of 28 August 2015</li> <li>● Order No 1549/2018</li> </ul>

<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Act 5/2004 Coll. On employment services (§ 56-§60 -measures specifically designed for people with disabilities)</li> <li>● Act 5/2004 Coll. On employment services (§ 63-§65 – compulsory employment of people with disabilities)</li> </ul>
<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● General Health Law (Law 14/1986)</li> <li>● Spanish Disability Strategy 2022-2030</li> <li>● Action Plan of the Spanish Disability Strategy 2014-2020</li> <li>● Mental Health Strategy of the National Health System 2022-2026</li> </ul>

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

**Key findings**

**Health and Social Insurance policies**

- ⇒ Although all the analysed country declares that they have a universal Health Care System, it seems that only **Czech Republic, Malta and Spain** are the countries which make no difference in the accessibility of the health care services regardless to the level of contribution of a citizen
- ⇒ In all other countries, only those citizens can be beneficiary of the health care and social security system, who are assured or co-assured, and even though, the out-of-pocket expenses are still present

## 4.6 Other supply-side policies

The term NEET may describe various groups of young people with different characteristics and needs. Eurofound (2016) divides the NEET category into seven subgroups to better understand the group’s heterogeneity. The largest of these sub-groups are the unemployed, people seeking work who can start working within two weeks. Depending on the length of unemployment, this can be further divided into short and long-term unemployed. They are the economically active group. In addition, we distinguish between the economically inactive who are not seeking work and/or are not available for work. Further sub-groups are determined by examining the underlying reasons. On the one hand, the ‘unavailable’ group is those unavailable due to family responsibilities or unavailable due to illness or disability. Then there are the discouraged workers who believe they have no suitable job opportunities. These are primarily vulnerable young people at high risk of social exclusion. In addition, a distinction is made between the category of re-entrants who are soon to start working or studying again. The last sub-group, the group of other inactive people, is very heterogeneous, where young people in privileged situations and hard-to-reach, vulnerable young people can be found (Eurofound, 2016). Policies targeting the

economically active NEET group have been analysed in the previous sections, so those that affect economically inactive groups will be examined below. Because of the heterogeneity of the NEETs group, it is not sufficient to focus only on labour market policies when tackling the problem. However, combining policies and holistic approaches is needed (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021). These policies are targeting unavailable NEETs due to illness or disability (Bulgaria, Romania), discouraged NEETs (Malta, Bulgaria), ethnic minorities (Romania, Spain, Bulgaria), and employment and educational capacities in rural areas (Poland, Romania, Spain, Bulgaria).

A group of Inactive young people are disengaged from the labour market due to barriers, such as illness or disability, that hinder them from actively seeking work. Policies show that integrating people with disabilities into the labour market requires not only the support of workers with disabilities, positive attitudes of employers and the creation of an appropriate working environment (Bulgaria) but also a change in the mentality of the wider society (Romania).

In **Bulgaria**, the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2021-2030 envisages support measures for people with disabilities. These support measures include incentives and benefits, development and financing of programmes and projects for fostering initiatives suited for people with disabilities. According to the People with Disabilities Act, there is a quota for employing people with disabilities by employers with personnel of more than 50 people. State support is foreseen for equipment of workplaces according to the needs of people with disabilities, as well as specific training for qualification or prequalification for their professional development.

In **Romania**, under law no 448 of 2006, persons with disabilities have the right to be given every opportunity to choose and pursue their profession, trade or occupation, acquire and maintain employment, and advance professionally. To realise these rights, public authorities must promote an open, inclusive and accessible work environment for people with disabilities, as well as the concept that the person with a disability in employment represents an added value for society and, in particular, for the community to which they belong. In addition, its obligations include implementing programmes and projects to increase employment in cooperation with or in partnership with public or private entities; initiating and supporting campaigns to raise awareness among employers of the skills of people with disabilities; initiating specific programmes to encourage increased labour market participation of groups at increased risk of social exclusion (Law No 448 of 6 December 2006).

In **Spain**, the Spanish Disability Strategy 2022-2030 has been recently approved. The Action Plan of the Spanish Disability Strategy 2014-2020 is in effect until a new action plan develops the new strategy. The action plan in effect has an axis based on employment and aims to promote the right to work of persons with disabilities and guarantee the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. It also presents an axis based on education that aims to reduce the school dropout rate and increase the number of people with disabilities with a higher education degree.



The discouraged NEETs group are primarily vulnerable young people at high risk of social exclusion who have stopped looking for work (Eurofound, 2016). Policies for them may focus on skills development. This can be digital skills development (Bulgaria) or other skills improvement to help young people find and keep a job (Malta).

In **Malta**, the Work Exposure Scheme at Jobsplus is intended to facilitate the transition into employment by providing jobseekers with initial hands-on training to help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competencies required to find and retain jobs (for people aged 20-64 years).

In **Bulgaria**, as part of its digital transformation pillar, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan introduced a reform that will create a national platform for digital skills and training for people over 16 years old. This platform and the related digital clubs will be free and accessible, while underprivileged people will have preferential access to these services.

Another barrier to labour market entry or re-entry can be ethnicity. Some ethnic minority groups, most notably the Roma community, are at greater risk of unemployment and inactivity (Eurofound, 2017). Policies for ethnic minorities relate to the inclusion of the Roma minority, which they seek to achieve through empowerment and recognition of Roma culture (Spain) or integration into the labour market or education system (Romania, Bulgaria).

In **Romania**, there is a specific policy aiming at integrating the Roma population: Romanian Government Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for 2015-2020.

In **Spain**, the National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-2030 established the reduction of the NEET rate among the Roma population as one of its objectives. As well as this objective that is the only one targeting NEETs, this strategy sets as priorities the improvement of essential services (education, employment, healthcare, housing services) and the non-discrimination through the empowerment of Roma women and the promotion and recognition of Roma culture.

In **Bulgaria**, according to the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2021-2030, the integration of ethnic minorities into the labour market coincides with the strategy for integrating underqualified people or people with a low level of education. Integrational services in education, employment, social security, health insurance, and housing will continue. They will be developed further based on individual approaches considering the particular needs of people at the local level. Additionally, practices such as the so-called 'Roma-mediators', mentoring specialised in job carving for unprivileged people, family counselling, training at the workplace, and acquiring basic and digital skills will continue.

The incidence of NEET status tends to be higher in rural areas, and rural youth face several challenges, such as family dependency, limited employment opportunities or transportation constraints (Petrescu et al., 2022).

The following policies aim to increase employment in rural areas (except in Spain). This is achieved through the provision of various types of support, such as a Settlement voucher (Poland), developing and expanding access to the labour market (Romania), improving transport and digital connectivity, and promoting local economic potential (Bulgaria). In Spain, addressing demographic problems in rural areas is considered necessary.

In **Poland**, those who have problems finding employment in rural areas can apply for a Settlement voucher at the labour office. To receive support, one must find an employment location at least 80 km from the current residence. The amount of support cannot exceed the two average monthly salaries. To be eligible for participation, one must stay employed for at least six months.

In **Romania**, the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for 2022-2027 draws attention to the disparity between urban and rural areas. It proposes developing and expanding access to the labour market for the rural population (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity of Romania, 2022).

In **Spain**, the National Strategy against the Demographic Challenge addresses youth challenges in rural areas by supporting the implementation of socio-economic development projects for young people. It also aims to develop projects that guarantee women’s effective freedom of residence in the territory. It also seeks to favour the upbringing of children to bring the birth rate closer to the average of the European Union.

In **Bulgaria**, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan tackles in each component the development and the integration of the population from rural areas. The development of the rural areas is postulated under the pillar ‘Connected Bulgaria’, which aims to improve transport and digital connectivity and foster local economic potential. Mobility is a priority concern to even out the unequal unemployment levels across the country.

In conclusion, we can say that NEETs are a heterogeneous group, meaning that the labour market policy instruments typically used to combat youth unemployment are insufficient. Consequently, policymakers seeking appropriate strategies to address the problems of NEET youth need to consider this group’s diversity and the heterogeneous conditions that lead to NEET status (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021).

Other supply-	Key findings
⇒	Being in the NEET group can be the result of several barriers (i.e., illness or disability, discouragement, ethnicity or migration status, rural areas). However, few countries have policies that consider this group’s diversity.

side  
policies

Only Bulgaria takes into account all these barriers and Romania and Spain tackle some of these problems (e.g., disability or ethnicity).

⇒ Even though the Roma community are at greater risk of unemployment and inactivity, we found policies tackle in only two countries (i.e., Romania and Spain).

## 5. Demand-side policies

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Despite the European Employment Strategy (EES) which dates back to 1997 and now is a part of the Europe 2020 growth strategy and whose implementation is well processed by the European Semester, the national strategies of the analysed countries show a versatile image.

Recently the European Semester has been adapted to take into account the creation Recovery and Resilience Facility, and it has generated a wide range of national recovery strategies and policies regarding the demand-side of labour market.

We analyse these policies by the following structure: incentives, social security and taxes.

### 5.1 Incentives

Each analysed country has implanted some kind of incentive regulation to promote the employment of young or disadvantaged persons. Regarding the focus on NEETs, it does exist differences: in some countries the category of NEETs is namely mentioned (Romania, Poland, Greece), or totally covered by the range of beneficiaries (Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Malta, Spain). Only in the Czech Republic – with a low level of NEETs – the regulation generally supports employers in several areas, including recruitment of employees.

Another possible way for clustering countries depends on the scope of legal regulations: there are countries with generally applicable policies defined by laws (Malta, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic), and in some countries there are more programs with pre-defined budget (Spain, Slovakia, Greece).

In **Malta**, the strategy Economic Vision for Malta 2020-2025 promotes the competitive make-up of business as one of its priorities for the whole population, but the ‘National Youth Policy 2021-2030’ sets the promotion of young entrepreneurship as its 5<sup>th</sup> strategic goal. The *Access to Employment Scheme* provides employment aid to enterprises to promote the recruitment of the more challenged amongst jobseekers, among others: 24+ persons being unemployed for 6+ months. Employers applying for this A2E Scheme receive a subsidy of €105.45 (full-time) / €52.70 (part-time) per week per new recruit engaged, for a period of 52 weeks or 104 weeks, depending on the target group. In the case of registered disabled persons, a subsidy of €158.20 (full-time) / €79.10 (part-time) per week for a maximum of 156 weeks is provided.

In **Hungary** disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged jobseekers as well as new entrants to the labour market can be hired with wage subsidies or wage cost subsidies. The concept of disadvantaged persons covers young people under 25. New entrants to the labour market are persons younger than 25 (in case

of primary or secondary level of educational attainment) or younger than 30 (in case of tertiary level of educational attainment) who have less than 180 days of previous work experience. So the category of new entrants to the labour market covers mostly the NEETs. The maximum length of a wage subsidy is 12 months for disadvantaged jobseekers and 24 months for severely disadvantaged jobseekers, and the amount of the wage subsidy covers 50% of wage costs. The amount of the wage subsidy covers 50% of wage costs.

In **Romania**, regarding the Government Emergency Ordinance nr. 60/2018 Art.85. employers who are employed for an indefinite period a young NEETs receive monthly, for a period of 12 months, for each person employed of these categories, an amount in the amount of 2,250 lei, with the obligation to maintain employment or service relations for at least 18 months. This incentive is worth 455 EUR in May of 2022, 88% of the gross national minimum salary. The Government Emergency Ordinance nr. 101/2021 finally extended the concept of NEETs: the person between the ages of 16 and up to the age of 30, who does not have a job, does not attend a form of education, and does not participate in vocational training activities.

In **Spain**, most of the efforts are dedicated to the supply-side policies and there are no specific demand-side policies aimed at increasing the amount of labour that employers seek to hire. In the 2022 version of its guidelines aimed at employers, for instance, the PES explains that if an employer wants to hire a person younger than 30 years old registered at the Employment Office, the type of contract with incentives in effect is the Alternating Training Contract (*Contrato para la Formación en Alternancia*). If the company has less than 250 employees, the employer has a bonus of the 100% of the annual amount of the employee's social security contribution. If the company has more than 250 employees, this bonus is the 75%.

In **Greece** it is the first time ever that Greece makes an integrated effort to respond to the challenge of tackling the extremely high youth unemployment rate. The new plans and policies show a paradigm shift because they seek to create new jobs rather than prevent dismissals. Among many programmes of the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Welfare there are two action plans – but not policies – meant for actors of demand side.

1. Special four-year programme for the promotion of employment through the subsidy of social security contributions for the recruitment of 40,000 unemployed persons. That means Creation of new full-time jobs, focusing on young people of up to 30 years of age (including NEETs) and special groups of unemployed (unemployed who are close to the age limit for retirement, long-term unemployed women, parents of many children, single parents) through the subsidy of the wage cost and non-wage cost, that corresponds to the amount of social security contributions.

The term of the subsidy will be 48 months and employers are obliged to maintain their personnel for a further 12-month period.

2. Special two-year programme for the promotion of employment, through the subsidy of social security contributions for the recruitment of 25,000 unemployed persons. The programme's objective is to create new jobs through the subsidy of part of the wage cost and non-wage cost that corresponds to the amount of social security contributions, which are calculated based on the emoluments that correspond to the minimum wage, as determined each time by the National General Collective Employment Agreement, in private enterprises. The term of the subsidy will be 24 months. After the expiry of the subsidy, enterprises are obliged to maintain their personnel for a further 12-month period.

In **Czech Republic**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provides financial contributions to employers in the following areas (for all jobseekers): recruitment of employees, employment support, commuting allowance, employee training.

In **Bulgaria**, the Employment Promotion Act regulates all aspects of employment promotion and employment security. According to Art. 36 employers, who 'hire an unemployed person under the age of 29 years old, including if this is the employee's first job position in their field of expertise, as advised by the Employment Agency' are entitled to a financial benefit for the duration of the employee's first 18 months of employment. The Act further establishes the regulations of programmes and measures for transition from passive to active employment, including the size of government support during unemployment and support during the transition to long-term employment. In particular relevance to NEETs, Section V of the Act establishes the rules for training programmes and measures provided by employers to workers or recently unemployed persons. The Employment Promotion Act regulates the promotion and size of government support for entrepreneurship among unemployed persons (in Art 47). The Act also supports business development and entrepreneurship among unemployed people, through the introduced one-time subsidies upon approval of a business project by the competent division of the National Employment Agency.

In **Poland**, Regional Labour Offices offer a financial support for employers who wants to hire a young person up to the age of 29. This program is specifically designed for tackling the problem of NEETs. This program enables the employer to hire a young person up to 25 years of age without work experience, the salary and other costs are paid by the Labour Office. The employer can also receive up to 30,000 PLN for the organization of the workplace. In addition, national-level incentives may also be joined with regional-level ones.

In **Slovakia**, the support for employment of the disadvantaged people (e.g., registered jobseekers) is implemented under the Act 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. Participants in the programme are

jobseekers up to 25 years of age who have been registered as unemployed for at least 3 months or jobseekers up to 29 years of age who have been registered as unemployed for at least 6 months. The labour office will reimburse part of her/his costs for an employer who creates a job for such an unemployed person for a period of 6 to 12 months. The obligatory sustainability of the subsidized placement is 50% of the subsidized period (e.g., if the placement is subsidized 12 months, the obligatory sustainability is another 6 months).

Table 12 Incentives

Country	
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program of <i>Access to Employment Scheme</i> provides employment aid to enterprises to promote the recruitment of the jobseekers.</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</i> provides financial contributions to employers.</li> </ul>
<b>POLAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Regional Labour Offices</i> offer a financial support for employers who wants to hire a young person up to the age of 29. Specifically designed for NEETs.</li> </ul>
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Employment Act</i> - disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged jobseekers as well as new entrants to the labour market can be hired with wage subsidies or wage cost subsidies. The category of <i>new entrants to the labour market</i> covers mostly the NEETs.</li> </ul>
<b>ROMANIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Government Emergency Ordinance nr. 60/2018 Art.85.</i>: wage subsidies for employers who employ NEETs.</li> </ul>
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program '<i>Allowance to support the creation of a job in the first regularly paid employment</i>' coordinated by labour offices grants subsidies for employers who employ jobseekers up to 29 years of age.</li> </ul>
<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alternating Training Contract</i>. A company with less than 250 employees get a subsidy of the 100% of the annual amount of young employee's social security contribution.</li> </ul>
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art. 36 of the <i>Employment Promotion Act</i>: employers who hire an unemployed person under the age of 29 years old are entitled to a financial benefit for the duration of the employee's first 18 months of employment. In particular relevance to NEETs, Section V of the Act establishes the rules for training programmes and measures provided by employers to workers or recently unemployed persons.</li> </ul>
<b>GREECE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programmes for the promotion of employment through the subsidy of social security contributions. Creation of new full-time jobs, focusing on young people of up to 30 years of age (including NEETs).</li> </ul>

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: •: Policies targeting NEETs; •: Policies targeting young people; •: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; •: Policies for the whole population

### Key findings

#### Incentives

- ⇒ All countries under analysis have implanted some kind of incentive regulation to promote the employment of young people.
- ⇒ The different kind of incentives are subsidised rate of the salary cost (Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia), predefined amount of subsidy (Malta, Romania, and Poland), social security costs (Spain and Bulgaria) and particular subsidies of different programs (Slovakia and Greece).

## 5.2 Social security policies

In **Bulgaria**, even if Code for Social Security in Bulgaria has no specific parts dedicated to the NEETs (as it offers only a general legal framework of social security), the National Plan for the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee (2014 – 2020) grants the reduction of social security expenses for those employers, who provide apprenticeships and temporary employment in regions with high unemployment rates for NEETs, initially up to 24 years old. In 2020, due to the decision of the Council of the European Union (2020) the reinforced Youth Guarantee expanded the limits of the NEETs up to 30 years, and so, in Bulgaria the subsidies of the social security costs were also granted for those employers who hire a NEET person up to 30 years. The Plan does not specify the amount of subventions. The timeframe of these benefits varies between 12 and 24 months for a NEET youth doing an apprenticeship.

In **Czech Republic** the focus is on the supply-side policies. The employers who hire a people with disabilities is eligible for a reduction in the social security contributions (75% of all personal costs being refunded by the state). It must be mentioned that these reductions are general, and they are not dedicated to deal solely with the NEETs or 25+ NEETs.

In **Greece** a special four-year long programme has been implemented, to facilitate the re-entrance of the unemployed persons to the field of work. Basically, this is a continuous programme where the main frame is the number of the beneficiaries This policy aims those employers who hire a young (up to 30 years) unemployed person through granting a subsidy covering the new employees' social security contributions up to 48 months with the request that after the subsidised period the employee should remain at least for another 12 months at the given job.

In **Hungary** the jobseekers from some underprivileged socio-economic groups receive a reduction in social security contribution through the Job Protection Action Plan. The subsidy can be received for 2 years, unless the employee does not reach the age of 25, as in this case the subvention can be received till reaching the given age. In other cases, the 25+ NEETs can receive the presented benefit, as other



beneficiary groups (e.g., mothers with young child, low-skilled workers, or workers in agriculture) indirectly can also cover the members of the 25+ NEETs group.

In **Malta** there are no policies which aim for the reduction of the contribution to the social security contributions neither for employers nor for employees when a NEETs or a NEETs25+ is hired.

In **Poland**, if an employer hires a young (till 30 years old) unemployed person, it will receive a 12 month-long subvention for the social security contribution (along with other labour-related contributions).

In **Romania**: the financial, accounting policies targeting to enlarge youth employment are direct incentives, does not affect social security policies.

In **Slovakia** does not have an explicit policy or law which aims the reduction of the social security expenses nor for employer nor for employee. But there are some subventions and tax reductions from which 25+ NEETs can benefit indirectly, as a social insurance contribution relief is offer for those employers who is hiring a long-term unemployed person, or a person residing in a least-developed district.

In **Spain**, as most of the effort is dedicated mainly to support the supply-side policies aimed at increasing the amount of labour that employers seek to hire (Sapsford & Tzannatos, 1993). Therefore, in the analysed period there was only one dedicated policy which applies to NEETs: the measure number 58 within the axes no 5 of the Youth Guarantee Plan Plus 2021-2027 grants an aid for the payment of Social Security contributions for 6 months for those young people who were registered in the Special Regime for Self-Employed Workers before the declaration of the state of emergency.

**Table 13: Country level policies regarding the social security contribution reduction for employing NEETs25+.**

Country	NEETs	Dedicated to NEETs	Dedicated to 25+ NEETs	Consist in tax reduction (for employer)	Duration of tax reduction
BG		yes	yes	yes	12-24 month
CZ		no	no	N.A.	N.A.
GR		yes	yes	yes	48 months
HU		yes	no	yes	24 months (or till reaching the age of 25)
MT		no	no	N.A.	N.A.
PL		yes	yes	yes	12 months
RO		no	no	N.A.	N.A.
SK		no	no	N.A.	N.A.
ES		yes	yes	yes	6 months

Source: Country reports

Based on the above-described characteristics, the analysed countries can be sorted in two groups. The first group is composed by Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland, and Spain where exists a specific policy or law which targets explicitly NEETs and– with the exception of Hungary – 25+ NEETS and encourages their re-entrance to the field of work through different subventions offered to the employers who hire personnel from this groups. On the other hand, the second group is occupied by the countries (Czech Republic, Malta, Romania and Slovakia) which does not have a specific policy which aims the reduction of the NEETs and 25+ NEETS with a policy dealing with social security reduction. This does not mean that these countries do not have policies which aim (even with the help of the reduction of the social security contributions) the reduction of 25+ NEETS number, just these policies are indirect, not specifically dedicated to this group of people.

**Table 14 Social security policies**

Country	
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Implementation Plan for European Youth Guarantee (2014-2020) Национален план за изпълнение на Европейската гаранция за младежта 2014-2020 г. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgaria <a href="https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?id=883">https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?id=883</a></li> <li>● National Social Security Institute. (2015). 135 години социално осигуряване в България: исторически преглед на социалноосигурителното законодателството [135 Years of Social Security in Bulgaria: Historical Review of Social Security Legislation].</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	There are no dedicated policies for NEETs and 25+ NEETS.
<b>GREECE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Special four-year programme for the promotion of employment through the subsidy of social security contributions for the recruitment of 40,000 unemployed persons <a href="https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/emcc/comparative-information/national-contributions/greece/greece-erm-comparative-analytical-report-on-recent-policy-developments-related-to-those-not-in">https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/emcc/comparative-information/national-contributions/greece/greece-erm-comparative-analytical-report-on-recent-policy-developments-related-to-those-not-in</a></li> <li>● Special two-year employment promotion programme with social security contributions subsidisation for the recruitment of 25 000 unemployed workers. (n.d.). Retrieved on 10/05/2022, from <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15248&amp;langId=en">https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15248&amp;langId=en</a></li> </ul>
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Act CXLVI of 2012 on the Job Protection Action Plan (in Hungarian): <a href="https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1200146.TV">https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1200146.TV</a></li> <li>● Information leaflet for employers on the webpage of the National Employment Service (in Hungarian): <a href="https://www.kormanyhivatal.hu/download/f/3d/70000/T%C3%A1j%C3%A9koztat%C3%B3%20Munkahelyv%C3%A9delmi%20Akci%C3%B3terv0223.pdf">https://www.kormanyhivatal.hu/download/f/3d/70000/T%C3%A1j%C3%A9koztat%C3%B3%20Munkahelyv%C3%A9delmi%20Akci%C3%B3terv0223.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>MALTA</b>	There are no dedicated policies for NEETs and 25+ NEETS
<b>POLAND</b>	Yes (source not mentioned in the country report)
<b>ROMANIA</b>	There are no dedicated policies for NEETs and 25+ NEETS
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	There are no dedicated policies for NEETs and 25+NEETS

<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth Guarantee Plan Plus 2021-2027 in Spain. Plan De Garantía Juvenil Plus 2021-2027 De Trabajo Digno Para Las Personas Jóvenes. <a href="https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil/plan-garantia-juvenil-plus.html">https://sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil/plan-garantia-juvenil-plus.html</a></li> </ul>
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Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

<p>Social security policies</p>	<p><b>Key findings</b></p> <p>⇒ The analysed countries are usually applying direct labour market incentives targeting the 25+ NEETs. These incentives consist in subventions or/and tax reductions after an employed person. At the time of the elaboration of this paper, the least ‘generous’ is Spain (6 months of tax reduction), and the most ‘generous’ is Greece (48 months of tax reduction).</p>
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### 5.3 Taxes

Only three of the examined countries (i.e., Malta, Poland and Hungary) reported that they help employers to hire young people with tax incentives. In fact, even in these three countries, the tax benefits are not aimed at the demand side of the labour market, but at young workers. In Poland and Hungary youth people are exempt from income taxation, under 26 years in Poland, if their annual income is less than 85,528 PLN, and under 25 years in Hungary.

The question arises, why so few countries use this fiscal tool but most of them grants incentives to employers who hire young/NEETs jobseekers? Are the incentives-based policies more effective compared to tax incentive in these countries? These questions should be addressed on future studies.

Table 15 Tax incentives

Country	
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tax Incentive benefit: a tax exemption on employment income which may be claimed by way of a tax credit. It applies to individuals who complete the relevant higher education course of studies in 2018 or later. Not specifically targeting NEETs.</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	No

<b>POLAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reductions in personal income taxation are for employees up to the age of 26 years. People who are under 26 years of age and receive income from work are exempt from income taxation provided that their annual income was not higher than 85,528 PLN. People who gain financial benefits from a contract for a specific task or running their own business are not exempt from paying income tax even if they meet the age and income criteria. There are no tax reductions for the employers for employing young people.</li> </ul>
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of 2022, young workers below 25 years of age are exempt from personal income tax<sup>3</sup> (Act CXVII of 1995 on the Personal Income Tax). Reductions in personal income tax are available for parents of children under 18, regardless of the age of the parent. If the employee has one child, the amount of the tax reduction is HUF 120,000 annually. For parents of two children, the annual amount is HUF 260,000. For parents of three or more children, the annual amount is HUF 396,000 per child (Act CXVII of 1995 on the Personal Income Tax)</li> </ul>
<b>ROMANIA</b>	No
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	No
<b>SPAIN</b>	No
<b>BULGARIA</b>	No
<b>GREECE</b>	No

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

## 6. Orientation

According to the definition often used in the literature, career guidance and orientation describe the services which assist people at any point in their lives to manage their careers and make the educational, training and occupational choices that are meaningful for them (Cedefop, 2019). According to CEDEFOP (2019), 'In some countries, terms such as 'career counselling', 'career development', 'careers information, advice and guidance', 'vocational counselling' or 'vocational guidance' are used to refer to the range of activities that is included here within the term career guidance.' (p. 3)

Access to these services can be divided into two major groups:

1. in public employment services
2. in education systems (primary and secondary schools; vocational training centres; higher education institutions).

<sup>3</sup> The personal income tax is generally 15% for those above 25.

The young people aged 25-29 not in education, employment or training (25+ NEETs) targeted by the project are mainly concerned with the guidance services provided by the Public Employment Services. Still, the knowledge of the career guidance system linked to the education system, which has a prominent role in preventing them from becoming NEETs, cannot be neglected.

In all analysed countries, **Public Employment Services** provide career guidance services. In some cases, these services are available only for registered jobseekers (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania), while other countries' services target a more comprehensive range of people (Malta, Poland, and Spain). For some countries, we do not have enough information (Czech Republic, Greece). It seems that in countries with a lower NEET rate, these services are available to a broader range of groups compared to countries with a higher NEET rate, where access is more limited.

In **Malta**, Jobsplus (Malta's Public Employment Service) provides career guidance services as an element of the Active Labour Market Policies. Still, the services do not explicitly tackle young people or NEETs.

In **Czech Republic**, the Labour Office provides career guidance and counselling for various issues; jobseekers can obtain individual or group career guidance (Guidance System in the Czech Republic, 2021).

In **Poland**, Regional Labour Offices organise counselling programs on the participant's demand. This counselling concerns choosing an occupational path, planning a career, defining competencies and interests, and planning professional development. While this policy is designed for individuals registered in the labour office, unregistered people can also apply for counselling to a lesser extent.

In **Hungary**, the National Employment Service is responsible for implementing labour market services for jobseekers: it either delivers the services via the counsellors employed by the NES or outsources them to third parties (NGOs).

In **Romania**, Public Employment Services offers job information and counselling services for individuals: free services to job seekers (PES, 2018a). Other services provided by PES include assistance for starting self-employment or a business. The service is provided, on request, in the form of legal, marketing, financial, effective management methods and techniques, and other consultancy services. (PES, 2017) Within the Youth Guarantee Program, as part of 'case management,' the process of monitoring the development of the young person both during and after their involvement in a program of active measures is also foreseen (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity of Romania, 2017).

In **Slovakia**, the local employment offices play a significant role in providing guidance and counselling. The Employment Services Act provides orientation and career guidance to jobseekers as part of the first contact (every jobseeker automatically receives orientation and career guidance services). A limitation of public employment services in Slovakia is that employment offices work only with people registered

in the register of job seekers. A large group of the most vulnerable young people, those unemployed but not registered, is therefore left without support.

In **Spain**, the Royal Decree 7/2015 (developed by Order ESS/381/2018) regulates the Common Portfolio of services that the National Public Employment Service and the regional public employment services must provide, which are one of the main elements of ALMPs. One of these services is the Career Guidance Service which includes actions such as individualised diagnosis and preparation of workers' profiles, design of the individual and personalised employment itinerary, support with the definition of the CV and the application techniques for active job search, and support for labour mobility (SEPE, 2022).

In **Bulgaria**, the Employment Agency and its territorial subdivisions are dedicated institutions for offering information and career counselling to people out of employment and support for finding new jobs.

In **Greece**, OAED, the competent Public Service in Greece, coordinates and supervises the activities foreseen under the above initiatives.

Regarding **career guidance and orientation in educational systems**, a qualitative longitudinal study supports the importance of guidance services in educational institutions to prevent becoming a NEET. In the study, members of the NEETs group believed that the lack of adequate career advice and guidance had led them to make educational decisions resulting in a dead end (Lórinç et al., 2020).

Generally, in the analysed countries, guidance and counselling services are available at all levels, including higher education. However, there are several differences between these guidance systems. First of all, the focus of guidance: often, a large part of the time of school counsellors are devoted to dealing with behavioural issues of children with problems, thus marginalising the career guidance activity (Watts & Sultana, 2004). In addition, there may be substantial differences between countries in the content of the guidance system. Several aspects should be taken into account here. One consideration is the focus on practical education. Providing experiential learning through job visits, simulation, and job shadowing, like in Malta, Hungary or Spain, may be helpful for labour market integration. Another aspect is empowering, which aims to develop students' skills related to career guidance (e.g. by introducing relevant subjects). This is the case in the following countries: Hungary, Malta, Poland and Spain. Personalisation may also be appropriate. This means individualised support for students from different family backgrounds and with different abilities.

In **Malta**, The Career Guidance Policy for Schools 2007 provides career guidance services for all students within compulsory schooling. This service has also been extended to several post-secondary institutions (Guidance System in Malta, 2022). In tertiary education, career guidance and counselling are also offered for students.

In **Czech Republic**, guidance and counselling services are required by law to be provided at all primary, secondary, and tertiary professional schools. Most public universities offer assistance through in-house Career Counselling Centres (Guidance System in the Czech Republic, 2021).

In **Poland**, students can attend school counselling before graduating from the educational system (Guidance System in Poland, 2020).

In **Hungary**, career guidance is a specific development area for primary and secondary school pupils. The professional-pedagogical services also provide guidance activities. In 2015, a network of 44 vocational centres was established, which includes information on the training programmes of the affiliated vocational training schools, as well as on adult education and training opportunities. At the county level, the professional-pedagogical services, the chambers of commerce, the government offices and the vocational centres often cooperate to support vocational guidance and orientation for schools. Higher education institutions should also assist students in planning their careers during and after their studies and maintain a career-tracking system. Most higher education institutions provide information and guidance services in the form of career centres, while larger institutions offer career management courses or training. (Guidance System in Hungary, 2022).

In **Romania**, counselling and guidance are provided through the County Resource and Educational Psychological Assistance Centres. They develop psycho-pedagogical assistance, school guidance services, and vocational guidance provided by county centres and school counselling offices. The school counselling centres are operated in schools with a minimum of 800 pupils or 400 preschool children or groups of pupils in schools/kindergartens. All universities have guidance and counselling offices accessible to all students.

In **Slovakia**, career guidance has recently (2019) been strengthened by legislation; however, these changes and support only apply to career guidance delivered in primary schools. In secondary and higher education, there is no systematic support for career guidance aimed at young people; activities are implemented mainly on a project basis. 'Employment paths and counselling' services are implemented as specialised counselling services in Slovakia.

In **Spain**, education authorities and schools of the Autonomous Communities (regions) have their bodies responsible for educational, vocational and professional guidance. Likewise, schools that provide compulsory secondary education, baccalaureate, vocational education and training, and universities offer guidance services that provide information, support, guidance and advice (Guidance System in Spain, 2022).

In **Bulgaria**, the leading providers of career guidance at the school level are pedagogical advisers. Career counsellors from the non-governmental sector support them. In the higher education system, Career centres provide information on practical training and the implementation of projects, on the conditions

of the labour market and the areas of professional development of the graduates (Guidance System in Bulgaria, 2022).

In **Greece**, the Centres of Educational and Counselling Support (KESY) offer career guidance, psychosocial evaluation, and pedagogical services to students, teachers and parents at the prefectural level. These Centres implement individual and group programs to support students' career development (Guidance System in Greece, 2022).

When it comes to **policies referring to career guidance**, the importance of orientation is demonstrated by the fact that all the countries reviewed have policies to address this issue.

In **Malta**, the National Employment Policy 2021-2030 recommends improving career guidance, but the Government identified the need for developing a new long-term strategy encompassing lifelong career guidance, so the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020-2030 established an independent guidance unit, together with stakeholders.

In **Czech Republic**, some strategies mention orientation and career guidance cross-cuttingly. There is no strategy explicitly addressing this topic. Some policies regulate career guidance and counselling services: The Education Act, the Government Decree on the Provision of Counselling Services in Schools and School Guidance Facilities, the Higher Education Act, the Act on Teaching Staff and other related legislations. The National Guidance Forum (NGF), established in 2010, is an advisory body for lifelong career guidance and counselling. The Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2020 includes support for guidance and counselling within the education and employment sectors. (Guidance System in the Czech Republic, 2021).

In **Poland**, the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions regulate the tasks of public employment services in the field of vocational guidance. (Guidance System in Poland, 2020).

In **Hungary**, labour market services for registered jobseekers are regulated by the 100/2021. (II. 27.) and 311/2021 (VI. 7.) Government Decrees.

In **Romania**, there are general and specific policies related to orientation and guidance. The general services refer to guidance services in schools (ORDER No 5555 of 7 October 2011 approving the Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the county/urban centres for educational resources and assistance), guidance services in higher education institutions, and guidance in public employment offices (Law 76 of 2002). The specific policy's scope is the school integration of Roma people (Romanian Government Strategy for including Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for 2015-2020).



In **Slovakia**, the topic of career guidance has recently (2019) been strengthened by legislation (by amending Act No. 61/2015 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training); however, these changes and support only apply to career guidance delivered in primary schools.

In **Spain**, two central policies refer to youth orientation: the Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021 - 2027 for decent work for young people and the Action Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021. The Educational law 'Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education' (LOMLOE, December 2020) establishes the national legislation on guidance. The law defines Guidance as a student's right, being an educational quality factor (Guidance System in Spain, 2022).

**Bulgaria** has a National Platform for Career Orientation that focuses on school students. The program has established career orientation centres in regional centres. The creation of the Platform is guided by the need to develop instruments and institutions for career development/orientation as outlined by the Pre-school and School Education Act. The legislative basis for adult career counselling is set out by the Employment Promotion Act (Guidance System in Bulgaria, 2022).

In **Greece**, the Youth Employment Action Teams' objectives include enhancing counselling and career guidance focusing on the young unemployed, boosting school career guidance, career mentoring and counselling in entrepreneurship in tertiary education.

The Career Guidance Policy is designed and implemented by the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministry of Health (Guidance System in Greece, 2022).

With regard to the definition of **NEETs as a target group**, in most of the analysed countries, their policies do not target NEETs explicitly. Still, the NEETs group may be part of a larger group targeted by the guidelines (in countries like Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia). In Spain and Greece, there are policies regarding career guidance targeting 25+NEETs. No data is available for Malta, the Czech Republic, or Bulgaria.

In most countries, we can find **guidance services targeting disadvantaged youth**, like learners with special needs (Malta), underprivileged groups (Poland, Romania, Slovakia), disabled job seekers (Hungary), or addicted persons (Greece).

In **Malta**, the Special Education and Resource Centres provide learners with special needs, including orientation guidance and transition support.

In **Czech Republic**, a wide range of services for specific target groups is provided by non-governmental organisations and funded by different sources, mainly temporarily (e.g. the European Social Fund, etc.). Awareness of their activities is, therefore, incomplete. (Guidance System in the Czech Republic, 2021).

In **Poland**, the Department of Labour Market is responsible for vocational guidance for adults and young people, particularly those at risk of social exclusion. (Guidance System in Poland, 2020).

In **Hungary**, rehabilitation counselling is explicitly designed for disabled job seekers. Neither of the other services focuses on disadvantaged jobseekers.

In **Romania**, Public Employment Services offers a personalised Social Accompaniment service based on a solidarity contract for marginalised young people. The services are free to young people at risk of social marginalisation. These services include vocational information and counselling, job mediation, and job placement (PES, 2018b). In addition, under law No 448 of 6 December 2006, people with disabilities, regardless of age or level of disability, have the right to free career guidance activities.

In **Slovakia**, labour, social affairs and family offices provide counselling services for disadvantaged groups (long-term unemployed, young people under 25, job seekers with disabilities, etc.) (Guidance System in Slovakia, 2020).

In **Greece**, the Ministry of Health supervises mainly separate bodies providing career guidance services to particular target groups, such as addicted persons (Guidance System in Greece, 2022).

As shown above, guidance systems comprise several components linked to education and employment systems and the public and private sectors. Nevertheless, it is recommended (Watts & Sultana, 2004) that they should be viewed as a coherent system. There are different aspects to consider when evaluating the national guidance system. One consideration is the universality: the career guidance systems can be inclusive ('any age and at any point throughout the life', like in Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, or Spain) or restricted to particular groups (students, registered jobseekers). This is the case for Bulgaria and Romania. Another issue is comprehensiveness. This means there are national career guidance portals (like Hungary, Greece, and Spain) where all the information is in one place. A lifelong perspective should also be considered because recent trends in career development theory suggest that career guidance should be available throughout life (Watts & Sultana, 2004). It is implemented in several countries, such as Spain, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania. Cooperation between career guidance stakeholders, like in Malta, Czech Republic, Hungary or Greece) could play a relevant role in the labour market integration. At the same time, the emphasis on quality and its control for better service, as in Malta, Spain, and Greece, cannot be neglected. As it will be explained in chapter 7, the good practices reported by expertise partners confirm some success factors on guidance and orientation that have been also reported by beneficiary partners throughout this chapter. These factors include individualisation, practice-oriented definition, cooperation between career guidance stakeholders or multidimensionality.

Table 16: Policies regarding orientation and career guidance in the analysed countries

	Career guidance system			Other Policies
	in pre-university education	in tertiary education	offered by PES	
<b>MALTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Career Guidance Policy for Schools (2007)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Employment Policy 2021-2030</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020-2030</li> </ul>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Education Act Government Decree on the Provision of Counselling Services in Schools and School Guidance Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher Education Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2020</li> </ul>	
<b>POLAND</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions</li> </ul>	
<b>HUNGARY</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Decree No 100 of 2021. (II. 27.) Government Decree No 311 of 2021 (VI. 7.)</li> </ul>	
<b>ROMANIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ORDER No 5555 of 7 October 2011 approving the Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the county/urban centres for educational resources and assistance</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Law 76 of 2002 February 2, 2002. on unemployment insurance and employment stimulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Romanian Government Strategy for including Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for 2015-2020</li> </ul>
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amending to Act No. 61/2015 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training</li> </ul>			
<b>SPAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organic Law No 3 of 2020</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021 – 2027</li> <li>Action Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021</li> </ul>	
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-school and School Education Act</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Promotion Act</li> </ul>	
<b>GREECE</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Employment Action Teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career Guidance Policy</li> </ul>	

Source: Country reports

Key to the table: ●: Policies targeting NEETs; ●: Policies targeting young people; ●: Policies with axes or priority objectives targeting youth; ●: Policies for the whole population

## Key findings

## Orientation

- ⇒ Career guidance is available through PES in all countries analysed, but in some countries, it is only available to registered job seekers. However, the NEETs group is not only comprised of the unemployed, so it would be worth extending these services to a broader audience.
- ⇒ Some elements of career guidance and orientation in the education system, such as experiential learning, empowerment, or personalisation, can help young people to find career paths that prevent them from becoming NEET.
- ⇒ National guidance services are recommended to be viewed as coherent systems, which may consider the following aspects to achieve their objectives better: inclusiveness, comprehensiveness, lifelong perspective, quality check, cooperation between career guidance stakeholders, multidimensionality and a one-stop-shop approach.

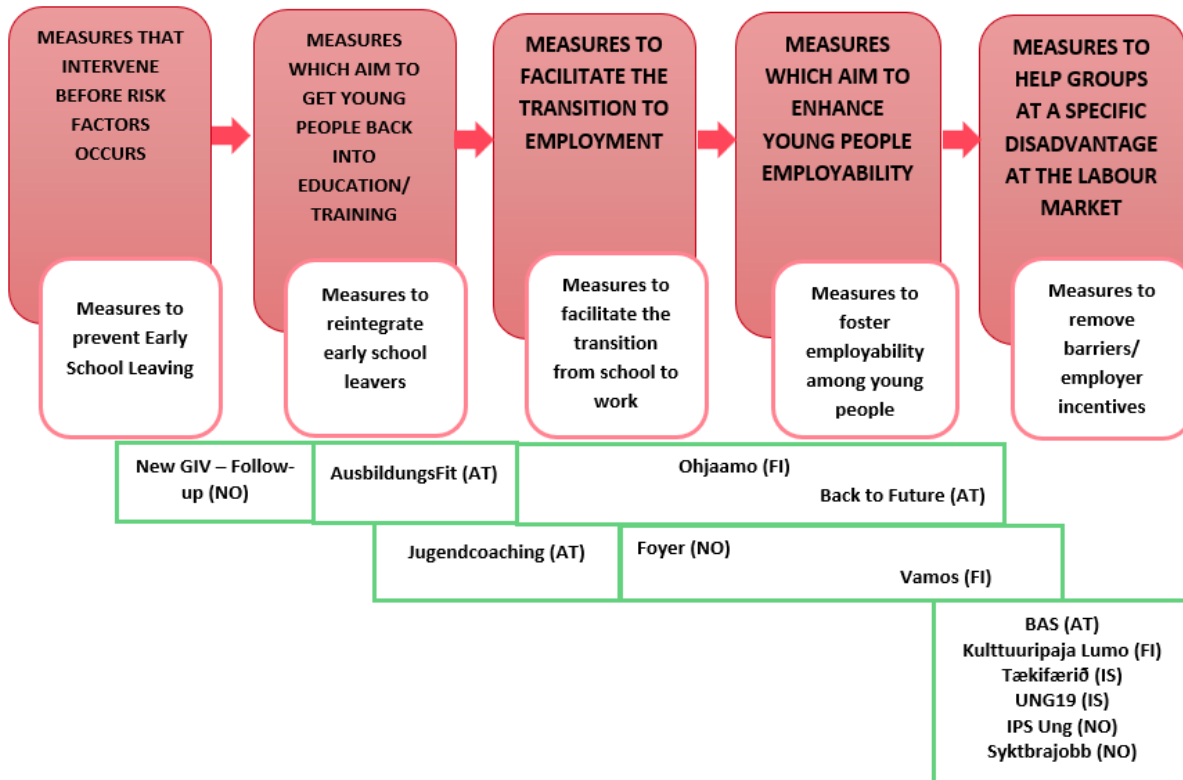
## 7. Good practices

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To identify the good practices carried out by the countries under review (i.e., expertise partners), these practices must necessarily have been evaluated. This evaluation is usually made once the policies have been implemented, since what is evaluated is the policy's results. This implies that, when analysing good practices of the expertise partners, since they must be evaluated according to the criteria of innovation, added value, evidence-based, applicability, effectiveness, and replicability, the focus of the analysis is on measures rather than on policies themselves. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on measures that develop expertise partners' policies on NEETs/25+ NEETs. Specifically, we analyse measures of expertise partners based on their place in the abovementioned 'pathway to employment' defined by Eurofound (2012) (see Figure 1).

According to this model, whereas some measures aim to intervene before risk factors occur, other measures intervene at later stages of the young person's pathway to employment (Eurofound, 2012). In many cases the preventative or intervening character of specific measures is not clearly defined, and they can be included within different stages of the pathway to employment (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Good practices along the pathway to employment



Source: own elaboration based on Eurofound (2012)

For instance, the **measures aiming to prevent early school leaving** (ESL) are often designed together with measures to reintegrate early school leavers. In **Norway**, the ‘New GIV – Follow-up Project’ aimed to prevent youth of leaving secondary schooling, as well as help those from 15 to 21 years olds that have already left to complete their secondary studies. This measure established a segmented and youth-oriented approach in which different institutions collaborated in a follow-up plan designed for every student that dropped out school. Secondary schools, vocational schools, the Norwegian Welfare and Labor Administration, Health Services and Child Welfare and Protection Services joined efforts to offer qualifying, practice-oriented measures to face ESL.

Focusing on the stage that corresponds to the **measures to reintegrate early school leavers**, the ‘AusbildungsFit’ measure (‘Fit for training’) in **Austria** prepares young people (i.e., people between 15 and 21, and young people with disabilities or special educational needs up to their 24th birthday) to return to their studies and/or training. Fit for training combines practical activities, cognitive learning, social learning, sports and exercise, and individual coaching.

In **Austria** there is also a measure aimed at young people and specially at those who are at risk of dropping out of school or unable to graduate called 'Jugendcoaching' (Youth coaching). The coaching provided to the target group (people between 15 and 24 years old) consists of individualised management in three stages. In stage 1, young people are accompanied and supported for up to 3 months, in stage 2 for up to 6 months, and in stage 3 for up to 12 months. Counselling and support are provided until the young person starts a training program that is suitable for him or her, thus ensuring the continuation of qualified training.

Again, the **measures to facilitate the transition from school to work** are not designed in isolation yet to accompany young people along different phases in their entering into the labour market. This is the case for the 'Ohjaamo', a project carried out in **Finland**, that targets people aged 15-29, with mild to severe presence of risk factors in which a multidisciplinary team—in various administrative sectors and an extensive cooperation network—provides personal counselling and guidance, support for life management, career planning, development of social skills and competencies, and support for training and employment. The cabinet supports the young person along different phases until a longer-term solution is found.

In **Norway**, the project 'Foyer' not only facilitates transitions but also eliminates barriers to access to employment. This project provides young people at risk (i.e., young people between 16 and 23 years who is struggling with difficulties to transition to adulthood such as having been in foster care) with a safe place to stay, new skills, and positive mental health and well-being. Services delivered are supported housing, learning, training, counselling, employment support and health improvement initiatives.

With regard to the **measures to foster employability among young people**, in **Austria** the 'Back to the Future' (B2F) program targets young people receiving the minimum income benefit. This measure aims at integrating these people into the regular labour market by developing three pillars: First, B2F establishes a joint contact point for the labour market service and the city regarding work-related and educational policy support. Second, it implements an incentive system for the acquisition of work skills and experience, as well as self-efficacy and resilience. Third, it provides subsidized employment opportunities that start with part-time job agreements and increases the workload progressively.

In **Finland**, the program 'Vamos' provides intensive individual and group coaching for NEETs of 16- to 29-year-olds. The individual coaching is intended for young people who are out of education and work or would otherwise like a change in their life situation. Group coaching, on the other hand, is aimed at removing barriers and it is designed for young people who need support in managing everyday life, developing social skills, and strengthening their self-esteem and resources, as well as intensive coaching to find a job.

Unlike beneficiary partners, which design their most of their important policies focusing on the former stages of the pathway to employment (e.g., education and training and labour market policies), expertise partners—and specially the Nordic countries—focus their efforts on **measures to remove the barriers** suffered by the people at risk of social exclusion.

In **Austria**, the project ‘Berufsausbildungsassistenz’ (BAS) promotes an integrative vocational training to facilitate the integration of disadvantaged young people (i.e., young people with special educational needs, with disabilities, with difficulties to find a regular apprenticeship). BAS can lead to an apprenticeship contract or to a training period in partial qualifications of an apprenticeship occupation and both options are combined with customized support for both apprentices and companies.

In **Finland**, ‘Kulttuuripaja Lumo’ (Culture House Lumo) is aimed at 18–35-year-old NEETs, who have mental health problems or otherwise challenging situations in life. The Culture Houses of this project are low-threshold places with a variety of activities (e.g., board games, artistic activities etc). In these houses there is always staff on site, and peer tutoring is an essential part of the program.

In **Iceland**, ‘Tækifærið’ (The Opportunity) targets NEETs up to 30 years old, mainly males, with immigration/foreign background—and who do not speak Icelandic properly—who have been unemployed for at least one year. This measure is developed along three phases. In the first one, participants start learning the language and take part in activities related to resilience, responsibility, exercise, outdoor activities, and team building. In the second one, participants live in shared flats to keep a healthy routine and have practical occupational training, such as maintenance of buildings, work in service sector and catering. In the third phase, which takes place in Reykjavík, participants are assisted with writing applications and connected to potential employers.

Another measure carried out in **Iceland** is ‘UNG19’ (Young 19). This measure is aimed at 18–30-year-old NEETs who have at most a primary education degree, who have little professional experience or have been unemployed for more than 6 months and who are at risk of exclusion (e.g., difficult upbringing, financial problems). Based on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) approach, this measure offers vocational rehabilitation to the participants and centres its efforts on meeting meet each of the participants in their own places and encouraging them forward by focusing on their strengths.

In **Norway**, ‘IPS Ung’ (Supported Employment for Youth) reaches out the target group of Supported Employment Youth which includes 16–29-year-old NEETs that are in risk of disability (due to mental illness and drug addictions). Supported Employment entails a professional – often called job specialist – following up a person that has (often severe) mental illness and/or drug addiction on a regular and frequent basis, with the aim of supporting that person in the process to employment. In this project, the Norwegian Welfare and Labour Administration collaborates with the general practitioners and other

services providers in the health and care services. These professionals do not only study NEETs' situation and background, but also the employers and organizations for the purpose of matchmaking between the youth and organizations.

'Syktbrajobb' (From ill to employed) is a measure also carried out in **Norway** that targets NEETS up to 35 years that are granted with long term social benefits because of illness, disability, or other long-term conditions. This project also employs the mechanism of supported employment but adapted to the specific target group of young people granted with long term financial benefits.

All these good practices are assessed as such because of their **success factors**. After analysing these key factors, we have found some similarities among most of these measures:

- ✓ They set very specific target groups (e.g., the 15–21-year-olds, NEETs that receive the benefit for the minimum income, NEETs that have any disability or mental health issue). This allows the individualisation of solutions as well as the ability to personalise attention to each participant or at least subgroup.
- ✓ They rely on the regular and systematic follow-up of target groups.
- ✓ They present a holistic approach and provide a multifaceted support (in many areas such as education, employment, physical health, mental health, self-esteem).
- ✓ They promote collaborative practices between the different welfare services working with the target groups.

## 8. Conclusions

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As explained in the introduction chapter, this report summarises the policies and good practices that beneficiary and expertise partners have respectively reported in their country reports which target, directly or indirectly, 25+NEETs. In doing so, we have developed 7 chapters of which their main conclusions are summarised in this chapter 8.

Chapter 2, which summarises the overall policies targeting NEETS, shows that all the beneficiary partners have reported a great influence of the European Union on their national policies. The national-level policies are mainly based on the EU-level dispositions regulating the Youth Guarantee mechanism. It also shows that, so far, these national policies have drawn on definitions of NEETs that diverge among countries (for instance Hungary has no official definition of NEETs, Bulgaria defines NEETs with an age range between 15 and 24 years old, or Spain or Greece define the age range between 15 and 29 years old). However, more recently, and once again with the EU as the main driving force, the member states' commitment to the Reinforced Youth Guarantee has established as a general rule that the upper age limit for participants in this youth guarantee is 30 years. In the same vein, the countries that have



approved new policies on youth in recent years have incorporated this age limit of 30 years, reaching 25+ NEETs (e.g., Romania, Czech Republic).

Chapter 3 analyses the influence of the institutional framework in the policies targeting youth and NEETs. Most of the countries under analysis are centralised countries whose decisions on NEETs are made at a national level. Moreover, some of these centralised countries present large general employment strategies—rather than several policies aimed to be developed by regional institutions—containing axes or priority objectives targeting young people and NEETs (Malta, Czech Republic, Romania, and Bulgaria).

Chapter 4 analyses the policies aimed at increasing labour supply (i.e., number of workers ready, willing, and able to work) and shows that beneficiary partners focus on these supply-side policies rather than on the demand-side policies. Regarding education policies, as chapter 4.1. shows, some of the beneficiary partners with the lowest NEET rates (Malta and Czech Republic) and those with the highest NEET rates (Bulgaria and Spain) are those that focus on inclusive education policies. In this vein, and although there is no clear pattern, among the countries that present plans focused on promoting Vocational Training and improving and modernizing university education, we find some of the countries with the highest NEET rates such as Romania, Spain, and Bulgaria.

Regarding the labour market policies focused on a) the labour market entry (e.g., upskilling or reintegration of the long-term unemployed), b) undeclared work, c) active labour market policies (ALMP), and d) passive policies or benefits; chapter 4.2 shows no clear pattern regarding the NEETs rate and these labour market policies. Nevertheless, we may point out that some countries—centralised countries such as Malta, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria—have general employment strategies targeting youth and/or NEETs that establish their policies on labour market entry (e.g., school to work transitions or long-term unemployment policies) and in the case of Romania and Bulgaria they also include their policies to tackle undeclared work. Instead of general employment strategies, Hungary has specific policies regarding undeclared work and ALMPs. In addition to the plans regulating the ALMPs and tackling the undeclared work, Spain also has a strategy on long-term unemployment-. Poland and Greece do not report higher-level strategies nor plans and base their actions on specific measures.

Regarding the main policies on entrepreneurship, none of the beneficiary partners, regardless their NEETs rate, has a specific strategy for youth entrepreneurship nor venture creation for NEETs/25+ NEETs. Nevertheless, Malta, Hungary, Romania, Spain, and Greece have youth policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship.

Our analysis of gender and work-life reconciliation policies and their possible relationship with the gender gap among 25+ NEETs shows that among the beneficiary countries only Czech Republic, Romania,

and Spain, which have one of the highest and the lowest gender gaps for 25+ NEETs respectively, have strategies specifically designed to face this problem.

Regarding policies on health information reported shows that despite declaring to have a universal Health Care System, in most of the beneficiary partners the out-of-pocket expenses still remain. Only Malta, Czech Republic, and Spain -with low, medium, and high NEETs rate respectively so there is no clear pattern regards the NEET rate- are the countries which make no difference in the accessibility of the health care services regardless to the level of contribution of a citizen.

in the case of other barriers that can lead to NEET status (i.e., illness or disability, discouragement, ethnicity or migration status, rural areas), most of the beneficiary partners have not reported policies to remove these barriers and only few countries (e.g., Bulgaria, Romania, or Spain) present policies to help these disadvantaged NEETs. Except for Malta (that targets discouraged NEETS) and Poland (that aims to increase employment in rural areas), the countries that report policies to remove barriers are mainly those with high NEET rate.

Chapter 5 analyses the demand-side policies (i.e., policies aimed at increasing the amount of labour that employers seek to hire. Every analysed country establishes regulations addressing incentives of employers to promote employment among youth. However, only Czech Republic presents a higher-level policy that supports employers. In the rest of countries there are specific measures that explicitly mention the category of NEETs (Romania, Poland, Greece) or even if not, they include NEETs in the range of beneficiaries of employers' incentives (Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Malta, and Spain). Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland, and Spain present reductions on the social security contributions for employers hiring NEETs. Of these countries, Poland, Spain, Bulgaria, and Greece have reductions applicable to 25+ NEETs which, with the exception of Poland correspond to the countries with highest NEET rates. Only Malta, Poland, and Hungary report that they help employers to hire young people with tax incentives. Nevertheless, these tax benefits are not aimed at the demand side of the labour market, but at young workers hired by these companies.

Chapter 6 analyses the policies on orientation and to what extent these policies target NEETs. In all the countries under review, Public Employment Services provide career guidance services. In some cases, these services are available only for registered jobseekers (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania), while other countries' services target a more comprehensive range of people (Malta, Poland, and Spain). Interestingly, the countries of which PES offer orientation services only at the registered unemployed are mainly those with the highest NEET rates. With regard to the career guidance and orientation in the educational systems, all countries report policies on this matter, but only Malta, Hungary, and Spain highlight experiential learning and skills development within their policies. Focusing on career guidance policies as such, Malta, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Spain have higher-level policies that include

orientation while the rest of beneficiary countries only report specific measures or programmes that include guidance actions.

Chapter 7 summarises the good practices identified by expertise partners because of their success factors which mainly relate to a) individualisation of solutions and personalised attention, b) regular and systematic follow-up of target groups, c) multidimensional support, and d) cooperation between institutions. The analysis of these measures based on their place in the 'pathway to employment' defined by Eurofound (2012) shows that expertise partners and beneficiary partners may diverge on the focus of their measures along this pathway. Beneficiary partners design most of their important policies focusing on the former stages of the pathway to employment (e.g., education and training and labour market policies). In contrast, expertise partners focus their efforts on measures to remove the barriers suffered by the people at risk of social exclusion and thus on the latter stages of the pathway to employment

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