

# Employment initiatives supporting 25+ NEETs

COUNTRY REPORT – MALTA

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

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## 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.*

## Implemented by:



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## 1. Introduction

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Compared to the EU average, young people in Malta have a lower level of education (however, trends are moving in positive directions) and lower unemployment rates. Since youth unemployment is not among the top challenges in Malta, policies and initiatives rarely target this demographic explicitly. In 2021, the NEET rate in Malta (for the age bracket 15-29 years) was 9.9 per cent (while the EU average was 13.1 per cent).<sup>1</sup> Malta has no national (or regional) strategy targeting NEETs. Still, several national policies regarding education, employment, economy, and social inclusion mention or address young unemployed and NEETs. Policies that do not specifically mention NEETs can still impact them if they target for example early school leavers or long-term unemployed youth. Typically, those policies and programmes address the under-25s; however, in the most recent development programmes (covering the 2021-2027 period), 25+ NEETs appear as a new target group.

In our research, we focus on 25+ NEETs, but it is essential to mention Malta's *Youth Guarantee Scheme*,<sup>2</sup> which implements the European-level *Youth Guarantee Initiative (YGI)*. The scheme, funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and operated by Jobsplus,<sup>3</sup> was developed in 2014<sup>4</sup> to target young people aged 15-25.<sup>5</sup> Based on expert consultation, Malta is extending the current YGI to cover the wider age bracket up to 29 years in the future, confirming our observation that Malta has recently recognised 25+ NEETs as a particular beneficiary group.

The mapping of initiatives and programmes (potentially) addressing 25+ NEETs in Malta since 2007 showed that most of these receive(d) co-funding from ESF, which is unsurprising since “the ESF invests in people, with a focus on improving employment and education opportunities across the European Union. It also aims to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people at risk of poverty.”<sup>6</sup> The ESF is one of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). It is a crucial tool for implementing the European Cohesion Policy, which supports the less developed European regions in reducing the economic, social and territorial disparities that still exist in the EU.<sup>7</sup> In the 2007-2013 programming period, Malta fell under the “convergence objective” (regions with a GDP per capita under 75 per cent

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat (2022a)

<sup>2</sup> [Youth Guarantee Scheme](#)

<sup>3</sup> Public Employment Service in Malta

<sup>4</sup> 2.0 version

<sup>5</sup> Ministry for Education and Employment (2014)

<sup>6</sup> [European Social Fund - Regional Policy](#)

<sup>7</sup> [An introduction to EU Cohesion Policy 2014—2020](#)

of the EU average),<sup>8</sup> and was, therefore, eligible for EUR 112 million of ESF funding.<sup>9</sup> In the 2014-2020 programming period,<sup>10</sup> Malta fell under the “transition region” category (as the GDP per capita was between 75 and 90 per cent of the EU average),<sup>11</sup> and was, therefore, eligible for EUR 132 million of ESF funding.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. The institutional context of initiatives and programmes

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The research identified 18 initiatives or projects (with smaller financial scope and implementation structure) and programmes (with more extensive and complex forms of financing and implementation set-up) which — at least potentially — target(ed) 25+ NEETs in Malta since 2007. Notably, only two of the 18 initiatives and programmes designate 25+ NEETs as their target; the rest potentially address them as they are part of a larger social group (for example, they are among the long-term unemployed aged 25-64 years).

Of the 18 initiatives and programmes, 15 were co-financed by ESF. In the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods, Malta implemented all its ESF co-financed human resource development interventions under the Operational Programme (OP) II<sup>13</sup> (in the first period called “Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life”<sup>14</sup>; in the second called “Investing in Human Capital to Create More Opportunities and Promote the Wellbeing of Society”<sup>15</sup>). As described on the Commission’s website, “Malta is investing in improving and better matching education and training systems and workforce skills to meet the changing demands of the labour market. ESF support also benefits disadvantaged groups, such as those with disabilities, women, children and older people.”<sup>16</sup> The EU-level

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<sup>8</sup> [Is my region covered? - Regional Policy - European Commission](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Programming Period 2007 – 2013](#)

<sup>10</sup> Because of the “n+3 rule” programmes can run until 2023.

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/images/map/eligible2014/mt.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/images/map/eligible2014/mt.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [Operational Programme II](#)

<sup>13</sup> In 2020 “REACT EU” was introduced within OP II as additional support for job maintenance in the context of the COVID pandemic crisis, EUR 111,2 million.

<sup>14</sup> [https://finance.gov.mt/en/Library/Documents/Operational%20Programme/Operational%20Programme%20II%20\(2007-2013\).pdf](https://finance.gov.mt/en/Library/Documents/Operational%20Programme/Operational%20Programme%20II%20(2007-2013).pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [Operational Programme II](#)

<sup>16</sup> [The ESF in Malta](#)

and the national level goals of ESF investments led to various interventions, among others, addressing 25+ NEETs.<sup>17</sup>

In all cases where the co-funding source is ESF, the Managing Authority (MA), the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (PPCD)<sup>18</sup> is responsible for the overall fund management (in cooperation with the Ministry). At the same time, different organisations (public bodies, NGOs, social partners, and voluntary organisations) are responsible for implementing the initiatives and programmes. The selection of implementers or beneficiaries can occur via open calls, or funds may be allocated to them directly in cases of projects of particular interest. Intermediate bodies designated by the MA manage aid schemes.

One of the projects identified addressing 25+ NEETs in Malta is funded by the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment. The selected Fund Operator manages the project and Jobsplus implements it. ERASMUS+ funds another project, and since it is a “decentralised action,” it is managed by the European Programmes Agency (EUPA)<sup>19</sup> in Malta. Finally, we listed the overall EU-level ERASMUS+ programme as it may significantly impact 25+ NEETs in Malta. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)<sup>20</sup> in Brussels manages this programme at the European level.

The identified initiatives/projects (potentially) addressing 25+ NEETs since 2007 are the following:

- Higher Education Courses to Address Skill Mismatches in Gozo, ESF 1.23 OP II. 2007-2013<sup>21</sup> (implementer/beneficiary: Ministry of Gozo).
- Addressing Skills Mismatches in the Aviation Maintenance Industry, ESF 1.34 OP II. 2007-2013<sup>22</sup> (implementer/beneficiary: MCAST - Malta College for Art, Science and Technology).<sup>23</sup>
- Wood CPR: Education and Training in Wood Conservation-Restoration, ESF 1.31 OP II. 2007-2013<sup>24</sup> (implementer/beneficiary: Institute of Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The OP II 2007-13 does not mention NEETs as a target group. The OP II 2014-2020 describes NEETs rate as an issue to be addressed, under Priority Axis 1 (Investing in the employability and adaptability of human capital), Specific Objective 1 (Smoothing the transition of youth from work to employment), identifying Youth Guarantee as the main intervention tool.

<sup>18</sup> [Managing Authority](#)

<sup>19</sup> [About Us - European Union Programmes Agency](#)

<sup>20</sup> [About EACEA](#)

<sup>21</sup> [ESF 1.23: Higher Education Courses to Address Skill Mismatches in Gozo - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>22</sup> [ESF 1.34: Addressing Skills Mismatches in the Aviation Maintenance Industry - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>23</sup> [MCAST](#)

<sup>24</sup> [ESF 1.31: Wood CPR: Education and Training in Wood Conservation - Restoration - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Heritage Malta](#)

- Second Step, ESF 2.12 OP II. 2007-2013<sup>26</sup> (implementer/beneficiary: MITA - Malta Information Technology Agency).<sup>27</sup>
- NETWORKED, ESF 2.204 OP II. 2007-2013<sup>28</sup> (implementer/beneficiary: MCA - Malta Communication Authority).<sup>29</sup>
- Support and Sheltered Employment Training for Disadvantaged Groups, ESF 3.113 OP II. 2007-201330 (implementer/beneficiary: Employment and Training Corporation, Public Employment Services, later called Jobsplus).
- REACH, ESF 3.54 OP II. 2007-201331 (implementer/beneficiary: Kirkop Local Council).
- INK Project, ESF 02.054 OP II. 2014-202032 (implementer/beneficiary: Agenzija Sapport).<sup>33</sup>
- Work Programme Initiative, ESF 02.056 OP II. 2014-202034 (implementer/beneficiary: Public Employment Service, Jobsplus).
- Developing the Potential and Skills of Vulnerable Persons, ESF 02.149 OP II. 2014-202035 (implementer/beneficiary: MASE - Malta Association of Supported Employment).<sup>36</sup>
- Documentation = Employability, ESF 02.15637 (implementer/beneficiary: Aditus Foundation).<sup>38</sup>
- SMARTLY - NEETs' employability in the Green and Digital Economy<sup>39</sup> (implementer/beneficiary: Public Employment Service, Jobsplus).
- INTERCEPT<sup>40</sup> (implementer/beneficiary: Public Employment Service, Jobsplus).

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<sup>26</sup> [ESF 2.12: Second Step - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>27</sup> [About Us - MITA](#)

<sup>28</sup> [ESF 2.204: NETWORKED: ICT competences for better employability and workforce adaptability - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Roles and Functions | Malta Communications Authority](#)

<sup>30</sup> [ESF 3.113: Support and Sheltered Employment Training for Disadvantaged Groups including RDPs - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>31</sup> [ESF 3.54: REACH: Opportunities Close to Home - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>32</sup> [INK](#)

<sup>33</sup> [The Agency](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Work Programme Initiative](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Project helps job seekers with disabilities find work](#)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.mase.org.mt/about-us>

<sup>37</sup> [Documentation = Employability: Support Services for the Documentation of Various Communities - aditus foundation](#)

<sup>38</sup> [About us - aditus foundation](#)

<sup>39</sup> [SMARTLY - Neets' Employability in the Green & Digital Economy - CASE - Center for Social and Economic Research](#)

<sup>40</sup> [INTERCEPT - motivating mobilising supporting NEETs green career pathway | EEA Grants](#)

The identified programmes (potentially) addressing 25+ NEETs since 2007 are the following:

- Employability Programme, ESF 2.4 OP II. 2007-201341 (implementer/beneficiary: Employment and Training Corporation, Public Employment Service, later called Jobsplus).
- Enhancing Employability Through Training, ESF 2.201 OP II. 2007-2013 42 (implementer/beneficiary: Employment and Training Corporation, Public Employment Service, later called Jobsplus).
- Training for employment, ESF 01.001 OP II. 2014-202043 (implementer/beneficiary: Public Employment Service, Jobsplus).
- Vaste Programme, ESF 02.048 OP II. 2014-202044 (implementer/beneficiary: Public Employment Service, Jobsplus in partnership with the Lino Spiteri Foundation).<sup>45</sup>
- Erasmus+<sup>46</sup> (implementer: the decentralised actions are managed by the National Agencies (EUPA in Malta) while the centralised ones are managed at a European level by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels).

### 3. Focus of initiatives/programmes

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#### 3.1 Typology of initiatives/programmes and their activities

Initiatives and programmes implemented since 2007 in Malta, (potentially) targeting 25+ NEETs fall under the following categories: educational and/or training projects (8), training programmes (4), support scheme (1), employment project (1), social inclusion project (1), knowledge building and exchange project (1), research project (1) and knowledge building and exchange programme (1).

The research identified the following activities within the framework of the initiatives and programmes: education, training, consultancy, traineeship, learning support, job coaching services, personal assistance allowance, incentives for employers to recruit persons from disadvantaged categories, sheltered employment environment for persons with disability, work placement, mentoring, social inclusion campaign, support in getting proper documentation as a precondition of employment,

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<sup>41</sup> [2.4: Employability Programme - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>42</sup> [ESF 2.201: Enhancing Employability through Training \(EET\) - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>43</sup> Consisted of 4 Schemes: Work Exposure Scheme, Training Pays Scheme, Work Placement Scheme and Traineeship Scheme. Information is available on the second one: [training pays scheme \(tps\)](#)

<sup>44</sup> [VASTE Programme](#)

<sup>45</sup> <https://linospiterifoundation.org/about-us/>

<sup>46</sup> [Erasmus+](#)



research, survey, dissemination of research results, networking, student exchange and knowledge sharing.

As mentioned above, the ESF co-funded most of the initiatives and programmes implemented within the framework of the Operational Programmes II (2007-2013 and 2014-2020). The initiatives and programmes were not evaluated individually, but (as it is an obligation of the member states) the implementation of the entire OPs and the achievements under the different Priority Axis within the OP were monitored, evaluated and reported in the Annual Implementation Reports. The Erasmus+ 2014-2020 Programme's implementation in Malta was subject to a mid-term evaluation.

### 3.2 Geographic coverage of NEETs support

Since Malta is a small and densely populated country, the concepts of "rural areas", "cities" and "suburbs" have a different context than in many other countries. The Rural Development Plan for Malta<sup>47</sup> classifies 46 out of the 68 localities as rural. "Rural areas account for 91% of the island's territory and are home to 64% of the total population. There are no lakes, rivers or mountains, and all areas constitute a continuum from urban to rural."

As in most other countries, Malta has more and less developed areas with significant differences in infrastructure, income and living conditions. Based on income concentration,<sup>48</sup> average disposable income per household,<sup>49</sup> average gross annual basic salaries,<sup>50</sup> the percentage of long-term unemployed,<sup>51</sup> infrastructure, and population structure, Malta's most developed areas are the Northern Harbour and Western districts, while the Southern Harbour and the Gozo and Comino districts<sup>52</sup> are the least developed.

The above indicators do not, however, represent huge (multiple) differences between the most and least developed districts (approximately 20-30 per cent). It is also crucial that the most developed Northern Harbour district has the highest rate (20.8 per cent) of people at risk of poverty.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds (2015)

<sup>48</sup> NSO (2021, p. 31)

<sup>49</sup> NSO (2021, p. 29)

<sup>50</sup> NSO (2021, p. 118)

<sup>51</sup> NSO (2021, p. 106)

<sup>52</sup> GDP per capita data is not available per district (LAU 1), but for NUTS 3 Regions. In 2019 this indicator was 26,780 EUR for Malta and 17,027 EUR for Gozo and Comino, which is a significant difference. (NSO, 2021, p. 131)

<sup>53</sup> NSO (2021, p. 31)

Taking into consideration the relatively similar territorial situation and the small size of the country, it is unsurprising that 16 of the 18 initiatives and programmes cover the entire territory of the country. One project is restricted to Gozo Island and another one to Kirkop municipality's territory.

## 4. Financial aspects of initiatives and programmes

Title of the initiative/programme	Financial allocation in total	Financial allocation for NEETs	Funding source
Higher Education Courses to Address Skill Mismatches in Gozo (ESF 1.23 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 63,038	N/A	ESF
Addressing Skills Mismatches in the Aviation Maintenance Industry (ESF 1.34 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 2,100,432	N/A	ESF
Wood CPR: Education and Training in Wood Conservation - Restoration (ESF 1.31 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 285,867	N/A	ESF
Employability Programme (ESF 2.4 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 4,922,132	N/A	ESF
Second Step (ESF 2.12 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 607,307	N/A	ESF
Enhancing Employability Through Training (ESF 2.201 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 2,890,250	N/A	ESF
NETWORKED (ESF 2.204 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 439,189	N/A	ESF
Support and Sheltered Employment Training for Disadvantaged Groups (ESF 3.113 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 1,392,439	N/A	ESF
REACH (ESF 3.54 OP II. 2007-2013)	EUR 172,127	N/A	ESF
Training for employment (ESF 01.001 OP II. 2014-2020)	EUR 9,550,361	N/A	ESF
Vaste Programme (ESF 02.048 OP II. 2014-2020)	EUR 12,960,115	N/A	ESF
INK Project (ESF 02.054 OP II. 2014-2020)	EUR 2,402,146	N/A	ESF
Work Programme Initiative (ESF 02.056 OP II. 2014-2020)	EUR 2,272,464	N/A	ESF
Developing the Potential and Skills of Vulnerable Persons (ESF 02.149 OP II. 2014-2020)	EUR 85,384	N/A	ESF
Documentation = Employability (ESF 02.156)	EUR 63,833	N/A	ESF
SMARTLY - NEETs' employability in the Green and Digital Economy	EUR 399,965	100%	Erasmus+

INTERCEPT	EUR 1,854,039	100%	EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment
Erasmus+	EUR 14,958,100,000 For Malta 2014-2019 appr. EUR 55,000,000 <sup>54</sup>	N/A	European Commission

The financial scope of the different initiatives and programmes reflect the country’s size and the population’s need for support to integrate into the labour market successfully.

The two projects with the smallest financial scope target special, narrow social groups. The *Higher Education Courses to Address Skill Mismatches in Gozo* project implemented by the Ministry of Gozo offered higher education part-time courses leading to a diploma or degree in finance, information and communications technology, and tourism studies in Gozo.<sup>55</sup> The project targeted the unemployed, underemployed, and those who wished to further their studies in these areas.<sup>56</sup> Its budget was EUR 63,038 (with ESF co-funding), and 65 individuals successfully participated (received certification). The *Documentation = Employability* project implemented by the Aditus Foundation provided support services to persons who encounter difficulties securing updated and accurate documentation, especially for migrants, refugees and Maltese persons and families facing challenges, such as trans and non-binary persons, persons with mental health problems and persons with disabilities.<sup>57</sup> Its budget was EUR 63,833 (with ESF co-funding).

The biggest budget among the listed initiatives and programmes is the *Erasmus+ Programme*, which invested approximately EUR 55 million in Malta between 2014 and 2020. Besides that, Jobsplus implemented the two programmes with the largest financial scope. The *Vaste Programme*, in partnership with the Lino Spiteri Foundation,<sup>58</sup> facilitated the working-age population’s access to developing knowledge, skills and competences. The programme offered training assistance to improve job seekers' skills entering the labour market and to upgrade the existing skills of individuals wishing to

<sup>54</sup> [More than 30,000 participants in the ERASMUS+ programme 2014-2020](#)

<sup>55</sup> The smaller island has approximately 31.000 inhabitants

<sup>56</sup> [ESF 1.23: Higher Education Courses to Address Skill Mismatches in Gozo - Investing In Your Future](#)

<sup>57</sup> [Documentation = Employability: Support Services for the Documentation of Various Communities - aditus foundation](#)

<sup>58</sup> <https://linospiterifoundation.org/about-us/>

re-enter the labour market. The programme also assisted job seekers in finding alternative employment and/or acquiring new skills to meet the labour market demands.<sup>59</sup> The project targeted all registered job seekers in Malta and had a EUR 12,960,115 budget (with ESF co-funding). The second Jobsplus programme was the *Training for Employment Programme*, implemented via four different financial support schemes (i.e., Work Exposure Scheme, Training Pays Scheme, Work Placement Scheme and Traineeship Scheme). The programme's total budget was EUR 9,550,361 (with ESF co-funding) and it targeted the working-age population of Malta.

## 5. Implementation of initiatives and programmes

### 5.1 Project implementers

Title of the initiative/programme	Name of the implementer	No of projects	Degree of reflection of NEETs	Period of implementation
Higher Education Courses to Address Skill Mismatches in Gozo (ESF 1.23 OP II. 2007-2013)	Ministry of Gozo	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2008-2015
Addressing Skills Mismatches in the Aviation Maintenance Industry (ESF 1.34 OP II. 2007-2013)	MCAST (Malta College for Art, Science and Technology)	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2008-2013
Wood CPR: Education and Training in Wood Conservation - Restoration (ESF 1.31 OP II. 2007-2013)	Institute of Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2008-2012
Employability Programme (ESF 2.4 OP II. 2007-2013)	Employment and Training Corporation (later called Jobsplus)	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2008-2015
Second Step (ESF 2.12 OP II. 2007-2013)	Malta Information	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was	2008-2012

<sup>59</sup> [VASTE Programme](#)

	Technology Agency (MITA)		not an explicit target group of the programme.	
Enhancing Employability Through Training (ESF 2.201 OP II. 2007-2013)	Employment and Training Corporation (later called Jobsplus)	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2012-2015
NETWORKED (ESF 2.204 OP II. 2007-2013)	Malta Communication Authority (MCA)	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2013-2015
Support and Sheltered Employment Training for Disadvantaged Groups (ESF 3.113 OP II. 2007-2013)	Employment and Training Corporation (later called Jobsplus)	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2011-2015
REACH (ESF 3.54 OP II. 2007-2013)	Kirkop Local Council	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2008-2015
Training for employment (ESF 01.001 OP II. 2014-2020)	Jobsplus	4 financial support schemes	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2016-2023
Vaste Programme (ESF 02.048 OP II. 2014-2020)	Jobsplus and Lino Spiteri Foundation	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2016-2023
INK Project (ESF 02.054 OP II. 2014-2020)	Agenzija Sapport	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2017-2021

Work Programme Initiative (ESF 02.056 OP II. 2014-2020)	Jobsplus	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2015-2021
Developing the Potential and Skills of Vulnerable Persons (ESF 02.149 OP II. 2014-2020)	Malta Association of Supported Employment (MASE)	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs, but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2021-2022
Documentation = Employability (ESF 02.156)	Aditus Foundation	1	It potentially targeted 25+ NEETs but it was not an explicit target group of the programme.	2021-2022
SMARTLY - NEETs' employability in the Green and Digital Economy	Jobsplus	1	The entire project targets 25+ NEETs	2021-2024
INTERCEPT	Jobsplus	1	The entire project targets 25+ NEETs	2021-2024
Erasmus+	EUPA in Malta, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels	above 700 projects in Malta	25+ NEETs is not a designated target group, however strengthening the employability of young people is one of the priorities.	2014-2020

The analysis found that the circle of employment-related project implementers is diverse and appropriate concerning the needs in Malta.

Of the 18 initiatives and programmes potentially targeting 25+ NEETs in Malta, the Public Employment Service (*earlier called Employment and Training Corporation, now called Jobsplus*) implemented eight. The central role of Jobsplus in employment-related initiatives and programmes is adequate as this public institution has the dedicated role, capacity, knowledge, skills, resources and experience to implement them. A governmental body (*Ministry of Gozo*) implemented one initiative, and a municipal council (*Kirkop local council*) implemented another. Other public bodies implemented initiatives and programmes: three public agencies (*Malta Information Technology Agency, Agenzija Support*

responsible for supported living of people with disabilities, and the *European Union Programme Agency*); and one authority (the *Malta Communication Authority*). Education institutions implemented two initiatives: the *Malta College for Art, Science and Technology*, responsible for vocational education and training in Malta, and the *Institute of Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage*. Altogether three NGOs implemented initiatives potentially addressing 25+ NEETs: the *Lino Spiteri Foundation* (in cooperation with Jobsplus), the *Malta Association of Supported Employment* and the *Aditus Foundation*.

## 5.2 Target groups of NEETs

Similarly to other European Union member states, the main funding source of all employment-related initiatives and programmes in Malta is ESF. All ESF-funded initiatives and programmes were planned and implemented under the Operational Programmes II in 2007-13 and 2014-2020. The OP II 2007-2013 does not mention NEETs as a target group. The OP II 2014-2020 describes the NEET rate as an issue to address under Priority Axis 1 (Investing in the employability and adaptability of human capital), Specific Objective 1 (Smoothing the transition of youth from work to employment), identifying Youth Guarantee Initiative (YGI) as the main intervention tool. As noted above, the YGI Scheme targets young people aged 15-25, but in the future, Malta plans to extend the age bracket up to 29 years.

The fact that the analysed Operational Programmes, the Priority Axis and Specific Objectives under the OPs do not mention 25+ NEETs as a designated target group does not mean that initiatives and programmes under the OPs do not address 25+ NEETs. Young people between 25 and 29 years of age, not in employment, education or training, are a diverse group with different needs. They are members of other significant social groups, including long-term unemployed, registered job seekers, inactive, vulnerable, in need of education and skill development, adults excluded from the formal education system, women who wish to return to the labour market, and persons with disability. A wide range of initiatives and programmes under the Operational Programmes address the employment-related needs of these groups.

Based on the available information, the mapping exercise mostly identified initiatives and programmes that *potentially* addressed 25+ NEETs in Malta since 2007. Since, in most cases (16 initiatives and programmes out of 18), 25+ NEETs were not mentioned as a target group, there is no specific data on what proportion of the interventions benefited 25+ NEETs.

The research identified two programmes (funded by Erasmus+ and the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment) within the 2021-2027 programming period that explicitly and exclusively address the issue of 25+ NEETs. Both programmes involve international collaborations. As noted above, Malta has recently recognised 25+ NEETs as a specific target group with articulated needs.

## 6. Conclusions

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Malta is the smallest European Union member state both in terms of population and area, while its unemployment and youth unemployment rates have remained significantly below the EU average over the last decade.<sup>60</sup> All these aspects must be considered when analysing the funding sources and initiatives or programmes targeting the issue of 25+ NEETs. The research concluded that, until recently, Malta did not prioritise 25+ NEETs as a target group. However, young people in this category are part of other social groups targeted by employment-related initiatives and programmes. Based on the analysis, the geographical coverage, thematic focus, financial scope and the circle of involved stakeholders and implementers are adequate to address the challenges rooted in the situation of 25+ NEETs in Malta.

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<sup>60</sup> Eurostat (2022 b)



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