



Handbook

Profile of beneficiaries and their barriers

Developed in the framework of the project:

EURIBOR

Promoting sustainable actions for empowerment of vulnerable groups of youth women", No: 2020-1-0049

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1. INTRODUCTION

The handbook “Profile of beneficiaries and their barriers” was developed within the framework of the project “EURIBOR: Promoting sustainable actions for empowerment of vulnerable groups of youth women”. The sources of information necessary for the preparation of the handbook were the national reports developed by the project partners.

The aim of these reports was to acquire knowledge about the position and situation of women aged 25-29 who represent the NEET group, at risk of social exclusion, and about the practices and measures taken to increase the employability of these women.

The information gathered in all the reports allowed a collective elaboration of their situation in terms of profile, needs, expectations, geographical coverage, risk factors and barriers to participation in education and employment.

1. WHO IS NEET?

The NEET phenomenon (the name is an acronym for “not in employment, education or training”) is one of the main social problems requiring fast and determined intervention in most countries of the European Union. It is a specific group of contemporary youth, very disturbing and not fully recognised, who remain outside the sphere of employment and outside the sphere of education (B. Serafin - Juszcak, 2014).

Knowing who is NEET in each country makes it possible to implement problem-solving measures and interventions appropriate for this particular group of women.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL RANGE

The handbook includes data from eight countries collected by the project partners. The NEET situation in each country was described in a global context or only from a regional or district perspective.

Partners from Bulgaria presented NEET in the Vrasta region and four districts: Pazardjik, Smolyan, Stara Zagora and Pleven. Spain focused on the autonomous cities of Melilla and Andalusia. Italy presented the Molise region and Slovenia the Coastal-Karst region. Globally, the NEET situation was addressed by partners from Poland, Austria, Germany, and Malta. Each partner considered the specificities and problems of their country. The detailed profile of NEETs, barriers, needs, expectations, or risks are described later in this handbook.

3. PROFILE OF BENEFICIARIES IN EACH COUNTRY

The NEET phenomenon is a Europe-wide problem. Across the EU, 7.5 million young people, or 12.9% of young Europeans aged 15-24, are not in employment, education, or training. Many of them have at most upper secondary education. They leave school early and do not go on to further education. A significant number of them are immigrants or people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are exposed to the negative consequences of being NEET.

In the EU, 30.1% of unemployed people under 25 have been unemployed for more than 12 months. More and more young people are not actively seeking work, which can leave them without structural support to help them re-enter the labour market.

Research shows that youth unemployment can have lasting negative consequences, such as increased risk of future unemployment, lower earnings, loss of human capital, the phenomenon of poverty inheritance or reduced motivation to start a family, which threatens to exacerbate negative demographic trends.

This is a problem that should not be underestimated. It needs to be addressed so that activities can be tailored to the specific group of NEET young people. In order to do this, knowledge about this group in a given country is essential. Therefore, a profile of NEET young people is given below, separately for each of the eight countries represented by the respective partner.

Bulgaria

The number of young people aged 25-29 in Bulgaria on 31 December 2021 is 342,277, of which less than half are women - 166,302 or 48.6%.

171,400 are young people under the age of 29 who are neither working nor studying. **One of the main groups making up this number is the Romani.** These are people who face ethnic discrimination, high levels of poverty and poor-quality housing in Romani settlements. **Another major group are young women** who cannot work because they are caring for children or elderly people in the family.

In 2021, 15.6 thousand young people, of whom 8.7 thousand were aged 25-29, were registered as unemployed with the employment offices, i.e. they had some activity. Nevertheless, most of the unemployed remain economically inactive for reasons such as lack of necessary education and/or qualifications, not finding a job in their occupation, too many unemployed, employers consider them too young, lack of work experience, family and health problems, among others.

Among young people aged 25-29 who are neither studying nor working, **those with primary education and below are the largest group (45.5%).** Those with secondary education are as high as 38.9%. The smallest percentage (15.6%) are university students.

A downward trend in the number of NEET young people has been observed over the last five years. Despite this, there is still a significant number of inactive, discouraged people and this is one of the main challenges of the labour market. According to EUROSTAT data, the relative percentage of young people under the age of 29 (NEET) in relation to the population, is one of the highest in the EU (17.6%) and Bulgaria is in one of the first places.

Bulgaria - Vratsa region

Here, **NEETs are not only Bulgarians, but also Romani and Turkish.** The diversity of the group in need of support is illustrated by the National Statistical Institute's (NSI) data from the 2011 Bulgarian census, which shows that around 70% of ethnic Turks and 93% of ethnic Romani do not complete secondary school, compared to 30% of ethnic Bulgarians. 23.2% of Romani children aged 7 - 15 have never attended school, compared to 11.9% of Turkish children and 5.6% of Bulgarian children. The presentation in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment 2012) of the best Romani and Turkish pupils (who did not interrupt their education until the age of 15 and were therefore able to participate in PISA tests) is significantly weaker compared to the average score of Bulgarian pupils. **According to the data, ethnic minority pupils lag behind ethnic Bulgarians by the equivalent of 3 educational years in reading and 2 years in mathematics and science.**

The total number of unemployed people under the age of 29 varies according to the years of education completed. On average, 1,060 people are registered each month in Vratsa district. Their share in the total number of unemployed is 14.4%, and of the 316 people registered in the Vratsa Labour Office Directorate, 46 declared themselves to be of Romani origin. There are 104 unemployed Romani over the age of 50 in the same office, out of a total of 841 in the district.

In the Directorate of the Vratsa Labour Office there are 754 unemployed people with primary and lower education, of whom 265 are Romani. There are 1,043 unemployed, of whom 222 are Romani. There are 435 unemployed registered with the Labour Office for more than a year, of whom 143 identify themselves as Romani.

Of the total number of unemployed, 515 are covered by programmes and measures, of which 60 are Romani. The Directorate of the Vratsa Labour Office reports that 2,187 people are employed, of whom 114 are Romani. Unemployed persons registered with the Directorate of the Vratsa Labour Office as at 31.12.2000 - 2,308 persons, of whom 399 are Romani. The number of unemployed women at the given date and office is 1,277, of whom 216 are Romani.

Persons without specialisation make up the largest part of the occupational structure of the unemployed. They are people with low qualifications and education and low mobility. In the district of Vratsa, this group accounts for 64.8%. The second largest group are the unemployed with secondary education. Their relative share in the total number of unemployed is 42.7% in Vratsa district (43.2% in 2019). Unemployed people with tertiary education have the smallest number and

relative share. During the year, the number of unemployed graduates in Vratsa district is 652. The relative share of women with higher education is very high - 64.4% of all registered graduates in Vratsa district. The share of unemployed people (up to 29 years) with tertiary education is 19.9% in Vratsa Region (17.4% in 2019).

The unemployment rate for women is higher than for men. **Women account for 83% of the unemployed. They do not want to work for personal reasons, including bringing up children, unpaid domestic work in the family, etc.** The subgroup of Bulgarian women who are not in education or training is one of the largest in the EU, according to a report by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EFILWC) entitled "Young and unemployed, not in education or training (NRCC group) in Europe" (2012).

At both national and regional level, **the employment rate of Romani women is significantly lower than that of Romani men.** The percentage of young Romani aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training is in line with the national level, which is quite high.

Information on the registered unemployed in the Vratsa region who identify themselves as Romani, by group in 2020, shows that **among the registered women, those with low education and without specialisation dominate, including representatives of the Romani community and other vulnerable groups.** Due to their low competitiveness on the labour market, they are registered at employment offices for a relatively long time. Moreover, they are offered jobs that are too heavy and inappropriate for women, which further aggravates the problem of unemployment and exclusion.

The percentage of NEET youth in Bulgaria (not only in the Vratsa region) **is higher in rural areas** than in large and small cities and suburbs for all age groups, indicating **territorial inequalities in access to employment and educational opportunities.**

According to the Annual Youth Report 2019, **just over two thirds of young people in Bulgaria live with their parents.** For young people aged 15-19, this figure rises to 97%. As they get older, this percentage decreases because they start their education in towns other than their hometown. **There is a similar relationship for material support from parents,** with 79% reporting that their parents help them, and this percentage declining with age to 58% for those aged 25-29.

30% of NEET young people have completed secondary education and do not want to study any further. Despite this difficult situation, there is a downward trend in the percentage of young people who do not want to study after leaving school. 16% completed higher education and 12% did so not because they did not want to, but because they could not afford it.

A positive trend in this group is that **47% of them are looking for a job at the time of the survey but cannot find one.** The young people in this group come mainly from small towns and villages. Some of them are supported by their parents, which reduces their motivation to look for a job.

66% of all unemployed and uneducated young people are not even registered with the employment office.

Bulgaria - Pazardjik province

The main problem of the local labour market is the educational profile. The population with primary and lower education reaches 19 700 and its relative share is one of the highest in the country - 7.84% (4.49% for the country).

The total number of unemployed women in Bulgaria between the ages of 25 and 29 in 2021 is 21 000. In the same year, 351 women were newly registered at the employment offices in the Pazardjik region, of whom 72 were long-term unemployed and 264 had previous work experience. **The group of women with secondary education is the most active.** The town of Velingrad (in this province) is an area with a strong spa tourism industry, but it also has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. **The nearby highland villages have a predominantly Muslim population.** There, the number of registered unemployed women is the highest compared to other municipalities in the district - 117, or 33.3%.

Bulgaria - Smolyan district

The employment rate of the working age population is relatively high (70.8%) and the unemployment rate is 8.8%. According to the NSI regional statistics, the number of young people aged 25-29 in the district is 3,275, of which 1,550 are women.

The educational level of the workforce is quite high. In 2021, the population with tertiary education was 11,300 (11.9%) and with primary and lower education 3,000 (2.94%). In this area, the main challenge for local labour market prospects is the ageing population.

In 2021, 134 young women were registered at employment offices in Smolensk region, of whom only 13 were long-term unemployed and 114 (85%) had work experience. The most active group of women are those with a medium level of education, followed by those with a high level of education.

Bulgaria - Stara Zagora province

The employment rate of the population aged 15-64 in 2021 is the highest compared to the other three areas mentioned above - 74.5%. Logically, this results in the lowest unemployment rate - 3.1%. The educational structure of the region's workforce is steadily improving. Most of the residents have a secondary education - 88.9 thousand, which corresponds to the industrial profile of the district.

According to NSI data, the number of young people aged 25-29 in Stara Zagora region last year was 14,458, of which 7193 were women. In 2021, 273 young women from the district were regis-

tered with the employment office as actively seeking work, of whom 38 were long-term unemployed and 190 had work experience. The activity of women with secondary education is slightly higher than that of women with tertiary and lower education.

Bulgaria - Pleven province

According to the NSI regional statistics for 2021, the number of young people aged 25-29 is 10,182 and the number of women is 5,019. In the Pleven district in 2021 there will be 305 women aged 25-29 registered with the employment offices, of whom 47 are long-term unemployed and 234 have work experience. In Pleven district, the group of women with secondary education is the most active. The percentage of registered unemployed women in the municipality of Pleven is the highest in comparison with other municipalities in the district, at 44.5% (136 women).

In all four regions considered, as in the city of Vratsa, the group of unemployed Romani with high long-term unemployment is the most vulnerable in the labour market.

Spain - Autonomous Community of Melilla and Andalusia

In Spain, 25.4% of women aged 25-29 are neither in education nor in employment, compared with 22.1% of men. EUROSTAT attributes this difference to the fact that women are more likely to look after children or other family members (EUROSTAT 2019). In the region under consideration, the national share of the population aged 15-29 who are neither in education nor in employment will be 17.3% in 2020.

The proportion of women aged 15-29 who are neither in education nor in employment is higher than the national average in both Melilla (28.3%) and Andalusia (22.6%) (Notas metodológicas in Nivel de formación, formación permanente y abandono: Explotación de las variables educativas de la Encuesta de Población Activa, Estadísticas de la Educación).

In 2020, the female employment rate in Andalusia ranges from 9.40% for women with no education (12.5% for men with no education) to 75.49% for those with a tertiary education (78.40% for men with a tertiary education).

Female unemployment in Andalusia is higher among younger women. The employment rate for women aged between 16 and 29 is 46.40%. Both the number of unemployed young men and women has increased in the last year, with a much more pronounced increase in the female population of 11.17%, while the increase for men was 7.68%, three and a half percentage points less (Mercado de trabajo de los jóvenes andaluces.2020. Observatorio Argos. Sistema de Prospección Permanente del Mercado de Trabajo de Andalucía. Servicio Andaluz de Empleo. Consejería de Empleo, Formación y Trabajo Autónomo. Junta de Andalucía. 2021).

The educational level of women participating in the labour market is closely linked to their chances of finding a job. In fact, the incidence of unemployment is higher among women with lower qualifications, such as illiterate women, with an unemployment rate of 53.39%, or with a primary education of 44.19%. For women with tertiary education, the rate is only 17.01%.

In the region under consideration, women aged 24-29 who belong to the NEET group are mainly Spanish women who left school at a very young age. Due to their inability to enter the labour market, they choose to re-enter education through courses that do not require any experience or other training. They are taught in small groups and through cross-training.

Most of these women come from dysfunctional families and are socially excluded for economic, social or cultural reasons. 95% of them have not completed compulsory education and have never had a job. They do not even have a current job application.

In some cases, the problem of being NEET has been caused by an early pregnancy. The prospects for these women are very limited. They tend to look for work in the home, such as childcare or caring for the elderly.

Women from NEET group usually seek support from community organisations, where they receive food aid and pay small bills. They turn to municipal social services for occasional rent assistance.

In Spain, foreign girls are also among the NEETs. From the point of view of ethnic minorities, there are two different profiles of girls from the Maghreb, mainly from countries such as Morocco and Algeria. The first are those who started the migration process with their families and stayed in Andalusia and Melilla. These girls are looking for regulated studies and belong to different networks that favour their real integration into society. The second profile is that of girls who started the migration process as minors and on their own, which led them to be taken into care by the administration until they reached the age of majority.

A large NEET group is the Romani community. 63% of young Romani men and women neither study nor work. **As many as 58% of Romani women do not work because they are involved in domestic work.**

In Spain, **the occupational profile is not the main reason for the high NEET rate.** Being in this group is linked to high unemployment rates, not to inactivity. Of the 19.4% of NEETs in Spain aged 15-29, the vast majority are unemployed (13.6%) compared to those who are inactive (5.9%).

Inactivity affects women more than men (7.3% of young women are inactive compared to 4.5% of their male counterparts). **Women choose to stay at home and take on family responsibilities.** The result is a loss of skills and distance from job opportunities.

Looking at the educational profile of NEETS in Spain in comparison with other European countries, Spain has the highest number of young people with only **primary education.**

Another phenomenon affecting young women is **part-time employment**. This is not a free choice, but a necessity, as it is the only option in the labour market. Figures show that in Spain, 67% of young people work part-time, which is almost twice the European average.

This does not mean that young women work less. **They are involved in other unpaid activities**, such as caring, subsistence farming and even family businesses. Caring for people at home is a fundamental social and political duty, but it is often treated as a task that does not deserve remuneration or compensation (Alonso, C. et al. (2019).

Italy - Molise region

In Italy, the pandemic has had serious repercussions, ranging from young people's anxiety to uncertainty about study and work to mental health (ISTAT, 2021; Ministry of Youth Policy, 2022). Perhaps this is why the number of NEETs in the region has reached record levels (over 3 million) among the 27 EU countries. NEETs **represent 25.1% of Italian young people aged 25-34**, 10% higher than the European average of 15% (Pogliotti & Tucci, 2022). Of these, **1.7 million are women**: 1 in 4 women (24.3%) are NEET, compared to 'only' 1 in 5 men (20.2%). Italy is almost the worst performer in Europe. It is only overtaken by Macedonia (27.6%), Montenegro (28.6%) and Turkey (33.6%).

The EUROSTAT 2021 study, which identified seven European regions where more than one in four young people aged 15-24 will not be in employment or education in 2020, unfortunately shows that **four of these regions are in Southern Italy: Molise (25.5%), Calabria (26.5%), Campania (28.0%) and Sicily (29.3%)**.

Italy also stands out negatively in the European context **in terms of the proportion of female NEETs in relation to the total number of young people**. 8.6 million women in this group in Europe live in Italy (Ministry of Youth, 2022; Filandri, 2021; Pogliotti & Tucci, 2022). This is the worst figure in the European Union, exceeded only by Greece.

According to the Openpolis survey, updated to December 2021, **NEETs in Molise represent 28.3%** of those aged 15-29, compared to the Italian average of 23.30% (Openpolis, 2021). It is worth noting that young people, and **especially young women aged 25-29, are a minority of the Molise population**. They represent only 5.4% of the total population of the region (with a predominance of males over females).

The NEETs include both those who are actively looking for work, i.e. the **unemployed**, who number around 1 million, and those who do not have a job and are not looking for one or are not immediately ready to take one, i.e. the **inactive**. This group comprises 2 million people (Pogliotti & Tucci, 2022).

At least **three different NEET groups** can be identified, all of which are predominantly female (Ministry of Youth Policy, 2022; Rosina, Marta, Marzana, Ellena and Cerruti, December 2021, 2022):

- 1. young people looking (more or less intensive) for work.** These are people who have recently left school or university. They are the most dynamic and employable. A significant proportion of them have high human capital and high career aspirations, which are not always immediately reflected in the labour market;
- 2. young people in a grey zone between insecurity and unemployment.** They have low skills but a strong willingness to retrain;
- 3. young people who no longer believe they can make it.** They are blocked by a problematic family situation or discouraged by negative experiences that have plunged them into a spiral of gradual deterioration, not only economically but also emotionally and relationally.

In Italy, more than half a million 18–24-year-olds have at most a secondary school qualification and their employment rate is almost 10% lower than that of Europeans in the same situation (Giannoli, 2021).

20.1% of the population aged 25-64 have a tertiary education, compared to 32.8% in the EU. The data refer to 2020 and confirm the slower growth of tertiary graduates in Italy (ISTAT, 2021).

The NEET rate is falling for men and rising for women. EUROSTAT analysts link this phenomenon to the fact that childbearing and motherhood are increasingly postponed, forcing many women to give up their careers in order to look after their families.

Slovenia – Coastal-Karst region

At the end of January 2022, there were a total of 67,834 unemployed people in Slovenia. Of these, 49.4%, or around 33,500, were women. Of these women, 18.7%, or around 12,680, were under 29 years old (or aged between 15 and 29).

In the region in question, unemployed women aged 25-29 have, **on average, a very low level of education.** A third (32%) have completed primary school or less. This makes them extremely difficult to employ or unemployable on the labour market, as Slovenian employers usually require at least lower secondary vocational education.

The group with **lower secondary vocational education includes 16%** of all unemployed women aged 24-29. Together with women who have not completed primary education, they account for almost half (46%) of all unemployed women aged 24-29.

The largest group are women who have completed secondary vocational, technical or general education. They account for around a third (30%) of all employed women aged 25-29. This is the group who **have completed a second level of education but there are no vacancies in the labour market in the field for which they have been trained.**

The group with **first-cycle higher education** etc., which is one of the fastest growing groups, has a relatively low unemployment rate of around 16%. The percentage is actually the same as for the group with secondary education, but the range of skills and knowledge is much wider and therefore their employability in the labour market is higher.

The number of unemployed women aged 25-29 has the smallest impact on the group of women with higher education, second or third cycle. This group represents 7% of all women aged 25-29. This is the highest level of education attained by a small proportion of the population.

The group of unemployed women aged 25-29 does not include many women with a disability or some form of disability. **Their share is less than 3%.**

Less than a third of women aged 25-29 (28%) **can be considered as first-time job seekers.** This is a special status in Slovenia, usually due to the fact that they have completed their education and are just entering the labour market. This does not mean that they have no work experience. They could have acquired it through professional activities within the framework of so-called student work. As a student, you can do various jobs in companies without being employed. This special status applies to secondary and higher education.

The group of women aged 25-29 is dominated by those **who have already been employed and have some work experience.** The share of such persons is more than 70%.

The proportion of long-term unemployed women aged 25-29 is high. It affects more than one woman in three. Long-term unemployment means that they have been out of the labour market for more than a year. The remaining 65% of unemployed women aged 25-29 have been unemployed (registered with a public employment service) for less than a year.

The statistics presented do not cover the entire population of women who belong to the NEET group of women aged 25-29, because some women are not even registered in the public unemployment register, which is the only one that keeps statistics in their entirety.

It can therefore be assumed that this group also includes:

- women who have not registered at all with the Labour Office for personal or other reasons;
- foreign women who have not taken a Slovenian language course and have not passed the Slovenian language exam or have not done so within 1 year - as a consequence they are automatically removed from the official registers;
- women who have children and benefit from social benefits;
- immigrant women who do not have residence or work permits;
- women from the Italian minority or other foreigners without language skills who do not participate in employment services.

Poland

EUROSTAT data show that in 2021, 13.7% of young people aged 15-29 in Poland could be classified as NEET. Compared to other European countries, the youth unemployment rate for this group in 2022 is lower than the EU average (7.2% compared to 13%).

Young people are characterised by **lower economic activity** (in Poland, 51.9% of those aged 15-29 were economically active in 2021, and 72.8% of those aged 15-64). On the other hand, the employment rate for the age 15-29 group was 48.1%, compared with 70.3% for the 15-64 age group. In the EU countries (EU-27), the rates for the 15-29 age group in 2021 were 54.4% for the activity rate and 47.4% for the employment rate.

The situation of the young unemployed is particularly difficult due to their lack of work experience, which translates into a high proportion of people **not entitled to social benefits**. **Young people are therefore one of the main beneficiaries of activation measures** implemented by public employment services.

Since 2014, the so-called new labour market instruments have been implemented to support, among others, the employment of young people under 30, i.e.: training vouchers, internship vouchers, employment vouchers or settlement vouchers. From the beginning of their introduction until the end of 2021, almost 135,000 people have benefited from them.

In 2021, almost 126,000 unemployed people under 30 will benefit from active forms of unemployment support, including 72.3,000 people under 25, representing 45.3% and 26.0% respectively of the unemployed benefiting from active forms of support. Last year, young unemployed people accounted for almost 69% of participants in **vocational preparation for adults**, over 58% of participants in work experience, over 47% of participants in **training** and about 40% of participants in **subsidised work**.

Currently, there are 580,000 registered unemployed in Poland (as at the end of 2021). **Of which 45.5% are women** (Statistics Poland, *Poland in figures 2022*) The largest number of young unemployed, according to Statistics Poland data as at the end of 2021, are registered in the districts of Szydłowiec in Mazowsze region, Kętrzyn (Warmińsko-Mazurskie) and Białogard (Zachodniopomorskie).

The employment rate for women differs from the EU average, especially in the 25-29 age group. **There is an increase in inactivity among women, caused first by social benefits (500+) and then by the COVID-19 pandemic**. Most women in this age group do not return to work after having children. The labour market participation of women with more than two children falls even further. Most of these women are lost to the labour market because they cannot keep up with the rapid growth of new technologies.

In Poland, as in other countries, most of the responsibilities related to the home, childcare and caring for ageing parents fall on women. This phenomenon is well illustrated by data from the pandemic period. In the third quarter of 2000, **1.3% of inactive men and 13.3% of women were inactive** due to family responsibilities related to household management.

The Mazovian Labour Market Observatory tried to profile a representative of the NEET generation in Poland. 82% spend their free time in front of the computer or television. 72% meet with friends regularly. 54% read books and magazines. 43% do sports. 54% take care of their family. 80% are single and not in a formal relationship. 74% have mostly done simple service or manual work in their previous jobs. 68% live in villages or towns of less than 50,000 inhabitants.

There are young people who are condemned to be NEET, but there are also those who deliberately refuse to participate in society or the labour market. Reasons can be social, environmental, family or fear of failure. Young people often feel overwhelmed by the high expectations of their environment and the competition. They give up the so-called rat race because they see no point in it. Another factor is the financial situation. Even families with an average income have the financial means to support an adult child. In less well-off families, children have to start working earlier.

Overprotection and strong interdependence, especially in mother-son and mother-daughter relationships, is also an important factor. This can affect the independence of young people who choose to live comfortably with their mother.

Avstrija

“Traditionally [...] the share of NEET young people is calculated on the basis of the LFS and compared across the EU. On this basis, a share of 6.5% of 15–24-year-olds was recorded in Austria in 2017, corresponding to a target group of 64,157. This share is clearly below the EU average of 10.9% (Steiner 2021, p. 188).”

“The rate of unemployed people aged up to 24 years is falling at the end of April 2022 compared to the previous year. Youth unemployment is [...] below the previous year’s level. In the age group up to 19 years, the number [...] is below the previous year’s level, and in the age group from 20 to 24 years, unemployment falls by 23.4% (-6,100 to 19,975). According to EUROSTAT, the youth unemployment rate in March 2022 was 6.9% (5.8% y-o-y). Austria ranks second in the EU behind Germany (5.7%) (Federal Ministry of Labour 2022, p. 11).”

“One of the more in-depth analyses made possible by the administrative database is the regional differentiation down to the level of political districts. There is a large regional spread in the share of NEETs, from 5.8% in Freistadt / Upper Austria to 23.6% in Vienna / Innere Stadt (centre). This corresponds to four times the difference between the political district in Austria with the highest and the lowest rate.

Low shares tend to be found in rural districts and high shares in urban districts. Gender differences are rather small throughout Austria. However, when distinguishing between urban and rural areas, it can again be seen that male youth are more affected by NEET in urban areas, while **female youth are more affected in rural areas.**

The proportion of NEETs also varies according to migration background. Young people born in a third country (outside the EU) are significantly more affected by systemic exclusion than young people born in Austria. The difference ranges from an average of 9.4% to 36.8% across Austria. **Consequently, young people born in a third country are three and a half times more likely to be NEET.** The differences in NEET rates across Austria are again huge, ranging from 26.6% in Vienna - Mariahilf to 70.8% in Volkermarkt/Carinthia for those born in a third country.

In the case of differences between urban and rural areas, third country-born people account for between 26.6% and 70.8%. These results show that the differences between urban and rural areas are reversed for migrants. Whereas previously generally high rates were found in urban areas, **the high rates associated with the migrant subgroup are characteristic of rural areas** (Steiner 2021, pp. 189-191)."

According to the data collected and analysed by Steiner:

- there is a wide regional variation in NEET participation in a community;
- the lowest rates are found in rural areas and higher rates in urban areas;
- gender differences are rather small throughout Austria;
- the risk of NEET is higher for females in rural areas and for males in urban areas;
- the risk for young people born in a third country is significantly higher (3.5 times), especially in rural areas;
- the NEET risk is high for girls from rural areas whose country of birth is not Austria or a non-EU country.

The results of Bacher's (2014) study also shed light on who is NEET and their situation.

In Austria, about 78,000 young people were NEET (2006-2011). This indicator tends to be cyclical and seasonal differences are negligible or insignificant. NEET young people are more likely to come from abroad and more likely to live in cities. The parents of NEET young people are significantly more likely to have low educational qualifications and less likely to be in higher education. Older NEETs (aged 20 and over) are predominantly young women with caring responsibilities. About half of the NEETs are early school leavers.

Second-generation immigrants do not have a significantly higher risk of NEET than young people from native families. Immigrant background is a strong factor influencing NEET among first-generation young people (both males and females). The main reason (apart from low parental education) is the lack of EU citizenship. This has an indirect effect (lack of recognised school and educational qualifications).

Vienna has the highest NEET rate in Austria and Upper Austria the lowest. This is due to socio-structural differences (migrant background, low educational attainment and early school leaving).

The strongest determinants of NEET among young women are compulsory care (largest factor), early school leaving, early unemployment and illness.

Germany

The German Federal Council defines the general group of NEET young people as follows “NEET young people are [...] a heterogeneous group and can be divided into two broad categories: **the unemployed, i.e. those registered as unemployed who are actively looking for work, and the inactive NEET who are not looking for work.** Their inactivity can be caused by a number of factors, including family responsibilities and health problems, but also discouragement and lack of motivation to register as unemployed” (Federal Council 2020).

In 2021, the youth unemployment rate in Germany averaged 4.9% over the year. The unemployment rate is the share of the unemployed in the total dependent civilian labour force (full-time employees subject to social security contributions, part-time employees, civil servants, unemployed) in a given age group and provides information on the labour market and employment situation. Unemployment among 15–25-year-olds is mainly due to problems during the transition to the education system and after leaving vocational training. Unemployment during these transitions is high but tends to be relatively short-lived.

The group of female NEET includes people of German origin as well as immigrants, who face problems such as: lack of language skills, lack of documents, difficulties in documenting work experience, etc., which will be discussed later in this handbook.

Malta

In 2020, there will be 4.8 thousand females and 4.4 thousand males aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training. The population of female NEETs aged 15-29 has decreased in absolute terms over the last decade, but more importantly in relative terms (from 14.9% to 10.5% between 2011 and 2020).

A slightly higher proportion of NEET young people live in cities (63%) than in their suburbs (35%). Only a small proportion of NEET young people, 3% of the Maltese population, live in rural areas.

The share of women in the NEET population aged 25-29 is disproportionately higher than in the male population. Although women make up less than half (46%) of the target population in Malta, they account for over 65% of the Maltese NEET population aged 25-29.

The gender gap remains one of the highest in the EU (16.8% in 2021), although it shows one of the highest percentage point decreases in the EU over the last decade (from 31.4% in 2012). The provision of free childcare and the 'making work pay' strategy have contributed to this result. At 29.4% in 2020, the employment gap for people with disabilities is higher than the EU average (24.5%). (Commission Staff Working Paper, Country Report 2022, Brussels, 23 May 2022).

In Malta, as in other European countries, **low educational attainment is associated with NEET status and a generally weaker attachment to the labour market.** Those with low educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) represent only 23% of the 25-29 age group, compared to 52% of NEET young people. High educational attainment is the main protective factor against NEET status, accounting for 41% of the general population aged 25-29 and 13% of NEETs in this age group.

4. RISK FACTORS

The crisis and pandemic have affected young people particularly heavily. They are a highly vulnerable group because of their transition from one stage of life to another, their lack of work experience, their inadequate level of education or training, their usually limited social protection and their limited financial resources.

Young women are in a particular situation. They are threatened by low wages and precarious employment conditions and lack adequate measures to reconcile work and private life. They are also more vulnerable to discrimination.

EUROFOUND identifies specific risk factors that can influence this:

1. health problems increase the risk of NEET by 40% compared to young people without health problems;
2. immigration increases the risk of NEET by 70%;
3. low educational attainment doubles the risk of NEET compared to young people who have completed vocational or school education;
4. young people living in remote areas are 1.5 times more likely to be NEET than those living in medium-sized towns;
5. young people living in low-income households are at increased risk of NEET;
6. young people whose parents have been unemployed are 17% more at risk than young people whose parents have not been unemployed;
7. young people whose parents have a low level of education are 1.5 times more at risk than young people whose parents have completed vocational training. The risk is doubled compared to young people whose parents have completed tertiary education;
8. young people with divorced parents have a 30% increased risk of NEET.

(Bacher et al. (2014), p. 48 of EUROFOUND (2012))

Education and qualifications are social and demographic characteristics that strongly determine whether a person is NEET or not. This is confirmed by data from all project partners.

In Bulgaria, 82% of young people do not look for information on training courses. The share of those who do look is only 8%. The share of young people who participate in non-formal education is also very low - 8% have participated once and the same number several times. A certain percentage of young people subjectively feel that the education and knowledge they have received at school or university is sufficient and therefore do not feel the need to acquire additional qualifications.

86% of young people say they can work with a computer and 11% say they cannot but can manage. **Those who say that they are not good at working with computers, but can manage, mostly have primary education or less, are of Roma origin and mainly live in villages.**

Another example can be found in the information provided by Spain. When analysing the relationship between the temporary nature of contracts and the level of education of female workers, it was found that **as the level of education increases, the temporary nature of the contract decreases**. 97.5% of contracts for women without a university degree are temporary. On the other hand, for women with post-secondary and tertiary education (including doctorates), the percentage of temporary contracts is 89.65%.

In addition, the Living Conditions Survey (LCS), also carried out in Spain, shows that **wages increase with the level of education**, with more than 50% of those with primary education or less in the lowest income quintiles. According to the OECD, low-skilled NEETs are particularly at risk of leaving the labour market permanently (OECD (2016)).

In Italy, dropping out or staying in education, as well as the skills acquired and subsequent choices, are largely **determined by the social and economic and family environment**. Parental educational attainment is a strong determinant of school success and retention in the education and training system. Early school leaving affects 22.7% of young people whose parents have at most lower secondary education, 5.9% of those whose parents have upper secondary education and 2.3% of those whose parents have tertiary education (Giannoli, 2021; ISTAT, 2021).

The problem of early school leaving does not only affect Spain or Italy, but all the countries considered here.

Immigrants and the Romani community are a very vulnerable group in terms of education. In Spain, 64.4% of Romani boys and girls aged 16-24 did not complete compulsory secondary education, i.e. they did not even complete compulsory schooling. In Italy, the drop-out rate for young people with non-Italian citizenship is more than three times higher than for Italians: 35.4% compared to 11.0%.

Distance learning, which was widely used during the COVID-19 pandemic, is also problematic in this context. Its medium-term effects highlight the risk of widening inequalities, especially for children who find it difficult to access digital education, such as Roma children. This leads to increased exclusion and discrimination.

Long-term unemployment is another risk factor. People who have been out of work for a long time find it harder to get a job because they lose motivation, confidence, and skills. Employers may be reluctant to hire such a person. Long periods of unemployment lead to an increased risk of poverty, social exclusion and even health problems.

In addition to long-term unemployment, there is the problem of **inherited (generational) unemployment**. In this group there is little chance of a change in attitude towards taking up some kind of work. Such people live at the expense of others and do not want to change this. For some young people, the word “unemployed” has become synonymous with a job that can provide them with an income without working.

Not every young person chooses long-term unemployment. In Bulgaria alone, almost 50% of them are looking for a job but cannot find one. This situation is particularly prevalent among **those from small towns and villages**. The situation is similar in the other countries included here. This difficulty in finding a job clearly increases the risk of entering or remaining in the NEET group.

Premature parenthood and single parenthood are also important risk factors. Premature pregnancy in most cases inevitably leads to dropping out of school, impoverishment of existing qualifications and a more difficult start in the labour market, even if the child reaches an age when it can be integrated into the systemic care system. However, this is not the only risk factor for NEET. Lone parenthood also has an impact. The double stress of keeping and/or getting a job in the market, the lack of sharing household responsibilities, increases gender inequality and reinforces the NEET phenomenon.

In many countries, a significant risk of women remaining NEET is the **obligation to care for children and other relatives (sick, elderly)**. It is almost culturally accepted that this belongs to women. This is confirmed, for example, by the data presented by the Italian partner. Here, **one in three women cites family reasons as a motivation for not working** (33.6% an important reason for women and only 2.9% for men, Save the Children, 2021). This situation leads to less work experience for young women and an increased risk of returning to or entering the labour market. Data from Poland during the pandemic period also illustrate this phenomenon. In the third quarter of 2008, 1.3% of inactive men and 13.3% of women were inactive due to family responsibilities related to running the household.

Wage inequality is often the dominant argument for choosing to care rather than work. In many sectors, women are paid less than men for the same work. The problem is exacerbated when a child is born. The couple has to decide which parent should give up work or work part-time. Even a simple economic calculation will lead the couple to opt for lower paid jobs, creating a vicious circle that tends to exclude women from the labour market" (Save the Children, 2022, p. 19).

Another aspect that reinforces the abandonment of the labour market in favour of caring for others are the **so-called social benefits**. This is highlighted by Poland and Slovenia. In Poland, most women in this age group do not return to work after having children. This is particularly evident in the statistics for women with two or more children. In Slovenia, these benefits are used by those who do not have sufficient financial resources. The social system provides them with funds that are sometimes even higher than the minimum wage they would receive for a full-time job. They therefore are not motivated to change this.

A general risk factor is the lack of opportunities to get a permanent full-time job with a contract and social security. This risk is explicitly mentioned by the Polish partner. People from rural areas and small towns, who are poorly educated, generally work in simple manual or service jobs, often on a **so-called 'junk job' (mandate contract) or without a contract at all**. The situation

is similar in Spain. Seasonal workers, mainly women, are called multiworkers. In winter they combine hourly contracts in school canteens or cleaning services, and in summer they move to the hotel and catering industry. Out of necessity they take up the above jobs, exacerbating the NEET problem.

The psychological symptoms associated with the COVID-19 pandemic are also a major problem. In Spain, in the Mental Health Survey of the Centre for Sociological Research (2021), the following were often or quite often mentioned: feeling hopeless about the future (24.9%), worrying a lot about many things without being able to control them (24.5%), anxiety (22.1%), feeling overwhelmed and stressed (21.8%), feeling a lot of sadness or depression (19.8%), loneliness (17.2%), feeling a lot of fear or anxiety (15.7%) and irritability, anger, malice or aggression (13.8%). In addition, 15.8% of the population reported having experienced panic attacks, of which 22% were women and 9.4% were men. This is a very important factor in exacerbating the problems of NEET young people, including females. Similar problems were reported in other countries.

The last factor worth mentioning is the lack of access to NEET young people in the initial phase of their activation. **Traditional methods are usually used to identify and contact them.** This method is inadequate. As a result, many of them are not even aware of the opportunities offered by various institutions and agencies. As a result, they lack the motivation to become active in the labour market.

6. BARRIERS TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The barriers to access to education and employment identified by the individual project partners partly coincide with the information given in the description of the NEET profile and the risk factors mentioned in the previous sections of the handbook. In order not to duplicate this information, only those not mentioned above are described here.

Specific barriers due to minority, ethnic and immigration groups

These barriers are related to the personal, family, social and cultural situation of young women, who start from a position of inequality, as they face more exclusion factors, which multiply the difficulties in accessing education and employment.

In the Vratsa region of Bulgaria, this barrier is particularly evident in the situation of **Romani women**. Despite the measures taken to integrate the Romani community, there is still extreme poverty, unemployment, low levels of education in some schools and classes, inadequate housing, poor health and well-being among parts of the Roma population, which places members of these communities in an unequal position to others.

According to research conducted by SILC 2017, NSI, Institute for Market Economics, the largest number of inactive young people is in the 25-29 age group. At the same time, there are significantly more inactive women in the 15-19 group, **which is probably due to the reluctance of some ethnic groups, especially the Roma, to allow older children to attend school.**

This is confirmed by the statistics provided by the Spanish partner. **Romani women find it difficult to access education and are more likely to be illiterate than Romani men.** Fewer Romani women than men complete compulsory secondary education, 15.5% compared to 19%. Illiteracy affects 13.8% of Romani women compared to 5.6% of men. The rate is 2% for women in the general population (Secretariado Gitano Foundation (2019)).

In Bulgaria, almost all young people (98%) have their own mobile phone and 80% have a computer and internet access at home (92%). However, this is not the case for Romani youth. **73% of young Romani do not own a computer. This has a significant impact, for example, on the development of labour market skills.**

The situation of young women is hampered by their own culture and traditional upbringing. This is illustrated, for example, by the reasons given for dropping out of school in Spain: family reasons (marriage, family responsibilities, moving house or family pressure), with significant differences between women and men: 42.7% of girls drop out compared to 14.9% of boys.

Women who **have emigrated** from their country (usually following a husband/partner who has left for work) and find themselves in a foreign place are in a special situation. The first problem they face is the **lack of documents**. This situation is well described in Slovenia. In order to obtain a

work permit, a foreigner must find an employer in Slovenia. Whether he or she will find an employer willing to employ him or her depends on which country he or she comes from. The procedure for obtaining a residence and work permit depends on this. As a result, many women who follow their husbands stay at home because they have no way of quickly obtaining jobs, permits and residency status. The lack of proper documentation keeps them at home and socially excluded.

The problem of lack of documents is more varied. In the case of Germany, only 8.2% of all vocational training certificates and 21.5% of all study or doctorate certificates available to the target group considered here who have moved to Germany are provisionally recognised, of which 40.1% are considered partly equivalent (BAMF 2018). The biggest obstacle is the fact that only 16.6% of migrants with vocational education and training seek recognition of their certificates at all. More than a third of respondents said they did not know how or where to apply. In addition, almost 30% think that recognition is not important and 12.8% find it too bureaucratic. To make matters worse, there are sometimes different rules, obligations and conditions for recognition depending on the federal state, and the costs involved “have a deterrent effect on some people” (BAMF 2018).

Another obstacle for migrants is the **language barrier**. In order to be able to work, everyone needs to have at least a basic understanding of the language of the country they are in, as the work process, job security and other procedures are conducted in that particular language. Language skills (e.g. in Germany or Slovenia) are confirmed by passing an exam. It is usually taken by men who take the job. Women take it much less often or not at all.

Germany points to a similar problem. In the BAMF survey on family reunification, lack of language skills is seen as an obstacle to full employment by almost two thirds of jobseekers and 56.6% of those in employment. (BAMF 2018).

Women who follow their partners/husbands into the country first seek support from their migrant community. **As a result, they do not try to learn the language at all.** Alternatively, they start when the children start school, but not always. As a result, they find it difficult to participate in everyday social life. Their partners, friends and relatives, and even their children, need to accompany them to school, the doctor’s surgery and offices to help them communicate with others.

People with language problems can attend various language courses. **Unfortunately, they are often unaware of this.** This is particularly problematic for those who do not speak a foreign language other than their mother tongue, and so do not even receive the information they need because it is provided to them in a language they do not understand.

Access to language courses for migrant women with younger children also depends on **the availability of childcare**. If this is not available, the woman has neither the opportunity nor the motivation to take advantage of this kind of support, even if learning the language is a prerequisite for staying in the country.

Women who do not learn or speak the language of the country they are in often do so not only because of a lack of knowledge about such training, but also because their **cultural environment** does not allow them to participate actively in the social and public life of that country. In some cultures, women are not allowed to meet other women who are not part of their community. They have to stay at home and look after their children. For example, when they come to Slovenia, they give birth to 2-3 children who are given Slovenian citizenship and many of these children stay at home until they are legally required to go to kindergarten/school. However, it can happen that even when the children start school, the women do not start looking for work (if only because of language barriers).

A major problem is the **violence** that is sometimes perpetrated under the guise of religious acts. A clear example was given by a Slovenian partner: "At a Slovenian language course at the employment office, the husband of a female participant came and when he saw that she was in the same class with other men, he got angry and forcibly took the woman out of the course". This situation illustrates the subordination of women (in some cultures) to men. Women between the ages of 25 and 29 (both older and younger) are particularly vulnerable, as they are more likely to allow themselves to be victimised by men out of concern for their children and their safety. Their integration into society and the community often depends on the 'goodwill' of their partners and their willingness to give up full control over their female partners, as well as their social status and ability to support their families.

Many migrant women **have no work experience** and are unable to obtain it because they face language and cultural barriers that prevent them from entering the labour market in the normal way. It is difficult to estimate the number, but in Slovenia, approximate figures suggest that there are about a thousand such women in the Coastal-Karst region.

The lack of work experience is exacerbated by the need to acquire the additional qualifications required for a particular job. In Germany, for example, the employment sectors in which women are most interested (e.g. teaching and health care) require long training paths after qualification. Women who have qualifications in their home country do not use them because the additional training is too burdensome.

A significant barrier (although not defined by each partner) is the issue of **migrant women asylum seekers**. This was particularly highlighted by Malta. Here, for example, women from sub-Saharan Africa have low participation rates in the labour market due to gender-related barriers, including the availability of childcare support. It is mainly women asylum seekers who face other barriers to employment, such as lack of local work experience, language barriers, lack of interview skills, lack of local references, lack of qualifications or problems with recognition of their foreign qualifications.

In addition to the challenges and barriers identified above, migrant women face others that often lead to exploitation and abuse, such as: long working hours, low wages, irregular work and unsafe conditions for those working without work permits.

Low or no education, low skills and lack of access to training

Without adequate education, **young women are not sufficiently qualified** to enter the labour market and to perform the tasks required by companies. As a result, it is more difficult for them to find a job, and when they do, they have less satisfactory working conditions commensurate with their qualifications.

Women's education is particularly important in the face of the technological revolution. **Lack of, or inadequate access to, digital training**, the internet and equipment puts them at a disadvantage in a labour market that requires these skills.

Young unemployed women also often do not have the prerequisites to work in shortage occupations that require appropriate training and qualifications. This requires a financial and time investment that they often cannot afford.

A major challenge is to maintain the motivation to learn and obtain qualifications that **minimise the resulting skills gaps in the labour market**. To increase this motivation, it is necessary to work with employers to identify the skills they need and then to adapt training provision to meet these needs, both in terms of the training itself and access to it.

Territorial inequalities

Young women living in small towns, suburbs and rural areas often have much more difficult access to information about training or courses that could change their situation on the labour market. This is confirmed, for example, by the data on vocational qualification courses in DP BGCPD in 2021. (in Bulgaria). A total of 90 young women took part in the proposed training courses, representing only 8.5% of the total number of unemployed people included. Those who received training services represent large urban areas where access to information, guidance and services suitable for young women is greater.

Negative attitudes of employers and lack of skills attractive to employers

In Bulgaria, in particular, the **SME sector** underestimates the benefits of on-the-job training and is reluctant to take on young people with recent vocational qualifications for internships and apprenticeships.

Malta, on the other hand, has limited human resources and, as a result, Maltese people no longer want to work in so-called low-skilled jobs. At the same time, highly skilled jobs (especially technical jobs) are not going to Maltese because they do not have the required skills. We are talking specifically about students, but it suffices to apply this to the situation of NEET women, for whom this barrier becomes insurmountable without systemic support.

In all countries, a significant barrier is the lack of skills that are not taught in schools, i.e. collaboration, oral and written communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork. These are aspects that companies attach particular importance to and that young female jobseekers often lack.

It is also worth noting that young women often enter the labour market without the practical application of the knowledge they have acquired at school/training. Meanwhile, many employers expect them to have the necessary practical experience when they enter the labour market.

Lack of experience

In a labour market with many more applicants than vacancies, those with less experience find themselves in direct competition with more experienced workers. They are at a disadvantage.

Some systemic solutions exacerbate this problem. For example, the work experience of young people in Slovenia is relative. Slovenian law allows young people to work through the student service until they finish their education (as long as they have secondary school or student status and are between 15 and 26 years old). This work is paid through a student's recommendation. Although the work is carried out and the relevant contributions are paid to the national system, the work is not considered as work experience. Thus, young women looking for work, although they have experience, cannot prove it because it is not recognised. They therefore start from the position of someone with no work experience.

In addition, some people deliberately delay their studies because it is more profitable for them to work through the student service. As a result, these people enter the labour market as first-time jobseekers even after the age of 26.

Difficulties in the transition from education to employment

Young women tend to be the last hired and the first fired. Their access to the labour market is characterised by high job insecurity and instability, which increases their risk of social exclusion.

Lack of mobility

Geographical location is often a **barrier to mobility**. The Italian partner, for example, points this out. The region of Molise is mainly mountainous and hilly. The only motorway that crosses Molise only runs along the coast and the rail and public transport networks are not particularly developed. Furthermore, Molise is spread over a large area. It is a network of small towns/villages nestled in the hills. Train and bus services are only guaranteed during peak hours. At other times, public transport is not very frequent or punctual. This situation limits mobility in the region, even between neighbouring villages. The coastal area has better access to transport thanks to a more developed motorway and railway infrastructure.

This barrier is also experienced by women in Slovenia. The region covered by the project is characterised by the fact that most of the population is concentrated in four coastal municipalities. These municipalities have an extensive network of smaller villages and towns. They have the disadvantage of being very poorly served by public transport. In some places buses do not run at all or only during the week. Sometimes there is only a school bus service. As a result, in many hinterland towns, women cannot get to work unless they have a driving licence and a car.

Only two countries were mentioned above, but the problem is much more widespread and should be recognised as a barrier to access to education and employment.

Barriers to access for NEET women

NEET women often work outside the system. They are not registered anywhere, so information that could affect them simply does not reach them. This was well described by an Italian partner. "To reach NEETs you have to go to the village bar, the sports club or the dog and horse lovers".

The barriers to reaching NEET women are also highlighted by the Slovenian partner. According to them, trying to reach them through an online form is not sufficient or helpful, especially if it is in a language or on websites that the target group does not understand or is not digitally literate enough.

Gender discrimination

The steady rise in unemployment during the economic crisis has justified a greater social **tolerance of discrimination based on gender, age or origin**. Some employers consider women to be less desirable employees because of pregnancy, childbirth, maternity, time incompatibilities (due to caring for the elderly, children or disabled) or simply because they are women of childbearing age. This problem was particularly highlighted by the Spanish partner.

Reconciling work and family life

Many women do not look for work because of family responsibilities, because it would be difficult for them to find a job that would allow them to work, for example, part-time, in the morning or in the afternoon. Young mothers in particular, or women caring for children, sick or elderly family members, need either flexible working hours or support in caring for dependents, including during festive or holiday periods. As the system does not provide them with this, they choose to stay at home instead of pursuing their careers.

Long distances between home and work are also a major obstacle to reconciling work and family life. Women with children or other dependents cannot afford long commutes. This limits their ability to look for work in the immediate area.

Inadequate access to crèches, kindergartens or other forms of childcare, especially for children under three years of age, cannot be overlooked. This problem also affects migrant women. The lack of flexible part-time training and employment opportunities for refugees is a barrier for these women and further increases their exclusion.

Traditional education model

Although the traditional model of child rearing, where the mother stays at home and the father earns money, is in theory much weaker, some countries have drawn attention to this barrier. The trend is not very widespread, but it exists.

Malta, for example, when analysing the situation of women, noted the significant influence of the parents in this respect. Most participants reported a traditional family arrangement. The father is the breadwinner, and the mother takes care of the home. This has a direct impact on how young women perceive the labour market and their career prospects.

Barriers at a personal level

NEET young people, even if they have the potential to study, are often reluctant to do so because the education system does not meet their needs. This has a direct impact on their **motivation and activity in this direction**. As a result, they lack career prospects and plans.

Low self-esteem and lack of **self-confidence can also be a barrier**. Because of their low skills, NEET women are reluctant to seek employment in modern sectors, even though these would be much more attractive and developmental in the long run. This may also be a key factor in their decision to declare or start their own business rather than work for someone else.

7. NEEDS OF THE TARGET GROUP

There are more than 7 million young people in the EU who are not in employment, education or training. Many of them are migrants or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is a very diverse group with many deficits and needs.

Changing the situation of NEET women in the 25-29 age group requires **a change in the approach to working with them in general**, based on integrity, personalisation, and the young woman's leading and active role in taking responsibility for her own life, whatever her current situation.

They should be helped to **recognise their skills and abilities, while building their self-esteem and motivation to take action**. This will help them find new ways to achieve autonomy and professional and personal fulfilment.

It is essential to recognise the need for **comprehensive and individualised support** to reconcile work and family life, including the care of children and other dependants. This should be provided at the stage of additional education or the use of different forms of training. This support should, for example, take the form of paying for kindergartens, canteens, toy libraries, hiring third parties, etc. It should, of course, continue when they enter the labour market.

It is also worth focusing on the need for a **systemic change in lifestyles**, which should not only focus on child-rearing and family life, especially when supported by additional social benefits that consequently alienate these women from working life. The longer they stay at home, the more difficult it becomes for them to enter or return to the labour market. Their qualifications and skills become less attractive to a potential employer. As a result, when their children grow up, they lose social support and have to start their career from scratch. They are unable to make up the lost years, which also affects their quality of life or the financial resources they will have in their later years. Therefore, these women should be supported and encouraged at every stage of their lives to continue their education, training and skills development, which can lead to a better start in the labour market and consequently a better quality of life.

Many NEET women are difficult for practitioners to reach, e.g. because they are not registered with employment services or because of outdated recruitment methods for training programmes. A further aspect is the lack of trust this group has in the officials offering different types of support. It is therefore necessary **to employ professionals who understand the specific difficulties faced by NEET women**, so that it is easier to connect with them and build motivation for change. In the case of minority, ethnic or immigrant groups, it is necessary to involve mediators, mentors or other people who act as an 'authority' for these young people. This will make it easier for them to engage in the process of changing their lives, especially if it requires effort on their part.

It is also very important to recognise the need to **raise awareness in society**. Attention should be focused on a culture that promotes genuine equality between men and women, free from racism and prejudice, as this is crucial to removing the obstacles and inequalities faced by women. Awareness-raising should be targeted at all levels of society in order to combat the prejudices that lead to the feminisation and rationalisation of sectors with inferior working conditions and even to the exclusion of women from the education system and later from the labour market.

Many of the needs of this target group have already been addressed in previous chapters, notably in the analysis of risk factors and barriers faced by NEET women. In order not to duplicate this content, they are only briefly mentioned below.

1. facilitating language learning for immigrant women and the integration of immigrant women into the host country;
2. wise financial support. In a situation where a woman receives various types of social benefits, she should not lose them when she enters the labour market. Rather than encouraging them, this makes the decision to take up employment more difficult;
3. providing mobility, e.g. through driving courses, car hire, so that women have job opportunities in places far from their home;
4. administrative support, especially for migrant women who need work permits, residence permits, etc.;
5. adapting education and training to the needs of the current labour market, including greater interest and involvement of the business community in the education system, so that young people are trained in areas that are desirable on the labour market;
6. encouraging young women to acquire technical and digital skills;
7. raising awareness of education and the acquisition of new skills in terms of their impact on one's own life and its quality;
8. the development of psychological skills to cope with stress, failure and disappointment, which will have an impact on the development of motivation for change;
9. to change the approach of officials and offices to the problems of young women in this NEET group.

8. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The handbook Profile of beneficiaries and their barriers has analysed the situation of NEET women aged 25-29 in different countries, represented by the different project partners. Who is NEET depends very much on the problems facing a particular country in Europe. For some it will be NEET women with a Roma background, for others it will be women with an immigrant background, and for others it will simply be young people who have dropped out of the school system and become unemployed.

Whatever the country, the problems faced by NEET young people are very universal. The deficits identified in this social group include, among others:

- limited personal and social skills;
- inadequate educational and vocational qualifications;
- lack of information and knowledge about the labour market;
- detachment from personal, educational and family life;
- dependency and lack of personal motivation;
- negative self-perception;
- lack or loss of work habits.

As a result, NEET women are much more likely to become long-term unemployed and have difficulties accessing education and the labour market. The longer this exclusion lasts, the more difficult it is to change. As a result, the barriers they face in changing their lives become harder to overcome. Their motivation to act diminishes. They become accustomed to their current lifestyle and no longer feel the need to change.

In order to prevent this, it is essential to provide this group with specific support, adapted to their needs as well as to their abilities. It is important not to forget the mental, environmental, and technological development of Europe and the world currently. In proposing various measures, we should consider the demographic changes taking place, the rapid technological and digital progress, including the development of the use of artificial intelligence, climate change and the transformation of economies towards a low-carbon and circular economy.

The support provided to this group should also focus on improving professional skills in line with current trends, taking into account the nature of jobs, forms of work provision and tasks performed. It is important that women entering the labour market are equipped with skills that do not quickly become obsolete, while at the same time allowing for the continuous development of their experience, knowledge, and qualifications.

We should not forget the measures that are currently being implemented and are having the desired effect. These include ongoing technical and vocational training; training in soft skills, i.e. autonomy, teamwork, communication, self-confidence, motivation, etc.; psychosocial and family support; socio-professional counselling; psychological support; job placement; post-training monitoring; and employment assistance.

These activities should be continued as they lead to increased self-confidence, motivation and responsibility for one's own life, regardless of the situation in which one finds oneself.

SOURCES USED

1. National report on the situation of NEET women in Bulgaria in the Vratsa region, developed by the partner from Bulgaria
2. National report on the situation of NEET women in Bulgaria in the districts of Pazardzhik, Smolyan, Stara Zagora and Pleven, developed by the partner from Bulgaria
3. National report on the situation of NEET women in Spain in the area of the autonomous city of Melilla and Andalusia, developed by the partner from Spain
4. National report on the situation of NEET women in Italy in the Molise region, developed by the partner from Italy
5. National report on the situation of NEET women in Slovenia in the Coastal-Karst region, developed by the partner from Slovenia
6. National report on the situation of NEET women in Poland, developed by the partner from Poland
7. National report on the situation of NEET women in Austria, developed by the partner from Austria
8. National report on the situation of NEET women in Germany, developed by the partner from Germany
9. National report on the situation of NEET women in Malta, developed by the partner from Malta

All sources and statistics cited can be found in the individual national reports listed above.

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