

Youth Friendliness Indicator

A critical assessment of the situation of young workers
in European labour markets



Introduction

Generally bad chances of finding a job for young people

Low employability of young people not due to basic skill shortages

Easier transition by robust labour market and collective bargaining

Generally worse jobs for younger people in relation to established employees

Good VET connected to lower NEET

Significantly higher risks of unemployment for young people

Insufficient job prospects and fragile employment security for young workers

Especially low remuneration of young people

Not more social policy but specifically tailored policy measures

There has been no positive shift despite a decline in youth unemployment.

Even though there has been a decrease in youth unemployment in Europe in the recent years, after a sharp rise in its rates following the latest economic crisis, the situation for young adults on the labour market in the countries of the European Union remains difficult. The unemployment rate among young people is still nearly two and a half times higher than the rate of people who are 25 and older.

The growth in employment among young people in the recent years has been weaker than among older adults. For many young people, it is still difficult to find employment that would adequately reflect their education, be covered by social protection and well paid.

The “Youth Guarantee” initiative introduced by the European Commission and the “Youth Employment Initiative” support programme may have influenced the policies of individual countries, however, could not achieve the defined objectives.

The programmes were aimed at ensuring that all young people under 25 years would – within four months after they became unemployed or graduated from school – find a job position, or be offered an educational measure or training/internship position. And yet, in spring 2017, almost a half of unemployed young people were still jobless for at least six months.

The youth employment growth was mostly a result of – as opposed to the groups of older workers – fixed-term contracts and, to a great extent, also part-time jobs, i.e. primarily such jobs that pose further risks. This is all happening despite the fact that youths and young adults are comparatively well educated. ■

The quality and compatibility of vocational education is essential.

Generally, the higher the quality of vocational education and the better such education reflects the requirements of the labour market, the more favourable the chances of young people to find employment. Such compatibility is, however, not yet sufficiently provided.

On the whole, in countries with a system of dual education, the phases of youth unemployment tend to be shorter, as they are often hired by training companies.

Good collaboration between training facilities and companies is an essentially important condition for an improvement of the transition to employment. Therefore, it should be practiced in all countries, independent of the system of vocational training.

The improvement of vocational education is a key enabler of the entry of young people in the labour market. ■

Youth unemployment is an issue of the whole society.

The tough employment situation of youths and young adults has short-term and medium-term negative consequences for the society.

The work capacity of young people is an important resource, which is not being currently used enough and sometimes not at all, or not sufficiently maintained and developed. This is particularly crucial for societies that are shaped by rapid technological changes and thus are in need of constant progressive development of work qualifications and competences.

As long as young people do not succeed in transiting from education to employment, they lack future prospects. Without a secure financial background, young people can potentially participate in social life only in a very limited manner.

This, in turn, can damage the trust of young people in political institutions and weaken social cohesion. ■

Factsheets

The ETUC Youth Committee has used public data and its own expert survey conducted within EU member states to produce factsheets covering the following themes and/or theses:

1. In general, young people have fairly bad chances of finding a job, regardless of its quality. The situation is even more worrying if we take into account the quality of this employment.
2. The survey shows that while employers claim that young people's basic skills have shortages causing low employability, there are experts from the field of science who think that this problem is rather insignificant.
3. The number of jobs available and the quality of working conditions and collective bargaining has a significant effect on the chances of young people to get a good job.
4. Young people have worse working conditions in most countries than established active (older) people on the labour market.
5. Groups of young people, e.g. with disability or migrations background, should be included.
6. The quality of VET correlates with the NEET rate of the countries. Where there is a good quality VET available, fewer young people are inactive.
7. Young people have limited access to employment security. They are often employed in fixed-term or temporary jobs and are being exploited in internships as a substitute for employment.
8. When it comes to money, young people are also having troubles. More than 60% of the answers to the survey said, that young people have rather bad, bad, or very bad level and adequacy of remuneration.
9. In general, experts agree that existing policy goals are important. The focus of attention of the policy measures for young people shows that they are also used as a kind of social policy. ■

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In general, young people have fairly bad chances of finding a job, regardless of its quality. The situation is even more worrying if we take into account the quality of this employment.

Unemployment and NEET – two different indicators describing participation in the labour market.

The transition from education to working life, i.e. the acquisition of the first paid job, is an important step in the life of young people. For some of them, this step can cause difficulties. Young people may not find a job immediately after completing their education, remain economically inactive for a longer time, or become unemployed. The much higher youth unemployment rate, in comparison with general unemployment, is a testament to the fact that it is particularly difficult at the beginning of a person’s working life to find a job – the entry in the labour market is not immediately successful.

In addition to the youth unemployment rate, the so-called NEET rate is another indicator of how successful the entry in working life is. The acronym “NEET” stands for “Young People Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training”.

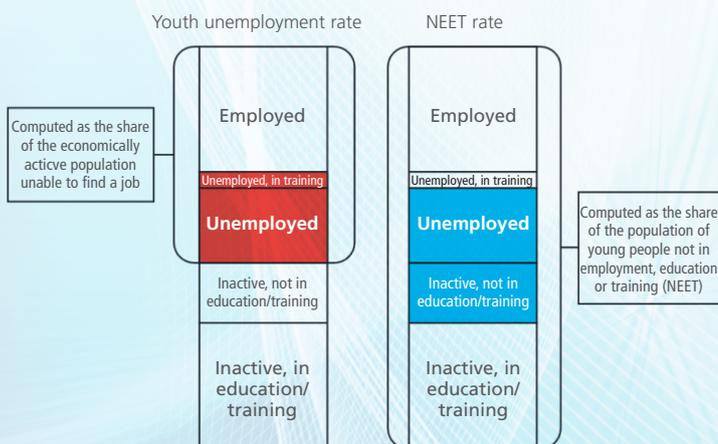
It records people who are not active in education, training or continuing education. Figure 1 shows the difference between the unemployment rate and the NEET rate.

The EU uses the NEET concept as a powerful tool to improve the understanding of how vulnerable young people can be in terms of their participation in the labour market and social inclusion.

This is because the NEET concept includes also people, who would otherwise be noted as “inactive” in labour market statistics and thus remain invisible (cf. Eurofound 2016). For instance, many young people have extended their education as a result of the rising unemployment during the economic crisis (Düll et al. 2016).

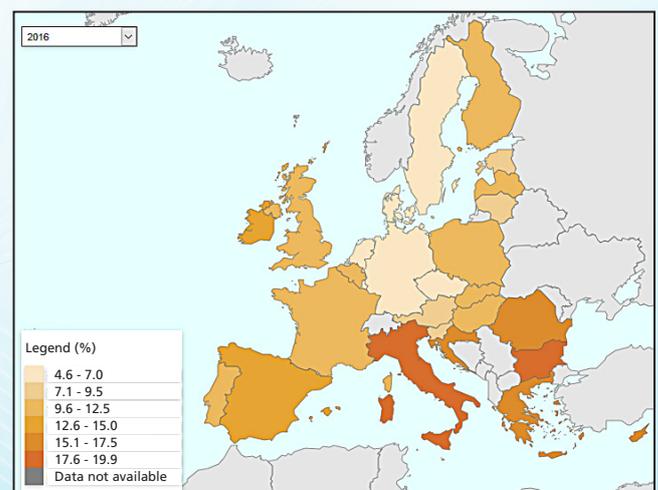
In individual countries of the EU, NEET rates are very different (cf. Figure 2).

Figure 1: Unemployment rate and NEET rate



Source: Eurofound

Figure 2: EU countries by NEET rates



Source: Eurostat

For the purposes of online expert surveys¹ conducted by the ETUC-Youth Committee, and in order to expertly assess the situation and prospects of employment of young people in Europe, EU countries have been divided into three groups according to their NEET rates (cf. Figure 3):

- Countries with below-average NEET rates (<10)
- countries with average NEET rates (10 to 15)
- countries with above-average NEET rates (>15).

The NEET indicator represents not only the extent of the integration and participation chances of young people on the labour market, but also the risks of social exclusion. In EU countries, social participation is largely influenced by the participation in education and employment.

Figure 3: Three groups of countries according to NEET rates (in percent)

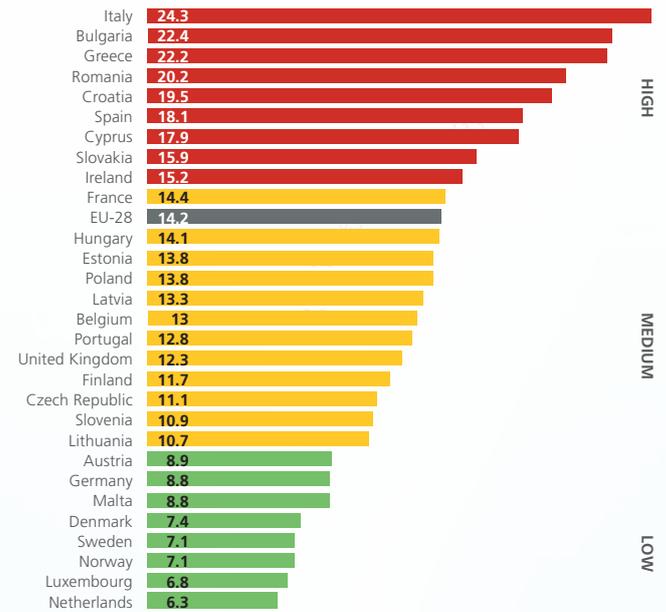
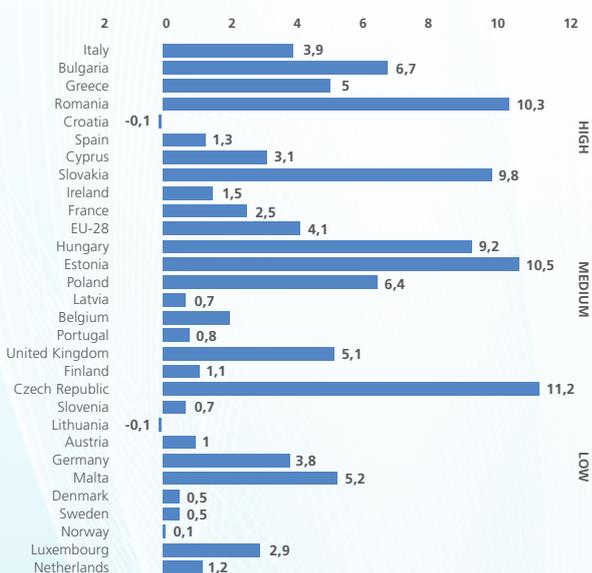


Figure 3b: Difference of NEET rates of women and men (in percent points)



Source: Eurostat

Source: Eurostat

Women are excluded from education and employment to a greater extent than men (cf. Figure 3b). On average, the NEET rate of women in the individual countries is almost 4 percent points higher than the NEET rate of men. In this respect, the differences vary considerably. The gender difference ranges between 11 percent points in the Czech Republic and very minimal gaps in Lithuania and Croatia. The different involvement of men and women can be explained, among other things, also by the still dominantly by women provided family care. However, gender segmented labour markets and indirect discrimination might also play a role. ■

Eurostat: Unemployment and NEET Data.

In countries with higher unemployment, there is usually also a higher rate of people who are neither in education, nor in employment.

The trend shown in Figure 4 clearly demonstrates this connection.

Overall, there are two breakaway groups: The first group includes countries with an above-average share of young people who are not in employment, school or training (NEET) and have an average unemployment rate, e.g. Bulgaria and Romania.

Figure 4: Unemployment rates and NEET rates



Data Source: Eurostat, c/o FIA

¹ The survey was conducted in spring 2017 in 24 European countries.

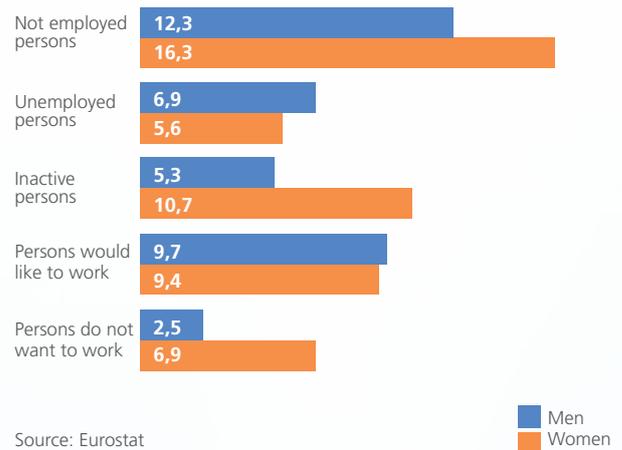
The other group includes countries with average unemployment rates, but with considerably below-average NEET rates. In particular, countries such as the Netherlands, Norway or Denmark, but also Sweden and Luxembourg.

On the whole, it becomes apparent that a high NEET proportion also means a high share of (involuntary) part-time work in this age group.

According to Eurostat data, the NEET rates group mostly includes people who would like to have a job, and there is only a minority of people who do not want to be employed, among them more women than men (cf. Figure 5).

Women are often NEET in the context of welfare regulations (OECD 2016), i.e. they make use of social and political regulations, such as the parental leave, and are solely for this reason (temporarily) not in education or employment. A part of NEETs are not employed due to unavailable affordable child care. Providing affordable child care facilities is an important condition allowing young people to participate in education and employment. Particularly in the family stage, part-time regulations may prove to be beneficial.

Figure 5:
NEET in ages 15-29 according to status and gender (rates in percent)



However, corresponding offers should be made to women and men. The largest part of NEETs would like to have employment and was excluded from the labour market against their will. A smaller part, on the other hand, is currently not looking for a job and has partly already given up. When the job opportunities are qualitatively weak, even socially accepted "alternative roles" are sometimes chosen (e.g. housewife or mother) in order to avoid taking bad jobs. ■

The conditions for labour market entry at the beginning of working life tend to be unfavourable.

As part of the online expert survey conducted by the ETUC-Youth Committee in 24 European countries, a critical assessment was made of the employment chances for young people. This question was posed: "How do you assess the chances young people have of finding a job when they start their working life, independent of the quality of this job?"

57 percent of the interviewed experts saw the chances that young people would find (any) job at the beginning of their professional career to be rather bad. On the other hand, 43 percent assessed the chances to be rather good.

There is a clear connection with NEET rates: in countries with low NEET rates, the chances are thought to be somewhat better, while countries

with average rates display mixed chances. And in countries with above-average rates, the chances are comparably worse.

Estimates made by experts were very different – depending on which group of participants they were part of. Across all countries, only 5 percent of the representatives of trade unions and NGOs, and only 9 percent of scientists, assessed the chances of young people at the start of their working life to be "very good" (cf. Figure 6). On the other hand, the group including employers, governments and labour market service communicated a significantly more positive estimation of job chances for young people. However, more than a third (38 percent) of this group assessed the chances of young people to enter the labour market as "bad" or "very bad".

The most frequent justification for the rather critical assessment was that labour demand is too small and that the basic knowledge taught to young people in schools frequently does not meet the professional labour requirements. The latter was cited as a relevant obstacle particularly by the expert group of employers, governments and labour market service, while the interviewed scientists did not see it as a relevant cause for weak chances of youth to enter the labour market. Also the interviewed union members and NGO representatives listed this as a rather rare cause for their critical assessment.

On the other hand, if there were generally positive assessments, these were backed by claims that there is high demand for young workforce as well as a broad offer of education and qualification places, and that the system of vocational training works well. ■

Figure 6: Assessment of chances to find a job by young people starting their working life by participant groups (in percent)



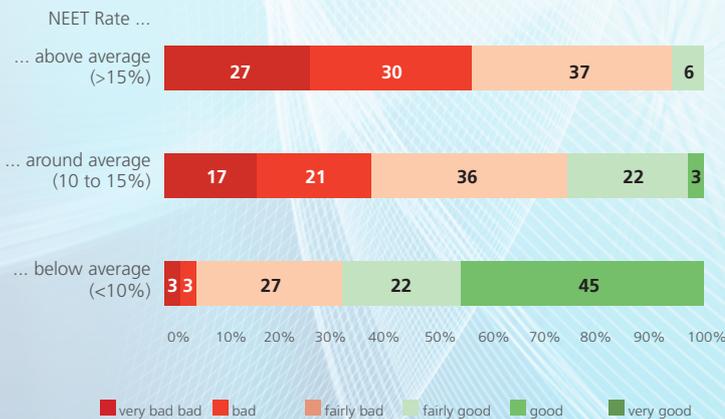
Source: European Youth Friendliness Survey, c/o FIA

It is even more difficult to find a GOOD job at the start of one's working life. This is the case particularly in countries with high NEET rates.

It is even more critical in cases when the assessment of chances includes the wish to get not any, but a good job. Almost three quarters of experts (73 percent) judged these chances to be rather slim. The employers/governments/labour market service group was, once again, visibly more optimistic in her assessments than trade unions/NGOs and scientists.

The division by countries clearly shows that high NEET rates are connected with slim or very slim chances to find a good job. And vice versa, in countries with below-average NEET rates, the majority believes these chances are good. Over two thirds of experts (67 percent) in these countries gave a rather positive assessment (cf. Figure 7).

Figure 7: Assessment of chances to find a GOOD job by young people entering their working life by country groups (in percent)



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Bad chances to find a good job are frequently brought into a connection with bad remuneration and a high proportion of fixed-term contracts, but often also with regional and industry-specific insufficient offer of jobs that would adequately reflect the achieved education.

One of the critical factors often seen by trade unions/ NGOs and scientists (but seldom by employers/ governments/labour administration) are fixed-term contracts.

However, there was unanimity among all participants, who agreed that young employees get lower pay than older employees.

As long as the interviewees evaluated the chances to get good jobs in their countries positively, their reasoning included the availability of a sufficient number of jobs that were education-appropriate, low health risk in the workplace, flexible wage and occupational provisions when starting employment. ■

Conclusion

- Labour market opportunities for young people starting their working life in EU countries are currently deficient. A large proportion of youths are neither in employment, nor in training.
- The majority of youths and young adults, who are currently part of the NEET group, would like to have employment. Only an insignificant minority does not want to have a job.
- Even more difficult than finding any job is finding a GOOD job. This is caused particularly by the fact that many jobs are poorly paid and/or offered for a fixed period of time.
- Experts from the group of employers, politicians and administration assessed the situation much more positively than the representatives of trade unions, NGOs and the field of science.

Sources

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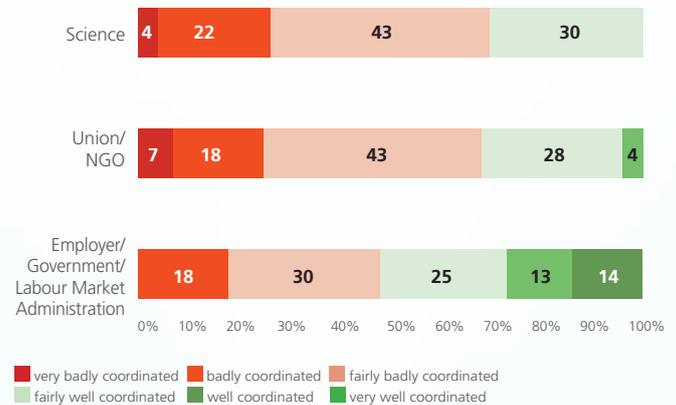
Compatibility between vocational education and labour market requirements.

Vocational training should prepare young people for professional life – focusing on helping them meeting the qualification criteria of an economy that generally requires growing qualifications and competences because of digitalization. Therefore, they should acquire knowledge, skills and competences which could be used at work. The more successful this acquisition, the easier the integration into the job environment (cf. OECD 2016). In this process, the different vocational training systems in individual countries affect the transition to the job market (cf. Eichhorst et al. 2015).

According to expert opinions, vocational training has been insufficiently adjusted to the job market requirements.

70 percent of the interviewed scientists and 68 percent of representatives of trade unions and NGOs have estimated that vocational training in their countries only weakly reflects business requirements (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 1: Estimation of the extent to which vocational training is adjusted to job market requirements



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Employers, politicians and administrators are more optimistic in this area, even though 48 percent of them have also presented rather critical estimates. ■

Reasons for slim job opportunities for young people as viewed by experts.

When asked about the causes of the generally slim chances of young people entering the job market, experts could choose from various predefined options.² On the whole, low demand for young employees was unanimously cited as one of the most important reasons why young people face bad chances of getting a job. The estimations of the three participant groups show only minimal differences (cf. Figure 2).

However, there are also other causes, e.g. the offer of training positions, low level of acceptance of degrees in companies, weak vocational education, etc. Evidently, several factors crucially influence the fact that young people find it very difficult to start their working life.

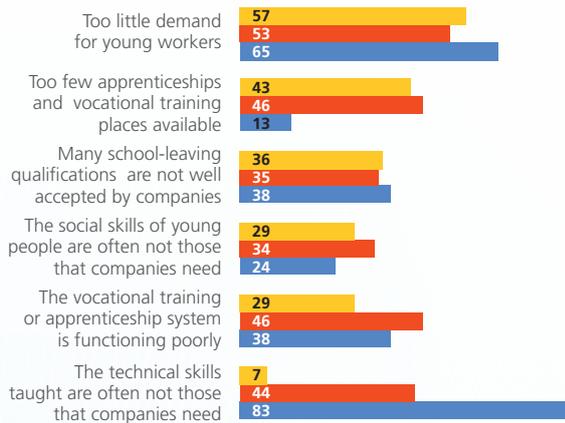
The respondents from the three groups of participants provided similar answers in many aspects, however, two differences stand out:

First, employers, politicians and labour administration/LM-Services consider the low offer of education and training positions to be less of a factor influencing the difficulty of entering the labour market than scientists, trade unions and NGO representatives.

Second, there is a great discrepancy in relation to the following argument: "The basic knowledge mediated to young people by schools rarely correspond with business demands." The employers (83 percent) consider this to be one of the major reasons why entry into the job market is not successful, while trade union representatives stated this as a factor much more seldom (44 percent), and the interviewed scientists saw this as nearly no real problem at all (7 percent). The scientists' assessment can be seen as an indicator of the fact that the employers' critical assessment of the basic knowledge of young people might be, at least partly, driven by interest.

² They were asked to list three most important causes.

Figure 2:
The most important reasons for slim job opportunities of young people as viewed by the experts (in percent)



Science Union/NGO Employer/Government/Labour Market Administration

Source: EU's own online expert survey

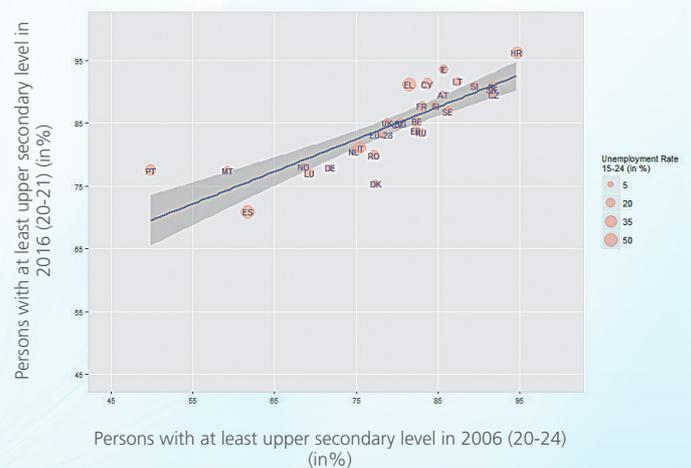
Lastly, the way the vocational training system is constructed may also be relevant. Studies have shown that vocational training systems with a practical work focus, which are closely connected to businesses, make the transition to the job market easier than purely educational training systems (cf. Gangl 2001). ■

The qualifications of young job applicants have improved over time. However, this does not automatically result in a better employment situation.

In the last decade, nearly all countries have displayed an improvement in the qualifications of young people (cf. Figure 3).

Portugal has shown strong improvement in this area, as well as Greece, Cyprus, Ireland and Croatia. In Spain, the proportion has shown a rise that is only below the average, while in Denmark, for example, it has slightly fallen on a high level which is best seen as a stable development. For young men and women this trend is very much the same. With the exception of Romania the proportion of young women with at least upper secondary education is the same or somewhat higher as of men in 2016.

Figure 3:
Growth of the proportion of young people with at least upper secondary education, 2006 and 2016

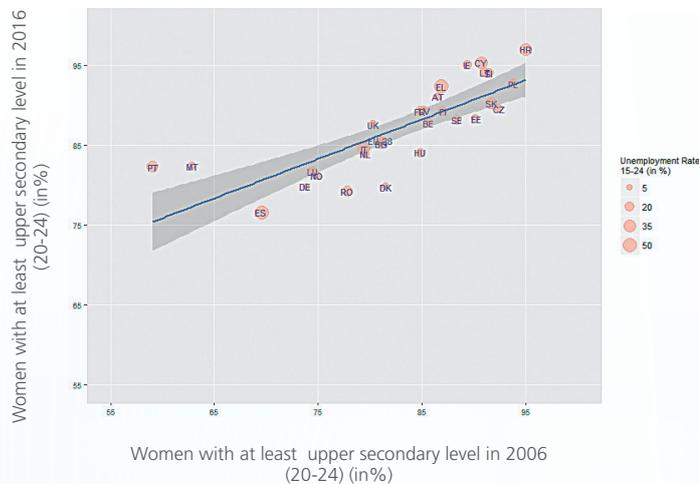


Data Source: Eurostat, c/o 2017 FIA

There is no correlation with the unemployment rates and NEET rates. High and rising qualification does not automatically result in a better employment situation. For example, Portugal and Greece show improvement in qualifications, but comparatively high unemployment rates. This shows that the qualification required of young people in order to allow them to enter the labour market might

be an important, but not sufficient condition for employment integration. Labour market-specific measures are also necessary to extend the job offer, if well-qualified young people are to find jobs. Such measures could include, for example, job creation schemes, or other measures aimed at working time reduction, which would divide the work volume among more people.

Figure 3f:
Growth of the proportion of young women with at least upper secondary education, 2006 and 2016



Data Source: Eurostat, c/o 2017 FIA

Brenke (2017) has demonstrated that even though unemployment rates decline with growing qualifications (i.e. a good qualification accompanies better job opportunities), young people are disadvantaged in comparison with older people.

Even with equal qualification, youth unemployment rates are significantly higher than those of adults.

In many countries, e.g. Romania, Anglo-Saxon countries, France, Belgium and Southern Europe, young people with middle-level education suffer from a higher unemployment rate than adults with no education. The difference between unemployment rates of young and older people is particularly large with those with higher qualifications. This indicates an insider-outsider phenomenon, which disadvantages younger people on the labour market: those who cannot cite references find it more difficult to have access to good jobs. What matters on the labour market is practically acquired work experience and knowledge. Young people have to be given the chance to even start gaining experience. ■

Conclusion

- Vocational education is often not sufficiently adjusted to the requirements of employment system. In order to achieve better compatibility of vocational training to the employment system, a closer collaboration between training institutions and companies/administrators is necessary, including adjustments of curricula to current developments and requirements.
- The causes for bad labour market chances of young people, as unanimously assessed by experts, lie mostly in low demand for work force.
- A significant cause for slim labour market opportunities of young people, according to employers, politicians and administrators, is that there is a lack of knowledge on the party of young people. The assessment of trade unionists, NGOs and scientists believe that this existing lack of knowledge is not dealt with.
- In the last ten years, statistics have displayed an improvement of qualifications of young people.
- Even though higher qualification is connected with lower unemployment rates, young people are disadvantaged over the older population even if the qualification is the same.

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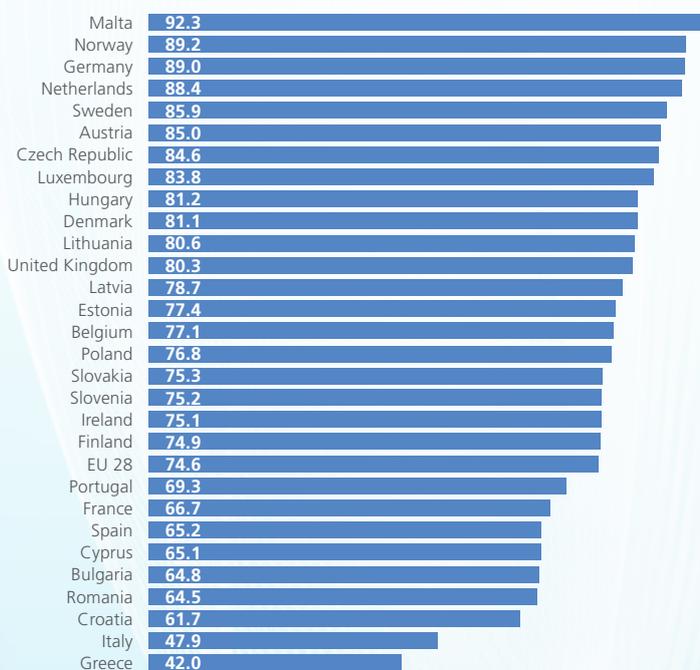
Not more social policy but specifically tailored policy measures

The transition from education to employment is more successful, if there is a good overall situation on the labour market.

The share of people who find employment within three years after completing their highest level of education is an indicator of the chances of young people to find a good job.

This share strongly fluctuates among the EU countries (cf. Figure 1). It is very high in Malta, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands, but particularly low in Greece and Italy.

Figure 1: Share of young people who find employment within 3 years after completing their highest level of education (in percent)



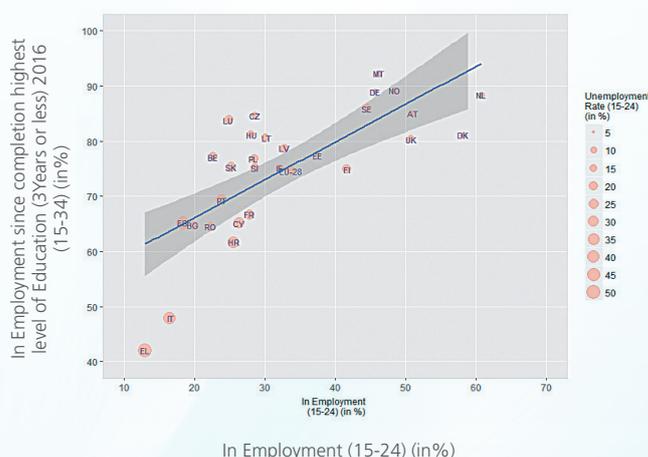
Source: Eurostat 2016

There is an evident connection here:

The higher the employment rate and the lower the unemployment, the bigger generally also the share of young people who find gainful employment within three years after completing their education.

In Greece and Italy, there is very low employment rate and the transition from education or training to employment is difficult. Similarly critical is the situation in Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Croatia, Portugal and Cyprus, where there are low employment rates and less than average success rate of transition from education to employment.

Figure 2: Employment rate and transition rate 3 years after completion of education



Data Source: Eurostat, c/o 2017 FIA

In Denmark and the United Kingdom, the employment level is high, however, the transition to employment is slightly lower than one can expect – while in Malta and Germany, it is higher than one can expect according the relation of employment situation and transition from school to work.

In Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Belgium, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland and Latvia, the transition is comparatively successful, even though the employment rates are below average, which might be related with higher unemployment rates. ■

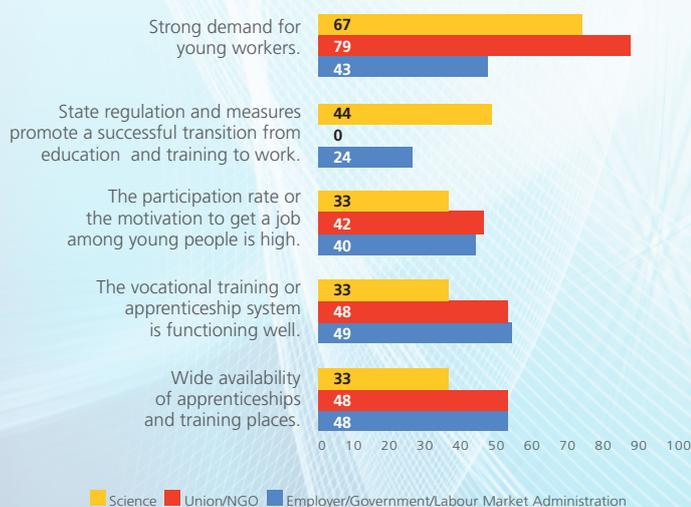
The labour market is the ultimate factor in determining job opportunities. In order to acquire a GOOD job, good working conditions are necessary, and there have to be relevant pay regulations and collective agreements.

The labour market is the major factor determining the job opportunities of young people. This is also proved by the expert survey conducted by the ETUC Youth Committee.

The respondents from trade unions and NGOs, as well as the scientists, believe that the main reason for good chances of young people to enter the labour market is a correspondingly great demand for young workers (79 and 67 percent, respectively, cf. Figure 3). Experts from businesses, politicians and administrators listed this reason less frequently (43 percent), for obvious reasons, but the demand for workforce is in this group also one of the three most important causes for good job opportunities for young people.

Moreover, there are also other significant factors to be taken into consideration: an extensive offer of training positions, a functional system of vocational education and, last but not least, the employment wishes of young people. Government measures can also encourage the transition from education to active employment.

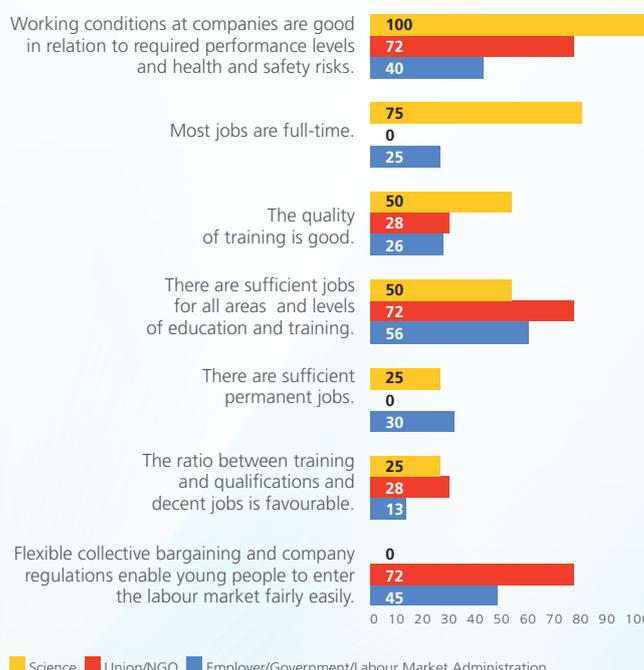
Figure 3: The most important reasons for good chances of entering the labour market for young people, from the experts' point of view (in percent)



Source: EU's own online expert survey

If it is not just about employment as such, but about the entry in a qualitatively high-grade employment, scientists, trade unionists and NGOs are unanimous in listing good working conditions in companies, in reference to health and safety conditions.

Figure 4: The most important reasons for good chances of acquiring a GOOD job (in percent)



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Equally, the respondents from trade unions and NGOs listed flexible pay regulations and collective agreements, as well as job offers that would be adequate for all educational directions and levels.

The latter is important to enable the acquisition of employment that adequately reflects the achieved qualification.

Pay regulations and collective agreements can secure good remuneration and demand-driven working time arrangements, as well as regulate the possibilities of further qualification, participation, health protection measures, and so on.

Basically, the transition from education to a qualitatively high-grade employment is conditioned – i.e. a whole range of various conditions have to be met, both conditions on the labour market as well as in companies.

According to Eurofound (2017), the working conditions, as well as the risks related thereto, vary with age. For younger people, the most relevant are risks connected with employment stability, which result from jobs in the so-called atypical forms of employment. ■

Conclusion

- Labour market entry is generally better for young people when the situation on the labour market is good, i.e. when employment rates are high and unemployment rates low.
- There are prerequisites for the entry into good employment.
- Labour market conditions have to be met, i.e. demand for work force should reflect the offer of young employees in terms of the extent and level of their qualifications.
- Working conditions have to reflect the tough requirements of labour law and health protection, remuneration, labour organization, worker participation and development possibilities in the light of the wishes and needs of young employees.
- Flexible pay agreements and collective bargaining should regulate employment conditions and ensure the maintaining of standards.

Sources

- Eurofound (2017), Working Conditions of Workers of Different Ages: European Working Conditions Survey 2015, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) (2015): Gute Arbeitsplätze für Menschen: Unser Weg in die Zukunft, Brüssel.
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Low employability of young people not due to basic skill shortages

Easier transition by robust labour market and collective bargaining

Generally worse jobs for younger people in relation to established employees

Good VET connected to lower NEET

Significantly higher risks of unemployment for young people

Insufficient job prospects and fragile employment security for young workers

Especially low remuneration of young people

Not more social policy but specifically tailored policy measures

Young people have worse working conditions in most countries than established active (older) people on the labour market.

In connection with the unemployment and employment rates, as well as in relation to the employment conditions, there are big differences between youth and young adults on the one hand, and well-established older employees on the other. This affects, for example, the type of work contract (concluded for definite or indefinite periods), remuneration conditions and/or the salary, as well as other indicators of social protection.

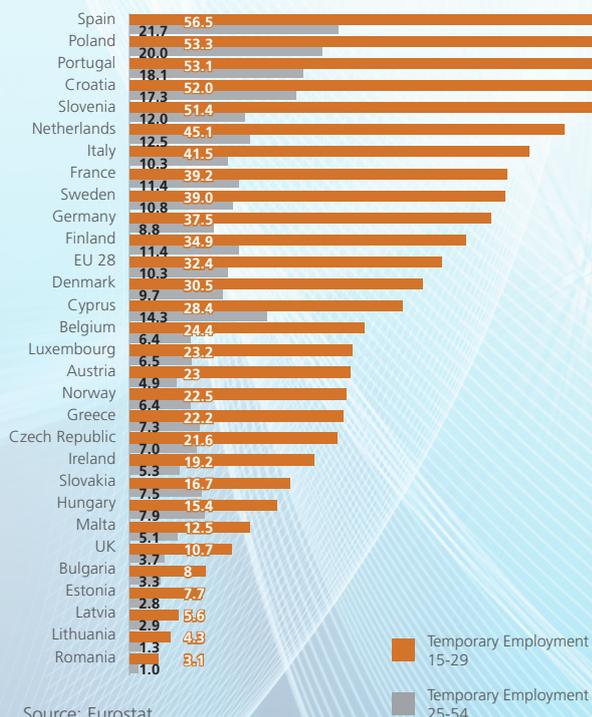
The individual risk of unemployment is, to a great extent, influenced by such factors as gender, migration background and especially education status. In particular, it is the low level of qualifications of young people who face high risk of unemployment, although in the countries of Southern Europe, also highly qualified people find it difficult to get a job.

Fixed-term employment is often a common practice for young people.

A remarkable part of work contracts of persons between age 15 to 29 are fixed-term contracts. This applies to employees of all age groups, but particularly to the younger population. Figure 1 makes it evident that the share of employees working under fixed-term contracts is much higher among younger employees than in the group of 25 to 54-year-olds. A special analysis of the employment survey (DGB-Index Gute Arbeit) for the period 2012-2017 demonstrates that many employees working in fixed-term contracts are under great pressure due to uncertain future prospects (Institut DGB-Index Gute Arbeit 2018).

Even though the share of fixed-term employment varies from country to country – from 1 percent in Romania to about 22 percent in Spain – the same finding has been arrived at in all European countries: the rate of fixed-term employment is considerably higher with younger employees. The smallest difference is in Latvia, where youth and young adults work “only” 1.9 times more often under fixed-term contracts than the older group (25 to 54-year-olds), while the greatest disparity is in Austria, where the fixed-term employment rate among young people is 4.7 times higher than in the older group.

Figure 1:
Share of employees working under fixed-term contracts – Comparison by age groups



Source: Eurostat

Figure 1f:
Share of female and male employees working under fixed-term contracts – Comparison by sex (women – men, in percent points)



Source: Eurostat

Generally, with a few exceptions, women in EU countries are given fixed-term contracts more frequently than men. However, this difference is much less pronounced among young people than among the older employees. The age difference is the greatest in Slovenia (16.7 percent points) and Finland (10.4 percent points).

The sharp rise of the curve in Figure 2 substantiates the above mentioned finding that young people, who are starting their employment, work more often under fixed-term contracts than older employees in all EU countries. The EU-28 average difference between the share of fixed-term employment among younger and older age groups is approximately 22 percent points or in other words: it is 3 times higher among the younger people than among the age group 25 to 54.

Figure 1mf: Comparison of proportion of men and women working under fixed-term contracts



Source: Eurostat, c/o 2017 FIA

Ultimately, the rates of fixed-term contracts among men and women are strongly affected by country-specific labour markets (cf. Figure 1mf).

The data display a clear correlation:

The bigger the spread of fixed-term contracts among older employees, the higher it is also among younger people aged 15-24 years (cf. Figure 2).

In Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Sweden, France, the Netherlands, but especially Slovenia, this difference is particularly pronounced to the disadvantage of younger employees, whereas in Latvia, Slovakia, Hungary and Cyprus, the difference lies below the expected line.

On average, most fixed-term contracts in EU countries (65 %) last no more than one year (Statistisches Bundesamt 2016).

With regard to involuntary part-time work (because no full-time job could be found), the correlation is less clear. However, young employees in some countries – Belgium, Sweden, France, Romania, and especially Italy – are more frequently active only in involuntary part-time work than older employees. ■

Figure 2: Fixed-term contract rates among younger and older employees in EU countries



Source: Eurostat, c/o 2017 FIA

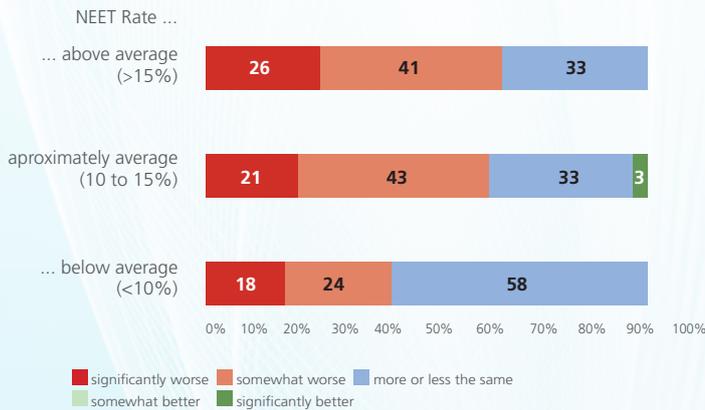
Experts state that, on the whole, younger employees have worse working conditions than older employees.

Experts responded to the question “How do you assess the working conditions for young people in comparison with the working conditions of active (older) people on the labour market?” unambiguously as follows:

Younger employees have seldom, or never, better, though mostly even clearly worse, working conditions than older employees.

These differences between age groups are considered to be more serious in countries where young people are better integrated into labour and education (cf. Figure 3).

Figure 3: Assessment of working conditions of young employees in comparison with older employees

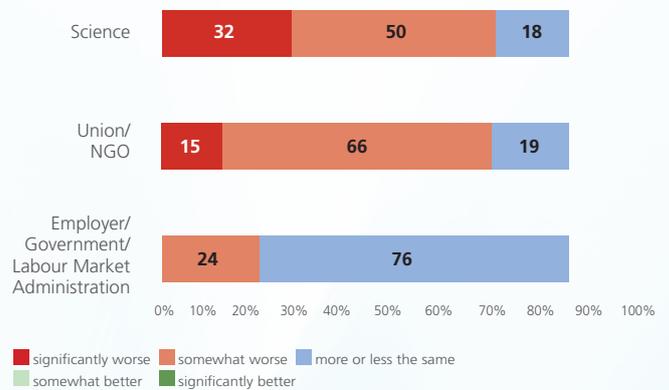


Source: EU's own online expert survey

More than two thirds of the interviewed experts from countries with above-average high NEET rates responded that the working conditions of young people are comparatively either “slightly worse” (41 percent), or even “considerably worse” (26 percent).

In countries with lower NEET rates, the dominant assessment was that the working conditions of younger and older employees was “about the same”. This could point to the fact that young people, in particular, profit from generally good labour market conditions.

Figure 4: How would you assess the quality of jobs of young people in comparison with older employees? Is it overall ...



Source: EU's own online expert survey

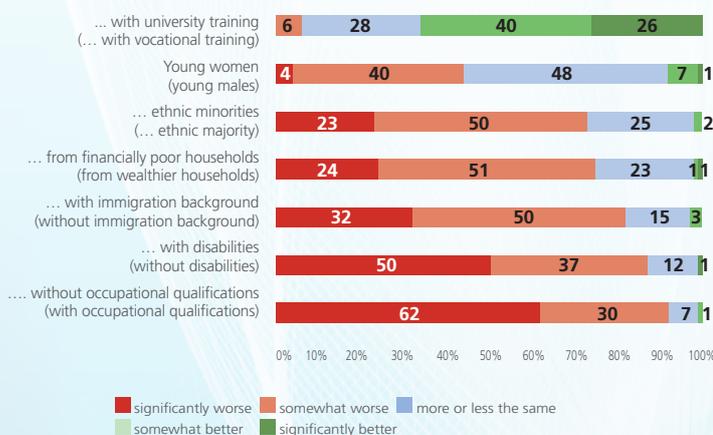
Both the queried scientists and representatives of trade unions and NGOs estimated the job quality of young people to be substantially worse than with older employees (cf. Figure 4). On the other hand, the employers/governments/labour administration group was much more optimistic – their representatives considered the job quality of the young and older groups of employees to be identical and/or comparable. ■

There are great differences also within youths and young adults.

Within younger people, unskilled workers, people with disabilities or migration background, and/or members of ethnic minorities, people from poor households, and women, have comparatively worse job opportunities.

Besides the (young) age, young people may be disadvantaged on the labour market due to several other factors. The strongest factor seems to be a lack of vocational training. As much as 92 percent of the surveyed experts assessed that the job opportunities of people with no completed vocational training were worse than those with vocational qualification. Nearly two thirds of the experts even believed that the job opportunities of unqualified people were “considerably worse” (cf. Figure 5).

Figure 5:
Assessment of relatively worse/better job opportunities of various groups of young people



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Vice versa, people with academic qualifications have much better prospects to find employment. This shows **that professional qualifications is generally a key to the access to the labour market** and that academic education can outstandingly improve the chances to find a job, especially in comparison with vocational training. In essence, this can be associated with the fact that people with university degrees are employed in positions that do not correspond with their level of qualification.

Besides lacking qualification, a whole range of other factors can impair the employment chances of young people (cf. also OECD 2016): a physical or mental

disability, affiliation with the status as migrant and/or ethnic minority, as well as social origin in families with low financial resources result in a much more critical (to a varying degree) expert assessment of employment prospects.

All experts assessed the job opportunities of young people with a migration background as below average – whereas the trade union representatives and scientists showed considerably more critical assessment than the employers and (labour) administrators.

In contrast, the experts' assessment of labour market opportunities of disabled young people was equally critical across all expert groups.

Last, but not least, **gender** also plays a role – women (still) have worse chances on the labour market than men. Even though about a half of the experts are of the opinion that young women have the same employment opportunities as young men; nevertheless, 44 percent believe that women have rather worse opportunities, and only 8 percent think that women have better chances on the labour market. The scientists, in particular, assigned women comparatively worse chances, whereas the employers/ government/labour market service group saw no gender-related differences more frequently. The respondents from the trade union group provided a similar assessment as the scientists: the job opportunities of women are slightly worse than those of men.

Also in relation to the other factors – with the exception of qualification and disability – the respondents from enterprises, politics and administration considered the differences to be less serious.

The problematic aspect of the finding that there are differences in labour market opportunities is that these indicators – other than qualification – are not primarily restrictive, i.e. that the capability to find a job or employment is not, or only rarely,³ directly influential. Therefore, it can be assumed that the frequently stereotypical attribution and/or discrimination are the reason why the mentioned factors are connected with the relatively worse employment opportunities of young people. ■

³ This can be the case, e.g. if there is a language problem, or in case of people whose disability causes their weaker performance.

Conclusion

- Youths and young adults have, in many respects, generally worse working conditions than older employees. Experts surmise that the working conditions of young people is rarely better, but very frequently worse than those of the older population.
- This becomes apparent, among other things, in the much higher proportion of fixed-term contracts concluded with young employees – even though a part of these is made up of vocational/educational contracts (mostly concluded for a definite period of time).
- Respondents from among employers, politicians and administrators assessed the differences between age groups to be less grave than trade unionists and representatives of NGOs and the science sector.
- Within the group of younger people, unskilled workers, people with disabilities or migration background, and/or members of ethnic minorities, people from poor households, and women have comparatively worse job opportunities.
- A completed vocational education, and even more so a university education, can generally boost the chances for employment.
- It can be assumed that some of the disadvantages of certain groups of people to find a job can be related to attributions and/or discrimination. That is why political pressure towards equality and protection against discrimination are important.

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The quality of VET is interconnected with the NEET rate of the countries. Where there is a good quality VET available, fewer young people are inactive.

The quality of the system of vocational education, as well as its country-specific arrangement, affects the conditions on the labour market (cf. Eichhorst et al. 2015). The decisive factors are compatibility with the requirements of the labour market, the professional quality of education, and a good holistic supervision of students and trainees during their education or training. Good vocational orientation and career guidance can help achieve lower dropout rates.

According to OECD data (2017), the education and training of young adults is now better than in the past.

A tertiary degree increases the chances to find employment. On the other hand, the employment rates of people with no upper secondary degree are outstandingly high. Approximately one fourth of students at upper secondary level do not get a degree within two years after the end of the training programme.

Political measures are necessary in order to reduce the number of young people who drop out of school too early, that is without a degree (OECD 2016). ■

The quality of the educational system plays a role.

The proportion of “early school leavers” and/or school dropouts varies in the individual EU countries. It spans from 3 percent in Croatia to nearly 20 percent in Malta and Spain (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 1: Share of early school leavers (dropouts) in EU countries (in percent)

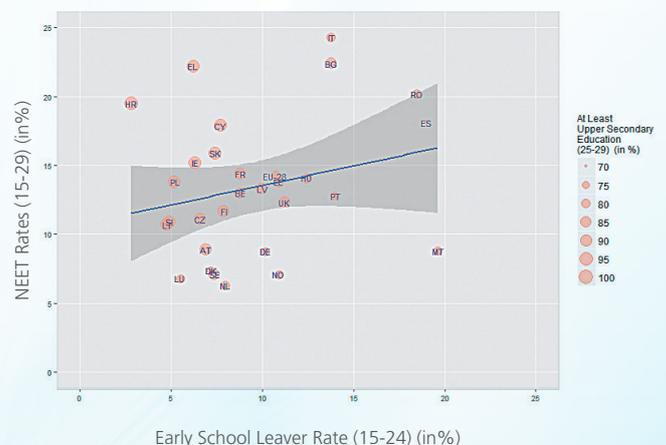


Source: Eurostat

At first sight, there appears to be no correlation between the share of young people who leave school early and the NEET rates.

If, however, one takes into account the share of young people who have at least one upper secondary degree, significant correlations appear.

Figure 2: School dropouts rates and NEET rates



Source: Eurostat c/o 2017 FIA

High proportions of young people who have at least an upper secondary degree correlate with higher NEET rates and smaller shares of school dropouts in some countries – here, young people get “stuck” in the education system and/or in inactivity, because there are no adequate entry points into the working life (e.g. in Greece, Croatia, or Cyprus).

On the other hand, Malta is an example of a country where there is a relatively high proportion of early school dropouts and a low NEET rate with a roughly average rate of people with at least upper secondary degrees. It seems that there are incentives to leave the education system too early because jobs are available – which is, again, a problematic situation.

The third problematic model one can see in Italy and Bulgaria: A high NEET rate goes along with high rate of early school leavers as well as only average or below average proportion of young persons with at least upper secondary education.

The results have shown that the good elements of the educational and training system are, overall, a good influence in the transition to employment. In addition, a good educational system alone is not sufficient for good labour market integration. It is much more effective to provide appropriate and integrated education and employment systems. ■

The harmonization of vocational training with the requirements of the labour market is an indicator of quality. Regarding this, countries with low NEET rates were given good assessment by the experts.

An important quality indicator of a good education system is that it can provide enterprises and organizations with well-qualified labourers. In order to do so, education has to reflect the current demands of the labour market – not only in terms of quantity, that is the number of trained professionals, but also quality, or the conveyed professional and social skills and competences.

In the online survey conducted by the ETUC Youth Committee, experts have been asked to give their opinion on how vocational training is compatible with the requirements of the labour market.

The assessment has shown a clear correlation between a good harmonization of vocational education and the requirements of the labour market on the one hand, and low NEET rates on the other.

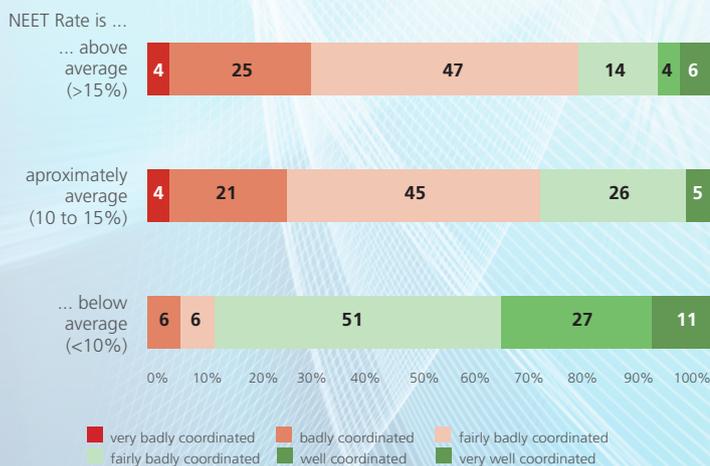
On the other hand, low NEET-rate countries received the most critical assessment of the harmonization between vocational training and the requirements of businesses and organizations (cf. Figure 3).

The experts were also asked to state three most important factors influencing good and/or bad harmonization between vocational education and labour market requirements.

They stated that the main cause for a weak and/or insufficient harmonization between vocational education and labour market requirements was that there was unavailable and/or **insufficient cooperation between vocational schools and businesses.**

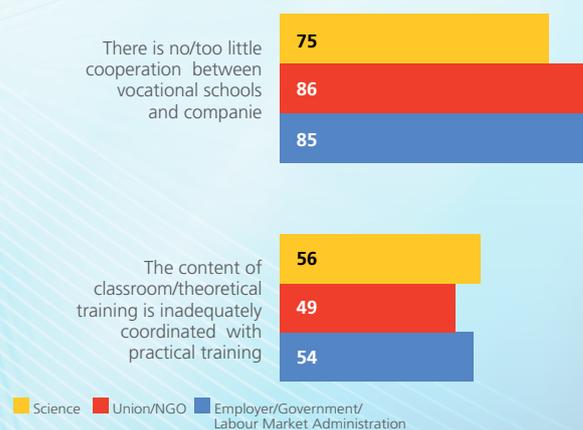
All three participating groups unanimously claimed this to be the most important reason (cf. Figure 4). Furthermore, the school/theoretical education is inadequately harmonized with practical education as far as its content is concerned.

Figure 3: To what extent is vocational training adjusted to labour market requirements?



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Figure 4: Vocational education is badly harmonized with labour market requirements – the most important reasons



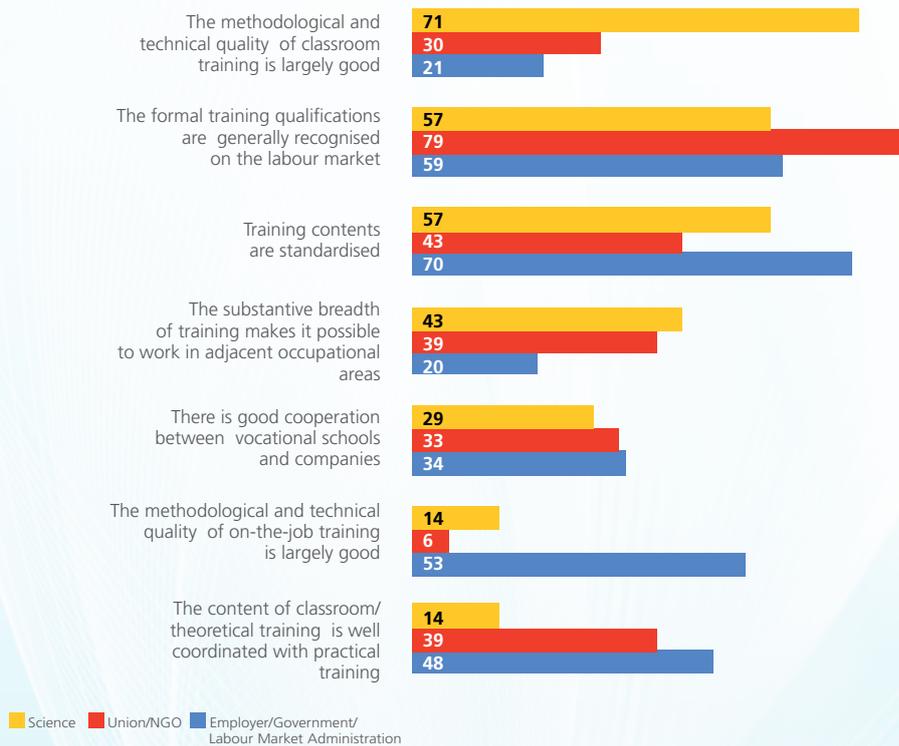
Source: EU's own online expert survey

While insufficient cooperation between vocational schools and business was highlighted as a problem in all three country groups, the experts generally consider the harmonization between school-based/theoretical and practical education in countries with low NEET rates to be better.

If the respondents assessed education to be well-harmonized with the professional requirements

of the labour market, they gave a variety of reasons for it (cf. Figure 5): As a beneficial measure, they listed standardization of the content of education and the recognition of formal degrees and qualifications. Another frequently mentioned factor was good cooperation between vocational schools and businesses, as well as good content-based harmonization between school and practical education. ■

Figure 5: What factors have you primarily applied to make the assessment that education is not well-harmonized with professional requirements of the labour market?



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Conclusion

- The overall quality of the training and education system influences the job opportunities of young people. It is especially important that the vocational training reflects the requirements of the labour market.
- Experts in countries with low NEET rates assessed the harmonization between the education and training system, and the labour market by far most positively. In countries with average or above-average NEET rates, experts gave rather critical assessment.
- Improvement can be made via close cooperation between vocational schools and enterprises, as well as by means of better harmonization between school-based and practical education.
- Further enablers include the standardization of the content of education, recognition of formal diplomas and qualifications, as well as a methodical and professional quality of education and training.

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Young people face difficulties when entering the labour market. They have a particular high risk of becoming unemployed and tend to get only the kind of jobs associated with inadequate prospects.

Youths and young adults become more frequently unemployed than the average.

Youth unemployment in Europe is considerably higher than unemployment among adults.

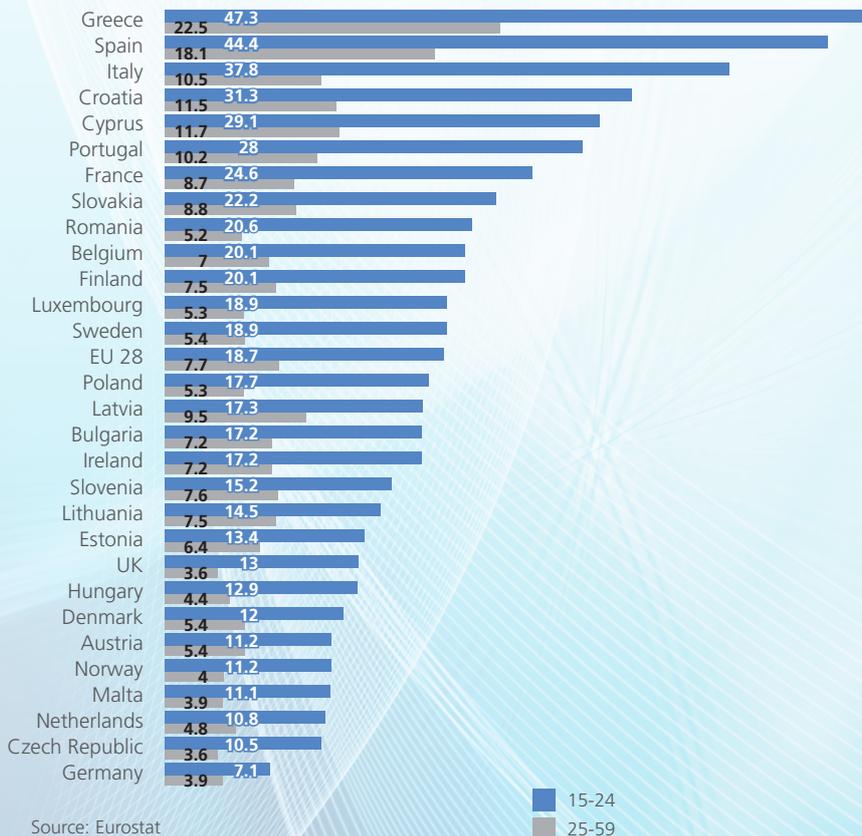
On average, the unemployment rate of young people in the EU 28 is 2.4 times higher than the unemployment rate of people aged 25-59.

The country-specific differences reach from 1.8 times higher rates in Germany to 4 times higher rates in Romania (cf. Figure 1 and Figure 2).

A striking example is Italy (youth unemployment rate is 3.6 times higher), where joblessness is generally high and the transition from education or training to employment is particularly difficult – the percentage of those who find a job within three years after their graduation is considerably lower than in most European countries.

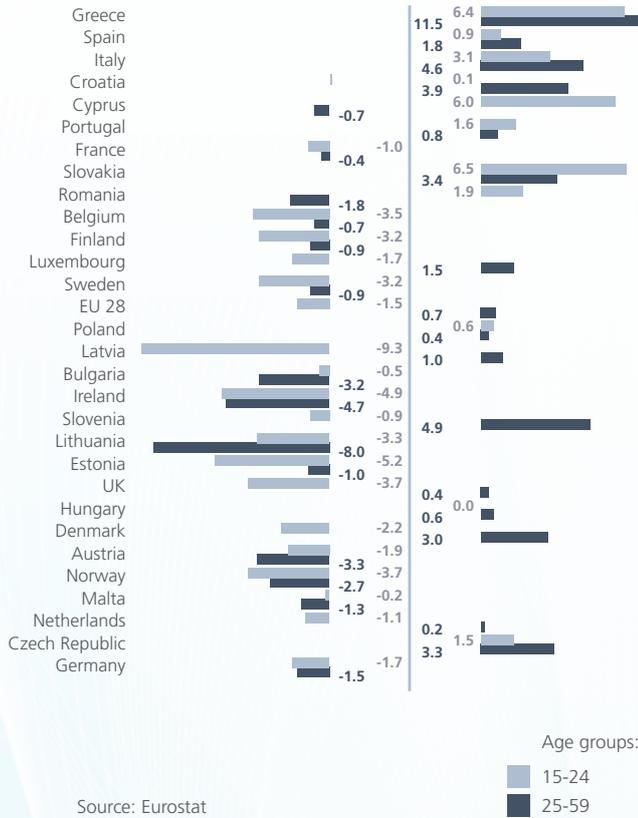
Spain and especially Greece also display great problems in this area: High general unemployment affects the even higher youth unemployment, which clearly underlines the adverse employment opportunities for young people. All in all, youth unemployment is more strongly influenced by the economic cycle than the unemployment of older people (Düll et al 2016).

Figure 1: Unemployment rates of people under 25 years of age, and 25-59-year-olds in EU countries (in percent)



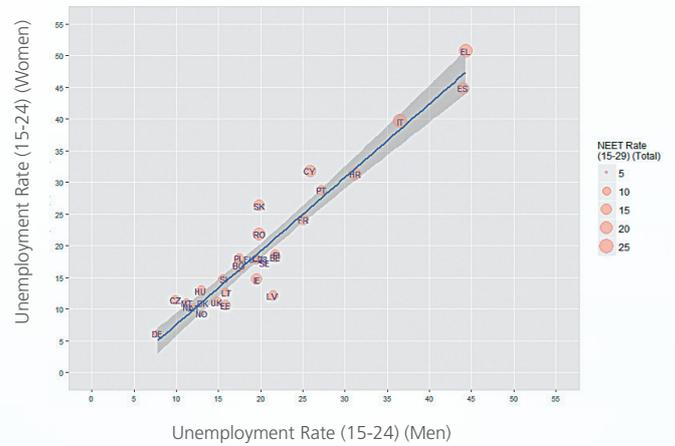
Source: Eurostat

Figure 1f: Difference of unemployment rates of men and women under 25 years of age, and 25-29-year-olds in EU countries (in percent points: women – men)



Source: Eurostat

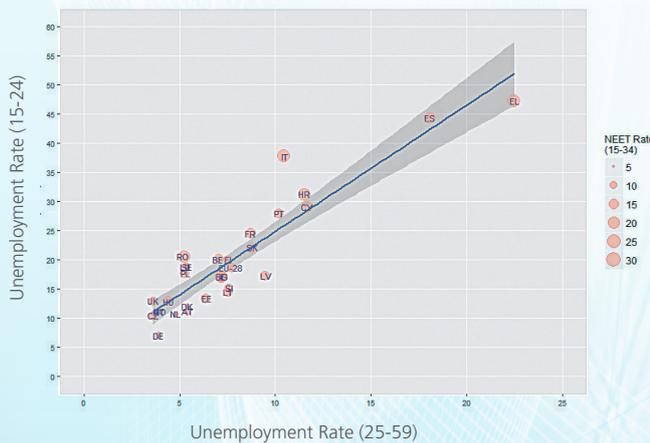
Figure 2b: Comparison of unemployment rates of men vs. women (15-24), and the rates of NEET (ages 15-29)



Source: Eurostat c/o 2017 FIA

In most countries the unemployment rate of young women and men are nearly the same. Nonetheless there are some exceptions like Latvia with a higher rate of unemployment among young men and on the other side Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus with a higher rate among younger women (Figure 2b).

Figure 2: Unemployment rates of young vs. older people, and the rates of the working population (ages 25-74)

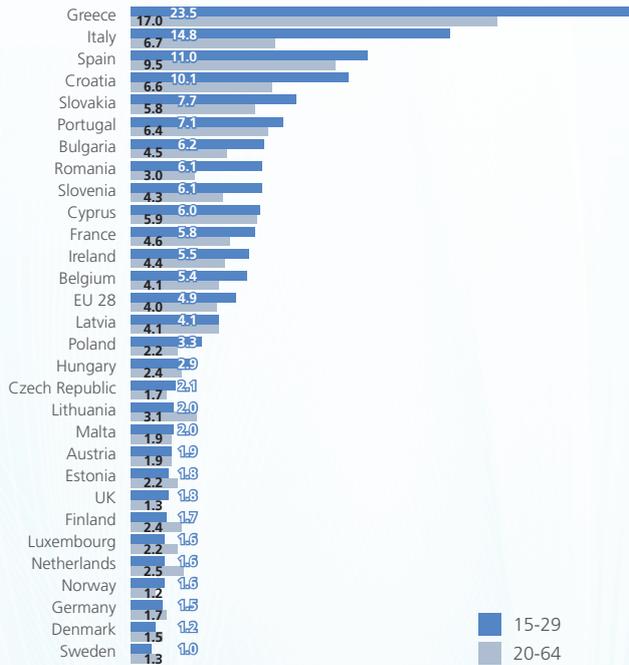


Source: Eurostat c/o 2017 FIA

Generally, young people also face long-term unemployment more frequently than the older population (cf. Figure 3). However, this is not the case in all countries and the extent of the difference is much smaller than in general unemployment. One of the causes for this is the fact that youth unemployment is, to a great extent, affected by the cyclical development of the economy, and young people are much more frequently impacted by unemployment phases in times of crisis than older people. The fact that young people tend to lose jobs more quickly in times of crises is accounted for also by the higher rates of temporary contracts among young people. In cases of forced redundancies, agreed selection criteria (e.g. the length of employment) could be partly effective. Nonetheless, long-term unemployment is a comparatively much greater problem for the young population, because at the outset of their working life, unemployment builds more barriers for them to enter the labour market (cf. Düll et al. 2016).

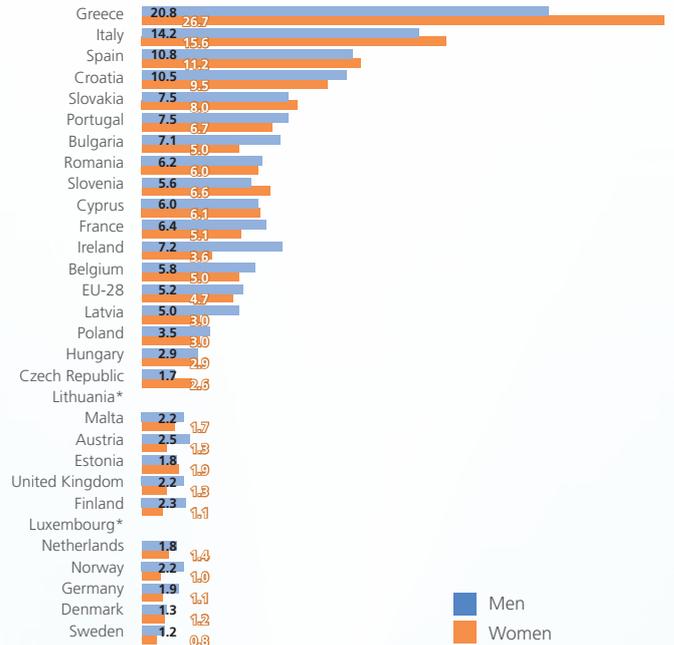
A Eurofound study (2017) underscores the fact that long-term unemployed youths can often end their joblessness only by accepting inferior employment. As a result, they earn only below-average income during their entire working life, thus facing the risk of social exclusion.

Figure 3: Long-term unemployment in EU countries – rate among 15-29-year-olds compared with the rate among 20-64-year-olds



Source: Eurostat

Figure 3mf: Comparison of long-term unemployment of men and women among 15-29-year-olds



Source: Eurostat

* No valid data available

This is often accompanied by ensuing social problems: Young people whose professional career is interrupted by unemployment frequently have no claim on insurance-based social services. According to OECD data (2016), social security nets are much less effective with young people in the battle against poverty. Youth poverty rates are higher than poverty rates of the older population. ■

All Experts attributed young people with a high risk of unemployment.

The experts interviewed as part of the ETUC Youth Committee online survey assessed the general labour market situation in their countries as critical, to very critical, for young people. The general perception was that there is high risk of unemployment. The assessment in countries with a poor labour market and outstandingly high NEET rates was most often critical, while in countries with a strong labour market, critical assessment was scarce.

The expert group of employers, politicians and labour market administrators gave, on average, slightly more positive assessment than scientists and the representatives of trade unions and NGOs (cf. Figure 4); however, even among these groups, a negative judgment of the labour market situation was dominant.

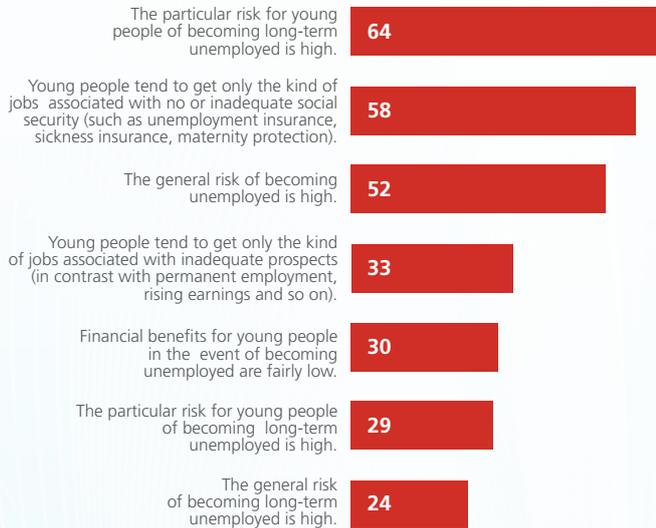
Figure 4: How do you assess the general labour market situation for young people in your country (extent and quality of risks of unemployment)?



Source: EU's own online expert survey

The various expert groups were largely united in their basic assessment of the relatively bad labour market situation of young people.

Figure 5: What factors primarily influenced your assessment that the labour market situation for young people is (rather) bad?



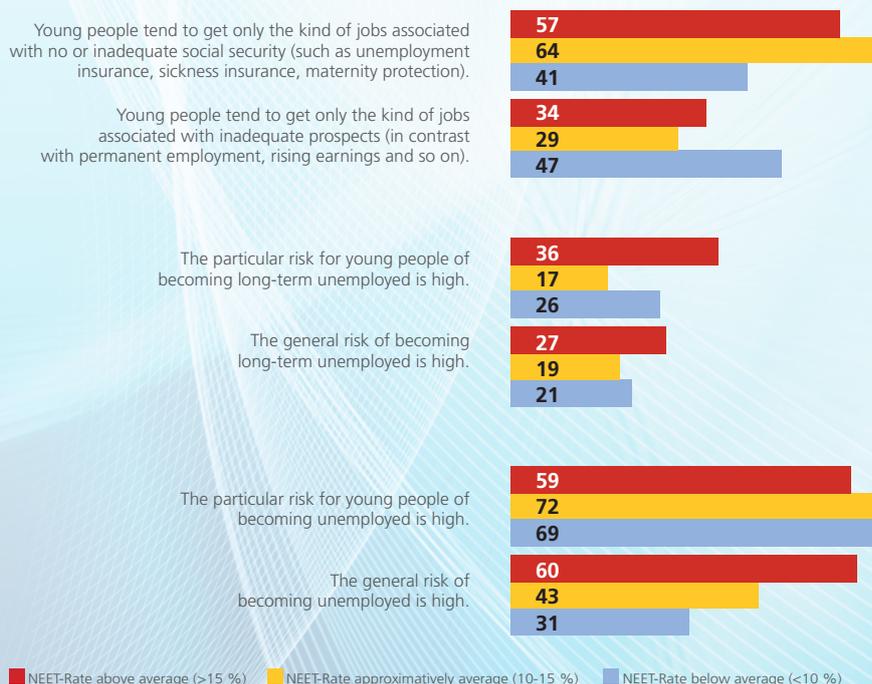
Source: EU's own online expert survey

It is evident that the respondents from different groups of countries (according to NEET rates) identified the risks very similarly. Though the general risk of becoming unemployed was assessed differently, the evaluation of the specific risk of joblessness for young people showed only slight differences.

When asked about the most significant factors which they consider to be relevant for their (rather) negative evaluation of labour market opportunities, 64 percent of experts stated that young people faced a particularly high risk of unemployment. 58 percent supported the proposition that young people mostly get jobs without any sufficient prospects, e.g. as far as the sustainability of the job and pay rise are concerned (cf. Figure 5).

The same applies to the support of the notion that young people find jobs without any adequate prospects or without sufficient social security. These phenomena are visible also in countries with relatively better labour markets. ■

Figure 6: What factors primarily influenced your assessment that the labour market situation for young people is (rather) bad? – according to country groups



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Conclusion

- Youths and young adults face an outstandingly high risk of becoming unemployed
- In addition, the often precarious labour market situation for young people becomes evident in how they frequently acquire only jobs that do not offer them long-term and sustainable prospects and/or are not connected with sufficient social security.
- The evaluations of experts from various country groups are fairly similar. Even in countries with low NEET rates, the experts assessed labour market risks posed to young people as critical.
- By way of comparison, the assessments provided by experts from companies, politics and administration about the labour market situation for young people were more positive, while scientists, trade unionists and NGOs provided more critical assessment.

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Young people have a limited access to employment security. They are often employed in fixed-term or temporary jobs and are being exploited in traineeships as a substitute for employment.

The employment security of young people in European countries is fragile. A high proportion of fixed-term work contracts, as well as jobs with restricted social security, for example, temporary jobs, internship,

crowd-working and/or involuntary self-employment, present a high risk that young people have to face on the labour market.

Young adults are often employed only for a fixed time. This presents risks that could affect their future professional careers.

A larger part of work contracts is concluded for fixed periods of time. This applies to employees of all age groups, but particularly to younger employees. Figure 1 makes it evident that the share of employees working under fixed-term contracts is much higher among younger employees than in the group of 25 to 54-year-olds.

In countries like Italy, but particularly Spain, the high proportion of fixed-term employment of young people is related to an uncertain transition from education to professional life. This is manifested by a relatively low share of young people, who find employment within three years after graduation.

Figure 1:
Fixed-term employment rate:
under 29-year-olds and 25-54-year-olds



Here, uncertainties accumulate. Because fixed-term employment can sometimes be (very) short and because it is, in the light of the wide distribution of fixed-term work, less likely that it will lead to non-fixed-term employment and/or job immediately after graduation, a relatively high proportion of young people will once again remain dependent on fixed-term contracts.

This uncertainty holds a relatively high risk that, in the meantime, employees will fall back into unemployment, or that they will have to make compromises in relation to the quality of employment.

As a result, the discontinuity at the beginning of working life can have long-term consequences on young people’s professional careers. A desired continuous further development and specialization of qualifications and competences can be made difficult by the (necessary) job changes. Then again, in an ideal case, various employment experience can be gained that will broaden the horizons of young workers and contribute to a greater flexibility when choosing their job. ■

Source: Eurostat

The interviewed experts also assessed the employment security of young people as critical.

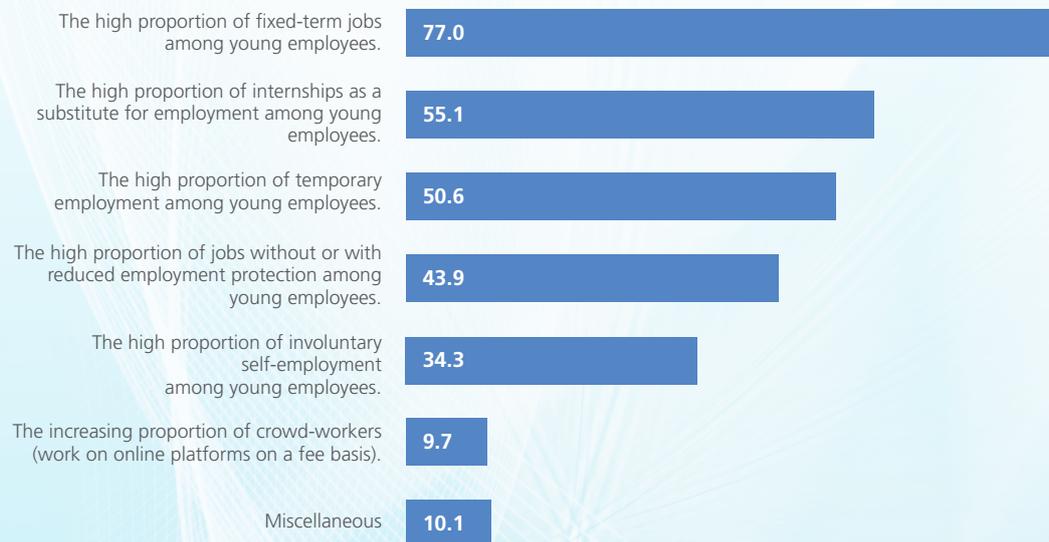
Employment security of young people was assessed by the experts as rather bad. In countries with higher NEET rates, the assessment was correspondingly more critical.

When asked about three most important factors underlying their assessment, the most frequently mentioned one was the high proportion of fixed-term employment (77 percent). It was followed by a high frequency of internships used as substitute for employment (55 percent) and then the high share of temporary work (51 percent).

Overall, the responses given by the interviewed experts manifest the perception of a great extent of uncertain and socially weakly protected employment (cf. Figure 2).

The mentioned uncertainties caused by fixed-term contracts and atypical forms of employment are accompanied by a high proportion of young employees doing work that does not adequately reflect their qualification. 83 percent of experts stated this as a reason why they gave a critical assessment of the working conditions of the young generation. 58 percent mentioned a high proportion of young employees doing jobs with bad prospects of professional development, 57 percent listed the many jobs with no, or very limited, working standards (occupational safety, labour law). ■

Figure 2:
What major factors underlie your assessment that employment security of young people in your country is (rather) bad?



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Conclusion

- The situation of young people on the labour market is shaped by uncertainty. This applies both to the risk of becoming and/or remaining unemployed, and to the risks ensuing from doing insecure and socially inadequately protected jobs.
- Experts give the high proportions of fixed-term employment and temporary work, as well as the widely spread internships as a substitute for (not available high quality) employment as reasons for their critical assessment of the labour market situation for young people.
- Another factor is that youths and young adults often do jobs that do not adequately reflect their qualification.
- The uncertainty when starting working life can have consequences for the future professional career of young people.

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Generally bad chances of finding a job for young people

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Insufficient job prospects and fragile employment security for young workers

Especially low remuneration of young people

Not more social policy but specifically tailored policy measures

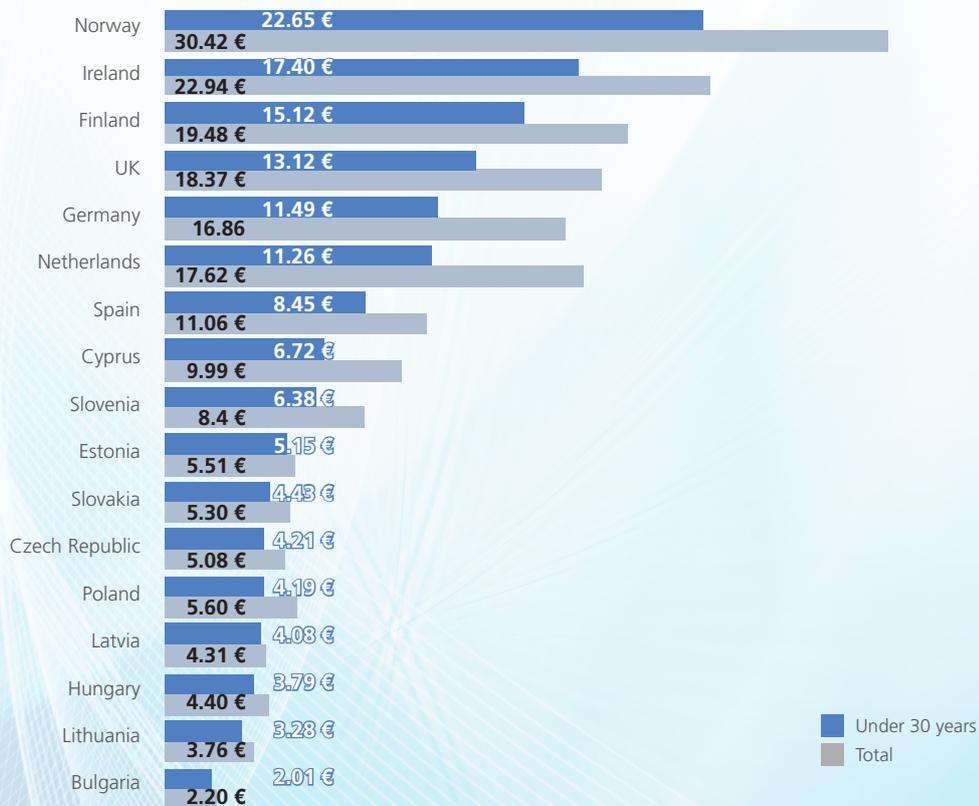
When it comes to money, young people are also facing problems. More the 60% of the survey responses said that young people have rather bad, bad or very bad level and adequacy of remuneration.

Younger employees have, on average, lower hourly wages.

On average, young employees have lower earned income than older employees. Figure 1 shows average hourly wage rates for under-30-year-olds and average hourly wage rates of all employed people. The figure shows that younger employees in all countries receive lower hourly wages. In some countries there is a considerable difference from average hourly wage rates.

The span across the countries is quite large: in the Netherlands, Cyprus and Germany, employed people under 30 years of age receive less than 70 percent of the average wage of all employees; in Latvia, Estonia and Bulgaria, the same age group's pay is over 90 percent of the wage level – however, this average level for the total work force level is very low. ■

Figure 1:
Hourly wages of under-30-year-olds when compared with average wages by countries (in euros)



Source: Eurostat

ILO (2016) refers to the above-average risk of poverty with young people, brought about, among other things, also by low wages given to young workers.

Experts give a critical assessment of both the level of wages and the adequacy of young people’s remuneration in their countries.

The experts interviewed in the online survey assessed the level and the adequacy of the remuneration awarded to young people in their country mostly as rather critical.

Only 20 percent of the scientists and 21 percent of the respondents from trade unions and NGOs, and up to 55 percent of experts from the employers/ politicians and administrators group, saw the level and adequacy of wages as (rather) good.

On the other hand, 48 percent of scientists and 41 percent of respondents from trade unions and NGOs consider the remuneration to be “bad” and/or even “very bad” (cf. Figure 2).

The listed reasons included particularly the generally low (national) level of wages, a high share of young employees doing jobs with remuneration that does not reflect their qualification, and a high proportion of young employees working in the sector with low

wages. This is also accompanied by a high share of jobs/areas where there is no collective bargaining or collective pay agreements.

In addition, not all EU countries have legally defined minimum wages. In countries with a law-defined minimum wage, young people (and/or types of employment often accepted by young people, e.g. internships) are sometimes excluded from the minimum wage regulations. Several EU countries (e.g. Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, UK), have defined separate minimum wage rates for young people which are lower than the general minimum wage in the country. One of the justifications for such separate minimum wage rates for young people is that they have lower productivity than older workers. Another argument is the fear that increases in statutory national minimum wages would promote early school drop-outs.

Figure 2: How would you assess the level and adequacy of the remuneration of young employees in your country?



Source: EU’s own online expert survey

The experts, who give a better assessment of the situation, stated that the reasons for this were, conversely, a good overall level of wages, a high share of young employees in jobs with remuneration

that would reflect their qualification, and a high proportion of jobs/areas where there is collective bargaining. ■

Conclusion

- In all countries, young adults receive, on average, lower hourly wages than older employees. The uncertain work integration in what are partly only weakly protected employment forms is accompanied by relatively unfavourable remuneration.
- The experts are rather critical about the level and adequacy of the remuneration offered to young people in their countries.
- The most positive responses were given by the respondents from enterprises, politics and administration, while trade unions, NGOs and scientists gave positive assessments concerning remuneration only rarely.

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In general, experts agree that existing policy goals are important. The focus of attention of the policy measures for young people shows that they are also used as a kind of social policy.

Politics reacts to high youth unemployment.

For young people, it is essentially important to know whether and how the government would support them during the transition to working life. This occurs in very different ways. Active labour market policies can decide between accelerated labour market integration (work-first) and long-term strategies to participate in the labour market (enabling) – for example, about what should be included in promoting school-based and vocational education (cf. Bonoli 2010). Dingeldey et al. (2017) refer to the compatibility of various strategies of labour market policies: In countries with comprehensive and well-working education systems, youth-focused labour market policies usually advocate enabling labour market participation and encourage the acquisition of formal and/or vocational degrees. On the other hand, work-first measures might appear as the best solution of the problem, as they promise short-term improvement, because once there is high youth unemployment, then even well-qualified youths are already unemployed.

Once youth unemployment became a serious problem, the member states adopted measures to fight against it. Promising a “Youth Guarantee” (cf. Council of the European Union 2013), as well as the “Youth Employment Initiative”, the EU provided protection for young people against long-term unemployment, pledged early employment – or at least an internship – as well as training and continuing education.

Even though nearly none⁴ of the member states introduced any relevant legal guarantee (cf. Dingeldey et al. 2017), both the political discussion and the reform activities in the member states were influenced by the youth guarantee concept. In Germany, for example, the European youth guarantee has contributed to a comprehensive establishment of the so-called “Youth Employment Agencies”.

Spain supported reforms that had been started earlier with the aim to establish a dual education system. This corresponds to the objective to adjust the youth guarantee measures to concrete requirements and national specifics, as well as to the diverse sub-groups of NEETs (Eurofound 2016).

While inspecting the “Youth Guarantee”, the European Court of Auditors (2017) came to the conclusion that although the programme achieved progress, it did not fulfill the initial expectations on quality and outreach of young NEET.

After 2013, youth unemployment really dropped faster than general unemployment. Brenke (2017) shows that besides the conjunctural development, the decline in youth unemployment was brought about primarily by demographic decline and a decreased labour market participation on the part of the young population. Employment growth contributed to this only slightly – the majority of the new jobs were fixed-term and/or temporary.

In light of this development, questions arise about the focus and efficiency of policies aimed at fostering youth employment. ■

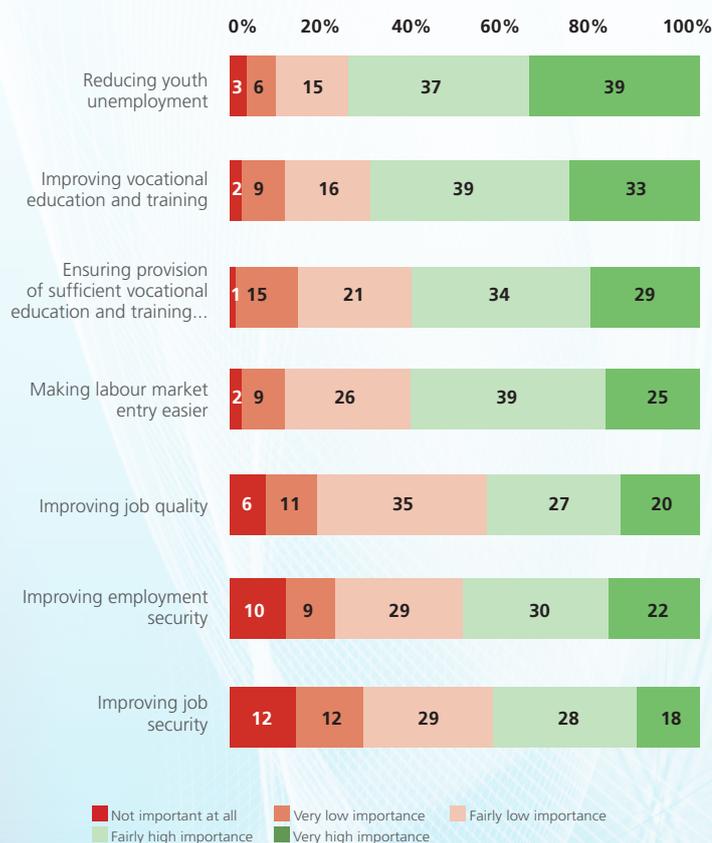
⁴ France has included the youth guarantee in the national legislation in the framework of the reforms of 2016.

The importance of various political objectives as perceived by experts.

As part of the survey, the experts were asked to comment on the significance of the following seven political objectives:

- Reduction of youth unemployment
- Improvement of vocational education
- Securing of an adequate offer of training and qualification positions
- Facilitation of career entry
- Improvement of job quality
- Improvement of job security
- Improvement of employment security

Figure 1:
Importance of political objectives as viewed by experts



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Figure 1 displays the overall assessment of these political objectives. The respondents considered the most important objective to be a reduction of youth unemployment – followed by an improvement of vocational education and securing of an adequate offer of training and qualification positions, as well as facilitation of career entry.

In contrast, the improvement of job quality and employment security were considered to be slightly less important. Among the mentioned political objectives, the improvement of job security was attributed the least importance.

Looking at the significance of the different political objectives from the point of view of the three groups of actors, the following transpires (cf. Figure 2):

The first four objectives (reduction of youth unemployment, improvement of vocational education, securing of an adequate offer of training and qualification positions, and facilitation of career entry) are most prominently considered to be important by employers/governments and administration. Trade unions and NGOs deem these objectives to be slightly less important, however – with the exception of facilitating career entry – they still consider them to be more important than the experts from the field of science.

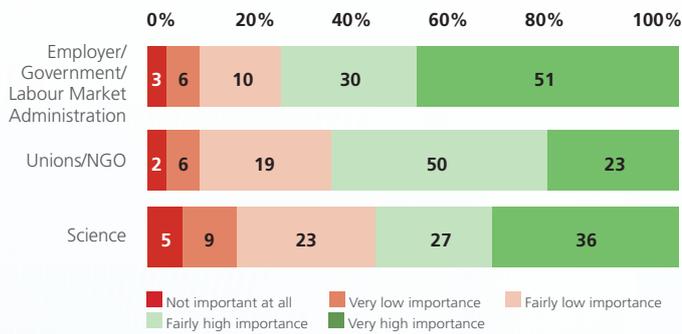
In comparison with these four above listed objectives, the other three objectives are by far less important for employers, politicians and administrators. This also applies to – though less apparently – trade unions and NGOs, whereas the differences visible in the responses provided by the scientists are smaller.

It is noticeable that the improvement of job quality is not in the centre of attention of any of the participant groups, and that the job security and employment security also have no primary importance. The participant groups responded similarly when assessing these three political objectives.

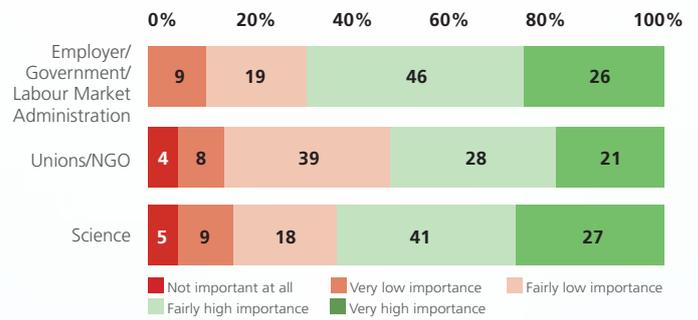
Not more social policy but specifically tailored policy measures

Figure 2: Assessment of the different political objectives across the three participant groups

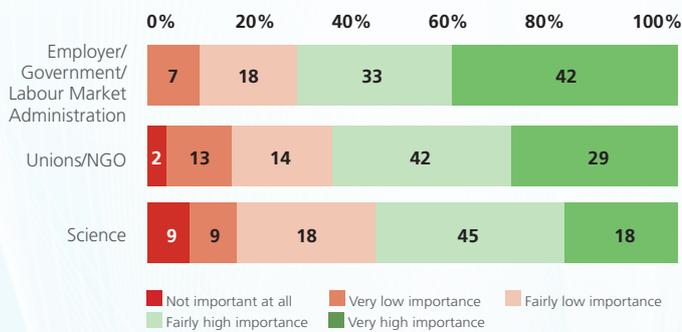
Q 54 What is the significance of: education of youth unemployment



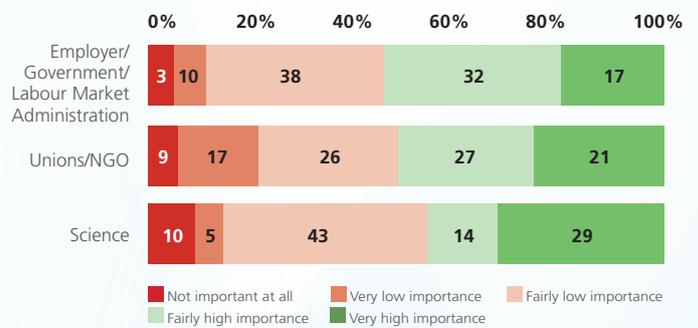
Q 57 What is the significance of: facilitation of career entry



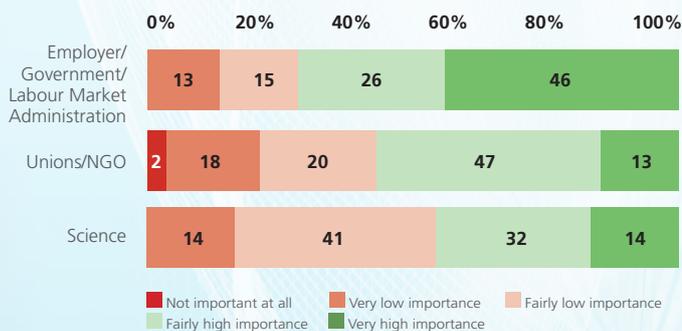
Q 55 What is the significance of: improvement of vocational education



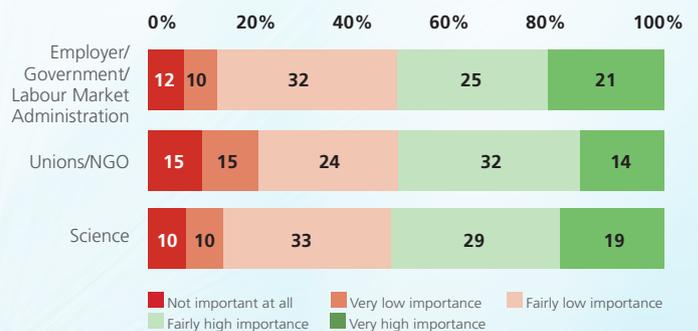
Q 58 What is the significance of: improvement of job quality



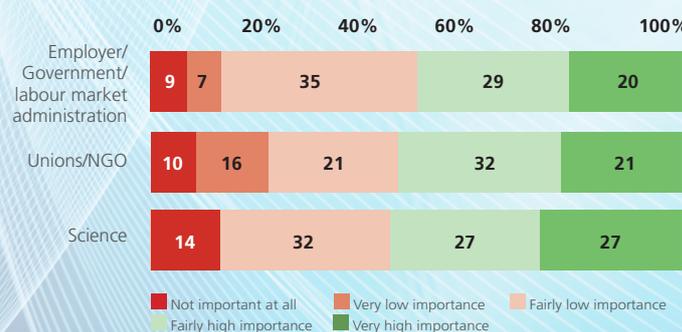
Q 56 What is the significance of: securing of an adequate offer of training and qualification positions



Q 59 What is the significance of: improvement of job security (i.e. the certainty of keeping the current job)



Q 60 What is the significance of: improvement of employment security (i.e. the certainty of remaining employed – possible also through job change)



Assessment of the implementation and influence of political objectives as viewed by experts.

The **implementation of the objectives** takes place in various ways (cf. Table 1). The four labour market oriented political objectives that were said to be most important were implemented mostly in the form of national government funded and/or co-funded EU measures. The other implementation ways of these objectives only play a marginal role. It was only rarely stated that these objectives were not at all implemented.

The objectives generally considered to be less important (improvement of job quality, employment security and job security) are most frequently implemented by means of law adoption, or not at all. All other implementation forms were applied, however, play only a secondary role.

The responses provided by experts suggest that the implementation of what are considered to be the most important political objectives should be tackled with more emphasis and resources.

Table 1

In what form, in your view, are the abovementioned policy goals being implemented at present or in the past five years?								
	In form of ...							
	nationally financed measures/programmes	co-financed EU measures/programmes	statutory initiatives (not yet adopted)	adopted laws	administrative reforms	commitments	No implementation	calls for action/declarations of intent
Reduction of youth unemployment	65	72	114	34	32	31	4	11
Improvement of vocational training or apprenticeship	59	56	11	36	27	25	9	12
Ensuring provision of training and education places	45	36	15	24	24	27	10	17
Making labour market entry easier	57	59	3	28	18	25	6	13
Improvement of job quality	27	25	4	37	10	29	28	20
Improvement of job security	23	22	5	32	12	18	35	17
Improvement of employment security	24	22	7	29	12	21	30	19

Data in percent
Source: EU's own online expert survey

When it comes down to the assessment of **the effects of implemented political objectives**, the expert responses reveal that policy implementation is quite visible. Even if the objectives could not be fully achieved, at least noticeable and recognizable improvements were made.

However, in some cases it has been reported that the implementation was rather inefficient, or that it even led to a deterioration of the situation of young people.

Table 2

How do you assess the effects of the implementation of objectives?						
Implementation ...						
	...led rather to a deterioration of the situation	...was rather ineffective	...resulted in a marginal/weak improvement of the situation	...resulted in a noticeable improvement of the situation	...achieved the set objective	not applicable/ there has not been any implementation (as yet)
Reduction of youth unemployment	11	17	33	21	8	19
Improvement of vocational education	5	13	29	21	17	25
Securing of an adequate offer of training and qualification positions	7	13	22	17	20	32
Facilitation of career entry	6	10	29	24	22	16
Improvement of job quality	3	15	14	29	23	23
Improvement of job security	2	10	17	21	38	19
Improvement of employment security	5	11	23	20	27	23

Data in percent
Source: EU's own online expert survey

Target groups of political measures.

The experts were asked the following question: "Which target groups, among young people, do you think, were particularly focused on in your country?"

The most frequent responses – provided by all three participant groups (science, trade unions, NGOs,

and employers, governments and administration) equally – included groups of young people with low qualifications, as well as school dropouts. ■

Summarizing the assessment of political participants and instruments.

In conclusion, two questions were posed concerning the overall evaluation of policies aimed at youths and young adults:

How do you assess the current activities of the government and/or the authorities aimed at improving/supporting young people in finding a good job? and

How do you assess the current efficiency of the instruments used to improve/support young people in finding a good job?

The responses by country groups (cf. Figure 3) show that the activities of the national participants, as well as the efficiency of the instruments in the countries with more adverse labour market conditions, were assessed more critically than in the countries with better labour market conditions and lower NEET rates. It can be assumed that the relatively more suitable labour market conditions are at least a partial result of the national labour market policies that are generally assessed positively here.

In countries with above-average NEET rates, both the political participants and the instruments received a generally negative assessment. This could mean that in these countries, there are unused resources in the labour market policy, which could and should be developed.

Figure 3: Summarizing assessment of national policy by country groups (NEET)

Q 84 What is your current assesment of the activities of the government or the authorities with regard to improving the chances of or helping young people to find a decent job?

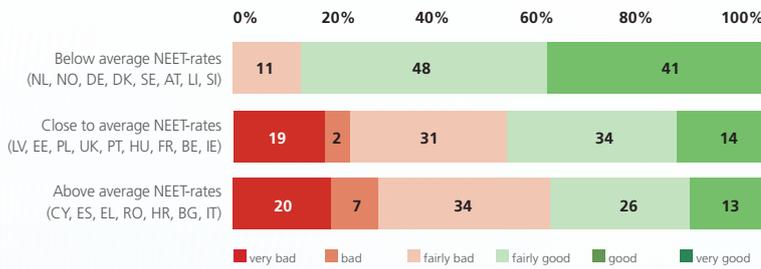
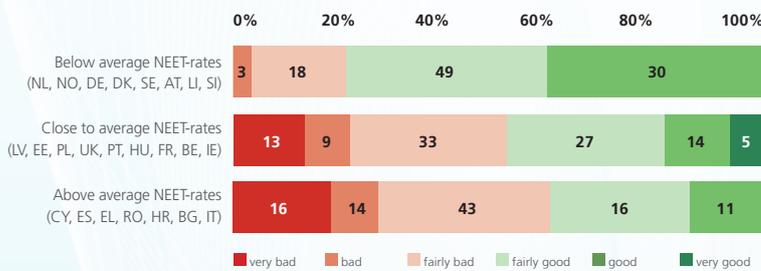


Figure 4: Summarizing assessment of national policy by participant groups

Q 84 What is your current assesment of the activities of the government or the authorities with regard to improving the chances of or helping young people to find a decent job?



Q 85 What is your current assesment of the effectiveness of the instruments for improving the chances of or helping young people to find a decent job?



Q 85 What is your current assesment of the effectiveness of the instruments for improving the chances of or helping young people to find a decent job?



Source: EU's own online expert survey

Source: EU's own online expert survey

The responses by participant groups (cf. Figure 4) show that the representatives of employers, politicians and administrators provided by far the most positive assessment both in relation to the participants and the instruments. Trade unions and NGOs, as well as scientists provided predominantly critical assessment.

These results reflect general trends. Labour market policy, however, is developed and implemented on a national level, whereby EU member states have to face various challenges (cf. Eichhorst et al. 2015). ■

Conclusion

- Political actors in EU countries have created different objectives and instruments to implement policies aimed at supporting employment of youths and young adults.
- From the point of view of the interviewed experts, the most important objective is a reduction of youth unemployment. It is followed by these objectives, in this order: improvement of vocational education, securing of a sufficient offer of training and qualification positions, as well as facilitation of career entry.
- The four labour market oriented political objectives that were said to be most important were implemented mostly in the form of national government funded and/or co-funded EU measures. The three objectives generally considered to be less important (improvement of job quality, employment security and job security) are most frequently implemented by means of law adoption, or not at all. It is a problem that the quality of labour is generally considered to be less important, particularly because the majority of newly created jobs are fixed-term, temporary or even precarious on more than one dimension of job quality.
- In countries with worse labour market conditions, both the activities of national actors as well as the efficiency of the relevant instruments are more critically assessed than in countries with better labour market conditions.
- Representatives of employers, politicians and administrators assess the political actors and the used instruments generally quite positively, while trade unions and NGOs, as well as scientists, provided predominantly critical assessment.

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