

NEETs in Mediterranean EEA 2008 - 2018: A Baseline Study

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Mytilene, Greece 01.11.2019

The YOUTHShare project aims at reducing youth unemployment in coastal and island regions of Mediterranean EEA by advancing the engagement and the skills of young people that are Not in Employment, Education or Training (hereafter **NEETs**) in trans-locally resilient economies such as agri-food production and pertinent circular economies. By boosting NEETs potential in social entrepreneurship and sharing economy practices in those fields the project aspires to produce innovative, path-breaking, yet replicable, ideas on how to reduce economic disparities and increase social integration. The YOUTHShare project focuses on two usually neglected target groups: NEET women and NEET migrants aged 25-29. The target areas are also 'divergent': we focus on the sub-national scale and specifically on the less privileged regions (e.g. the coastal or island regions) of Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy.

In the framework of a very brief contextualization and some key definitions, we stress that in the context of contemporary socio-political change, the 'NEET' acronym has been widely used to define all those young people that are 'Not in Employment, Education or Training'. The term was introduced in the UK in 1999, both as theoretical notion and as empirical category that captures youth marginalization in more holistic ways than traditional measures of exclusion, such as the unemployment rate.

The NEET rate is defined as "the share of young people NEET divided by the total number of young people in the specific age group, by gender" (OECD 2018, Eurostat 2019) and it concerns persons who face the following two conditions (Eurostat 2019):

- "they are not employed" (i.e. they are unemployed or inactive according to standard definitions) or

- "they have not received any formal or non-formal education of training in the four weeks preceding the survey"

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Below, as a summary of the statistical data gathered and the analysis conducted so far, we present the change of the volumes and rates of NEETs within a relatively large period, namely between 2006 and 2018, across the crisis-hit regions of the Mediterranean EU. The data used for this analysis are mostly retrieved from Eurostat's Labour Force Survey series as well as from national reports regarding the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG) initiative, the latter being the most important contemporary policy response against the NEET phenomenon. In several cases we have claimed and analyzed microdata for the respective years. The raw statistical data used, and the figures or maps designed can be, upon request, provided to the FO in order to facilitate the baseline study in progress. Those presented below belong to a sample of our work so far.

Our main results, to date, reveal that the NEET population:

- i) is persistent and high in all study countries,
- ii) it is higher in specific regions than in others,
- iii) it has significantly, though unevenly, increased during the recent crisis,
- iv) it is decreasing in the post-crisis period, approaching its pre-crisis volumes only in some countries,
- v) is unevenly divided between different age groups, among which the 25-29 is the bigger one,
- vi) finally, it includes many more women and migrants than men and natives, in general.

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* Acknowledgement: The authors would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the research staff of the YOUTHShare partners, Neapolis University Pafos (Cyprus), Sistema Turismo (Italy), Universidad Catolica San Antonio de Murcia (Spain), for the collection of the data used in the present study.

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A statistical snapshot of young NEETs in Cyprus: The paradox of a gender gap reversal

The NEET population in the Cypriot social formation mainly follows a stable pattern of development for the age group of 15-19. On the contrary, the development for the age groups of 20-24 and 25-29 presents some fluctuations. Their population increases during the crisis (from 2006 to 2013) and then it falls (from 2013 up to to 2018). The maximum NEET rate is observed in 2013 (approx. 28% and 23% for 20-24 and 25-29, respectively) which underlies that the relatively older NEETs are the most affected ones.

Our analysis shows that in the post- crisis period, both the male and female NEET rates increased. Female NEETs, however, are currently slightly higher than male ones, especially in the 25-29 age group, even though males had higher rates between 2012 and 2014. A possible explanation for this ‘gender gap reversal’ paradox can be found in the higher job losses faced by women amid the turbulent years of the crisis.

Furthermore, available national data across all age groups (note that no regional data are analyzed for Cyprus since the whole country is a NUTS-II level region) demonstrate that the rise in NEET rates during the crisis is primarily driven by a high increase of the relative share of unemployed NEETs, while the relative share of inactive NEETs declines. This finding suggests that inactive NEETs and unemployed NEETs should be commonly treated as two separate groups that call for distinct and specialized policy interventions.

Considering all the above, our main conclusions for youth in Cyprus are the following:

- i) NEETs of the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups are strongly affected by the economic crisis in the country,
- ii) female NEETs face higher barriers when trying to find a job or entering any form of education, and
- iii) the relative share of unemployed NEETs within the total NEET population is increasing at a high pace, whereas the relative share of inactive NEETs is decreasing.

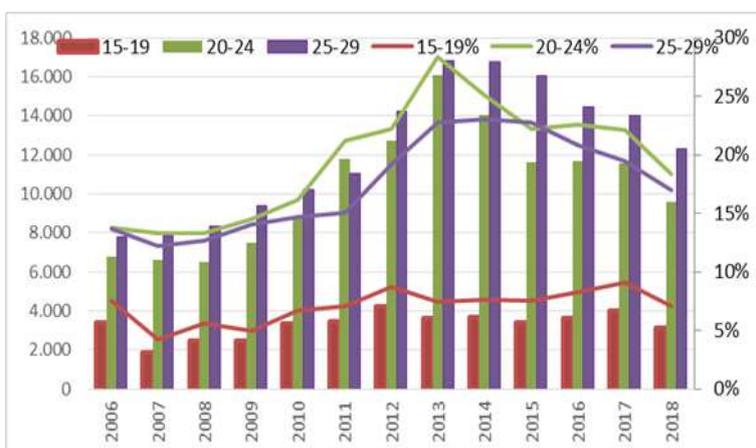


Fig. CY1: Temporal evolution of NEETs (right vertical axis and vertical bars) and of NEET rates (left vertical axis and horizontal lines) per age group, Cyprus, 2006-2018

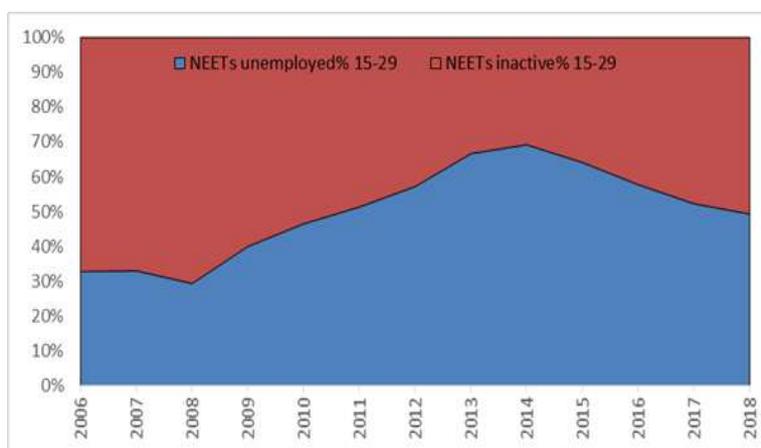


Fig. CY2 Division of NEETs into unemployed and inactive, 15-29, Cyprus, 2006-2018

| NEETS 25-29 | | |
|-------------|--------|--------------------|
| Country | 2018 | % change 2018-2008 |
| Cyprus | 12.310 | 47% |

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Policy responses in Cyprus

General Note on Policy Responses

In order to confront the issues related to youth unemployment, early school leavers, labour mismatches resulting from inadequate skills, limited geographic mobility or inadequate wage conditions etc, the European Union supports its member states in achieving the goals of enhanced youth employability presented in the EU2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010). A salient key action of the latter strategy is the “Youth Guarantee” (hereafter **YG**) programme. All EU countries have committed to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the Council Recommendation of April 2013 in Luxembourg. The established “Youth Guarantee” is considered to be the most significant effort for assisting young people either to re – enter the labour market or to acquire education or training (Eurofound 2016). As the YG strongly suggests, all member states should “ ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education” (Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013:3).

Cyprus presented its Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan at the end of December 2013 and a National Action Plan (NAP) for youth was approved one year later. Government policies and institutions play an important role in moderating the impact of the economic recession and in facilitating the transition of young people to the labour market and education. The policy areas that have an impact on youth employment are the (a) macroeconomic and sectoral policies and their impact on job creation, (b) the education and training policies and their relevance to labour market requirements and (c) the labour market policies that bridge labour supply and demand gaps. (National Action plan for Youth employment in Cyprus, 2014-2017, 2014).

In 2016, only a discouraging 6.3% of the people exiting the YG are known to have undertaken an offer within 4 months of registration, even though this percentage is perhaps not properly estimated. During the same year the Cypriot YG scheme covered 23.8% of all NEETs aged under 25 years old. Only 14.1% of the people who left the YG in 2016 were known to be in a positive situation (employment or traineeships) 6 months after leaving, even though this percentage is again not a safe estimation, since 84.0% of the people who left the YG could not be tracked and included in the analysis. Finally, 46.3% of the people registered in the YG scheme during 2015 had been waiting for an offer for more than 4 months, which is a significant increase compared to previous years (23.3% in 2014 and 33.7% in 2015), probably caused by the recession that hit the country (Youth Guarantee of Cyprus 2018).

YG monitoring data 2016

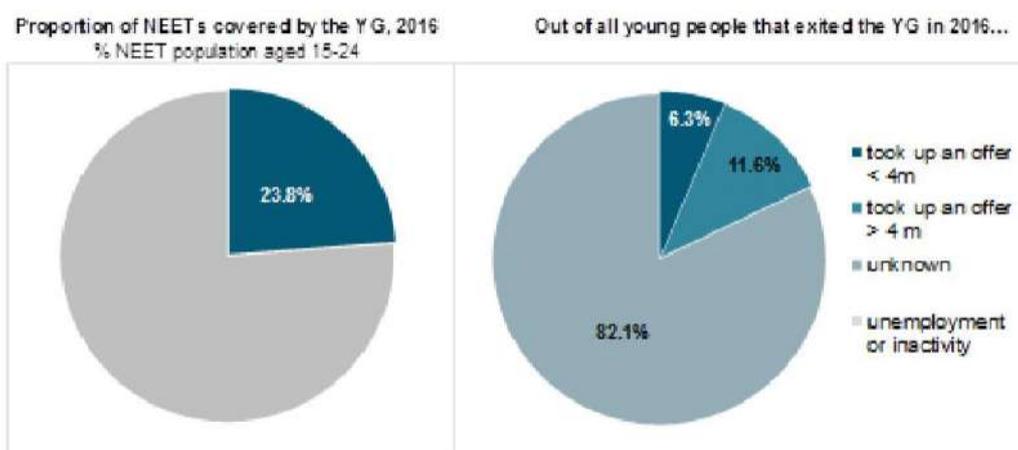


Fig. CY3 YG monitoring data, 2016, Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database 2016

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A statistical snapshot of young NEETs in Greece: the country that suffers from the highest NEET rates

In Greece, the population aged 25 to 29 year old has been significantly reduced from about 800,000 to 600,000, mainly because young people migrated during the socio-economic crisis; whereas, in the other age groups in focus the decrease is more moderate. The most active part of the labour force left the country, leading to great loss of human capital. Equally, the NEET rates, particularly for those aged 25 to 29 years old, respectively rose from about 25% during 2006-2009 to about 40% in 2013 which further illustrates the immediate impact of the economic crisis.

The most vulnerable age group is the 25-29 year-olds; a group which always scores higher, compared to the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups. Notably, in the years 2011-2015, the NEET rate of that particular age group is even larger (or almost equal) to the sum of the other two age groups. Our data analysis suggests that NEET rates in both females and males present a similar pattern: a sharp increase from 2010 to 2013 and then a gradual decrease at a small pace. It must be noted that throughout the period of our study, the NEET rate for females is constantly about 10-15% higher than the NEET rate for males for the age group 25-29 (see also Map 1). This is partly explained by cultural reasons, since women in Greek society are engaged traditionally in family-caring roles. Also, we identified a large gap between the NEET rates of locals and migrants. Across the three countries (Greece, Italy and Spain), the migrant NEET rates are constantly 5%-10% more than the local NEET rates. This result is in accordance with the literature review.

Turning to the spatial analysis of the NEET rates, the difference between metropolitan (e.g. Attica) and coastal areas (e.g. North Aegean) is tangible. Fig. GR2 presents the NEET rates by gender and region. More specifically, it is clear that the female NEET rates in the North Aegean are higher than the corresponding female NEET rates in Attica by about 25% especially after 2016. On the contrary, a spatial gap in the male NEET rate is not present. The NEET rates of males living in metropolitan areas reach the NEET rates of males living in coastal areas. As previously, the female-male gap is also illustrated in this figure.

All the above facts lead to the following key conclusions:

- i) the 25-29 age group holds the highest rate of all age groups, rising dramatically in the years of the economic crisis,
- ii) there is a female-male gap in the NEET rates which is more evident in countries like Greece and Italy,
- iii) there is a locals-migrants gap and
- iv) a metropolitan-coastal areas gap which is mainly observed in the female's group.

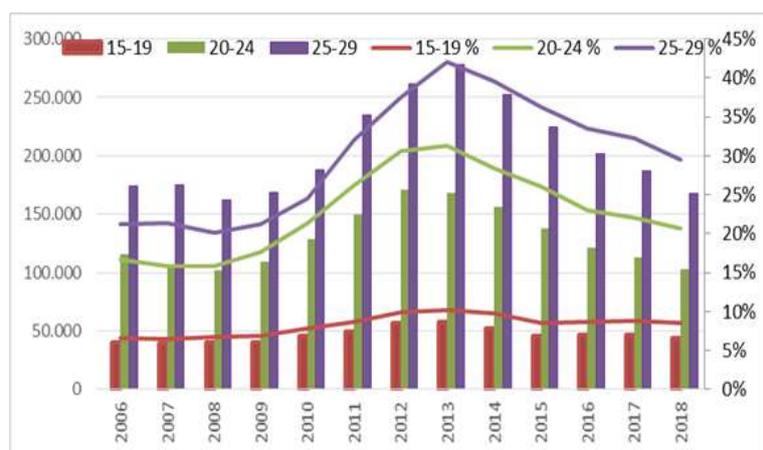


Fig. GR1: Temporal evolution of NEETs (right vertical axis and vertical bars) and of NEET rates (left vertical axis and horizontal lines) per age group, Greece, 2006-2018.

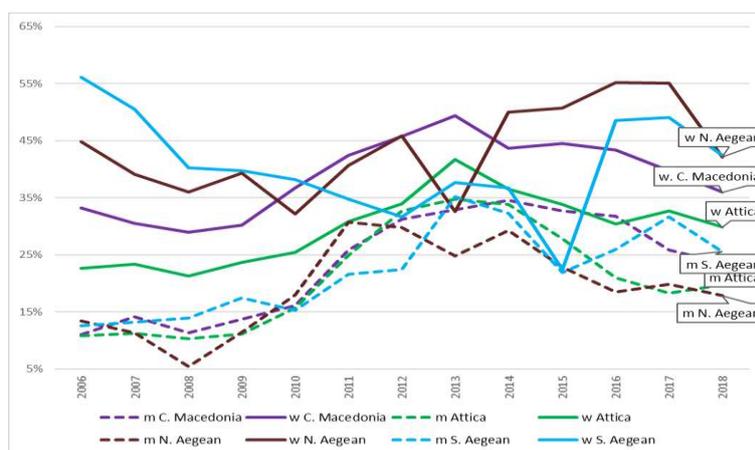


Fig. GR2: Temporal evolution of NEET rates per gender and region, selected Greek metropolitan and coastal/ island regions, 2006-2018.

| NEETS 25-29 | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| Country | 2018 | % change 2018-2008 |
| Greece | 167.799 | 3% |

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Policy responses in Greece

Greece submitted a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan on December 31, 2013 which was updated in June 2014. The main service point for the implementation of the "Youth Guarantee" in the country is the Manpower Employment Organisation service.

Indicatively, some of the initiatives are:

- Development of "Second Chance" programs in secondary education (age group:18-24/1,500 beneficiaries)
- Training programs to enhance skills and qualifications of young persons in key sectors of the Greek economy (tourism; agriculture; new technologies; etc.) that will result in the certification of qualifications (age group:15-24/ 15,000 beneficiaries)
- Internship Program with maximum duration of 6 months (age group:15-24/ 5,000 beneficiaries)
- Specific actions aimed to promote employment of youth with disabilities (age group:15-24)

The "Youth Guarantee" program is funded by two main types of financial resources; the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The overall amount available for the implementation of the "Youth Guarantee" in Greece amounts to 260,000,000€ (Youth Guarantee Implementation plan, 2014).

According to the Youth Guarantee of Greece (2018), in 2015, only 26.4% of the people leaving the YG undertook an offer within the 4-month target, while in 2016, 46.1% of NEETs aged 15-24 were registered in the YG preparatory phase. This indicates a significant improvement in coverage of the YG compared to the previous year (33.9%). Also, this partly reflects the decrease of youth unemployment, therefore, the reduced percentage of unemployed NEETs (inactive NEETs were not taken into account).

YG monitoring data 2016

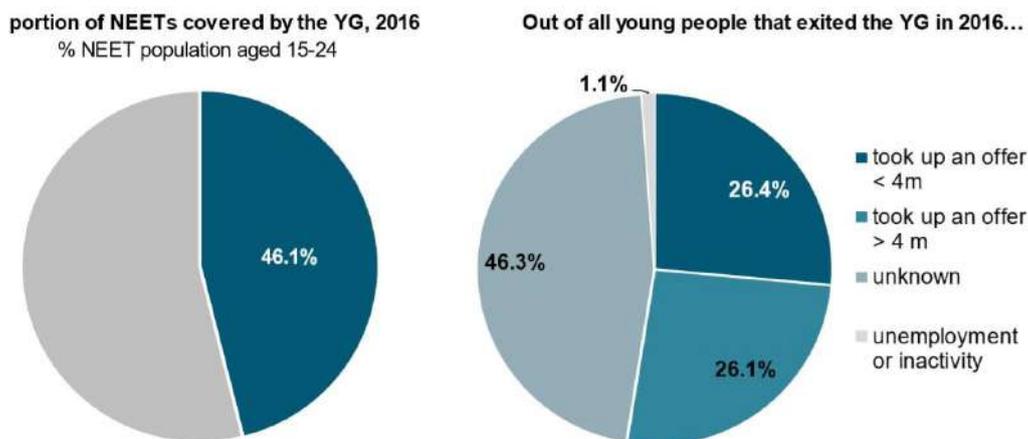


Fig. GR3 YG monitoring data, 2016, Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database 2016

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A statistical snapshot of young NEETs in Spain: The crisis impact and the importance of rurality

The Spanish NEET population follows a stable pattern of development from 2008 to 2018 for the 15-19 age group; It presents, though, a significant reduction for the groups of 20-29 age group. The maximum NEET rate was recorded in 2012-2013, when the 20-29 age group picked in comparison with the youngest age group (15-19). Before the crisis, the country's inactive NEETs were almost as many as the unemployed. However, during the recession most NEETs were unemployed, whereas recently an increment of inactivity is observed.

Females NEETs present, generally, higher rates than males. It needs to be stressed, though, that for a two-year period (2012-2013) male NEETs were more than females.

Turning the analysis to the migrants-locals NEET gap, it can be easily observed that the NEET rate for migrants is constantly about 10-15% higher than the NEET rate for locals for the 25-29 age group. The greatest divergence between the two NEET subgroups is marked in 2014 when the NEET rate for migrants was 20% higher than locals.

Combining spatial with gender analysis of NEET rates, it becomes clear that females in all study regions have higher rates than males. Females in Andalusia have the highest rates recorded at the study regions, whereas males living in the same region have high rates too (see also Map 1). On the contrary, males in Madrid, Cataluña and C. Valenciana have the lowest rates. Furthermore, just like Greece and Cyprus, in Spain the unemployment rates are higher than the inactivity rates among the 25-29 year-olds; while unemployment follows the economic cycle reaching a peak in 2013.

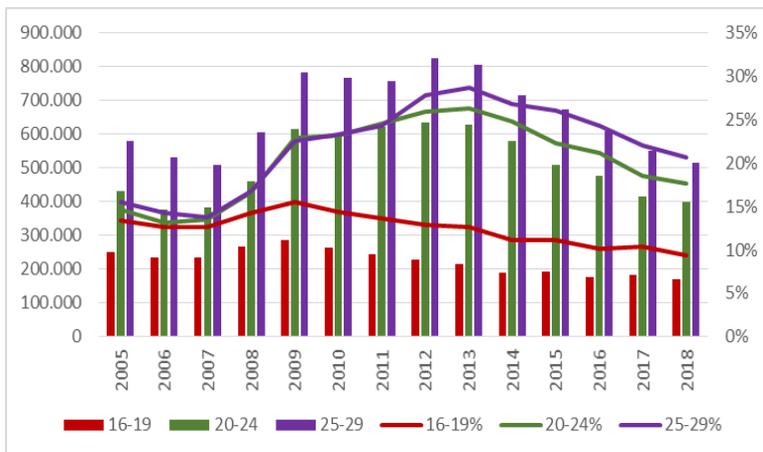


Fig. ES1: Temporal evolution of NEETs (right vertical axis and vertical bars) and of NEET rates (left vertical axis and horizontal lines) per age group, Spain, 2006-2018

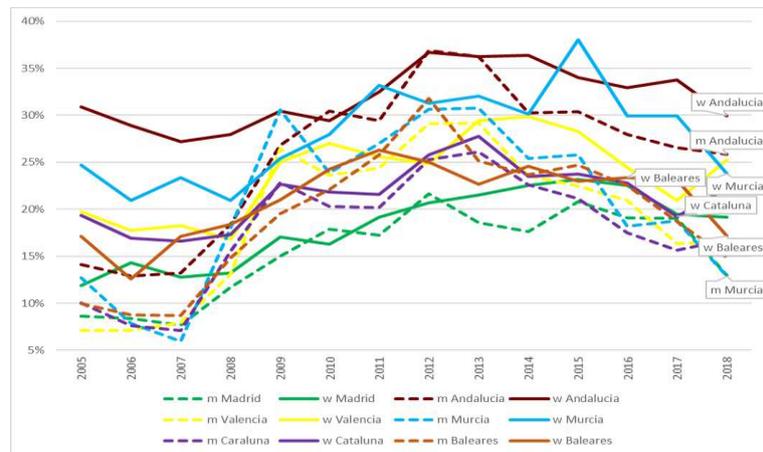


Fig. ES2: Temporal evolution of NEET rates per gender and region, selected Spanish metropolitan and coastal/ island regions, 2006-2018

| NEETS 25-29 | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| Country | 2018 | % change 2018-2008 |
| Spain | 514.835 | -15% |

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Policy responses in Spain

Spain presented a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan on 19 December 2013 and the scheme started in July 2014. Although the majority of the EU Member States have implemented YG for young people under 25 years old, thirteen of them have extended the upper age limit of application to young people under 30 years old. Among those countries are Spain and Italy (Analysis of the Youth Guarantee in EU Member State, 2016).

In 2014, the YG was available to all people aged 16 to 25 years old and to persons aged under 30 years old who had more than 33% of disability. One year later, the age limit was increased to under 30 years old for all unemployed youth. The registration for the YG scheme for participants and employers happens by means of an online platform on the website of the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security (Youth Guarantee of Spain (2018)).

In 2015, the percentage of NEETs that was covered by the Spanish YG scheme was 10.7%, while in 2016 the rate of the NEET population that was covered by the same intervention was three times higher, namely 34%, indicating the embedded implementation of the programme and the progressive increase in the registration of participants. Trying to assess the YG for 2016, a large percentage (51.3%) of those leaving the YG were known to be in a positive situation 6 months after exit. This percentage is higher than the percentage of registrants who left the YG and were in a positive situation 6 months after exit in 2015. Also, in 2016, 73.4% of young people aged 15-24 were in the YG preparatory phase beyond the 4-month target. This may be the result of the design of the scheme, its progressive successful implementation, and the progressive increase in the registration of the participants (Youth Guarantee of Spain (2018)).

The promotion of entrepreneurship is one of the basic policies that aims towards activation and re-integration in employment. A large percentage (78%) of the budget was used for measures promoting entrepreneurship and motivation to employers for hiring unemployed youth, while the remaining (22%) was invested in training and employability activities. However, there are important differences regarding the implementation and fostering of YG among the regions. In the period 2014-2015, Navarra spent the largest share of its allocated budget (90.9%), followed by Asturias (64.8%), Cataluña and Melilla (around 40%), the Balearic Islands (18.2%), Aragón (18.4%) and Galicia (13.72%). The other regions have spent less than 10% of their total budget allocation (Spanish National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2013).

YG monitoring data 2016

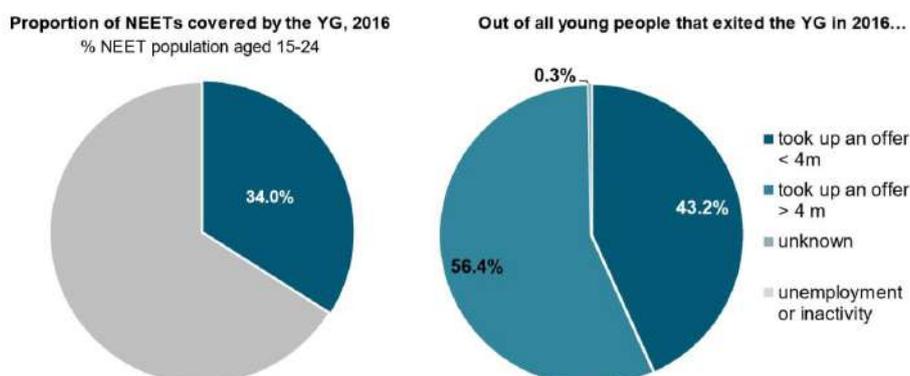


Fig. ES3 YG monitoring data, 2016, Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database 2016

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A statistical snapshot of young NEETs in Italy: The North - South gap and inactivity

Young NEET population in Italy remains almost stable during the study years (2008-2018), even though a slight decrease is observed in 2013 for the 25-29 age group; nonetheless, no significant population decrease has occurred. This development may be the result of internal migration from the southern regions to the northern and more developed regions of the country as well as the more contained impact of the crisis compared to other southern countries (e.g Greece).

Female NEET rates are higher compared to male NEET rates during the whole study period (2008-2018). More specifically, in 2008, the gender gap regarding NEET rates was approximately 12%. Since 2014 the gender gap has increased and reached about 20% (see also Map 1). This can be partly explained by cultural reasons underpinning a society in which women are traditionally engaged in family-caring roles, a common practice in southern European countries. The most vulnerable group since 2014 has been the 25-29 age group, while in previous years, namely, for the period 2008-2013, the 20-24 age group had the higher NEET rates. Since 2014 a slow but steady recovery has been observed (see also Map 2) which is related to the economic recovery of the country.

In contrast with other countries under study, the rates of the economically inactive people in education present an almost stable development for all age groups in Italy, throughout the period in focus. Unlike other countries, there appears no tendency of studies extension due to the competitive labour market and the difficulties in entering there. Thus, inactive NEETs constitute a structural issue. Their rates are higher than the unemployment in the 25-29-age group and no clear pattern of correlation with business cycle could be identified (as Eurofound 2016 also mentions).

Turning to the spatial analysis of the NEET rates, we can see the difference between metropolitan (e.g. Lazio) and insular areas (e.g. Sicily). Women in the South, namely in Sicily and Campania hold the highest rates of female NEETs, while women and men in Lombardy have the lowest rates. Female NEET rates in Sicily are higher than the corresponding NEET rates in Lazio or Lombardy with a difference of approximately 20% and 40% respectively in 2018.

- i) the 25-29 age group presents higher NEET rates compared to other age groups since 2014, and NEET rates rose dramatically during the years of the economic crisis,
- ii) there is a significant female-male gap in the NEET rates mainly in the less developed regions of the country,
- iii) there is a metropolitan-coastal gap, which is mainly observed in the case of female NEETs.

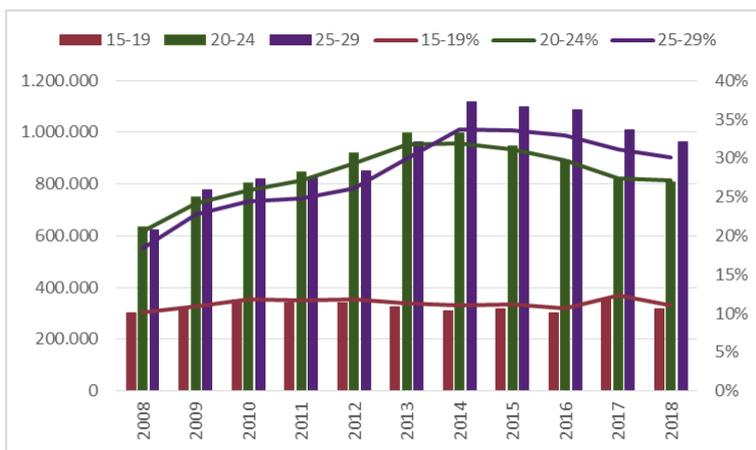


Fig. IT1: Temporal evolution of NEETs (right vertical axis and vertical bars) and of NEET rates (left vertical axis and horizontal lines) per age group, Italy, 2006-2018)

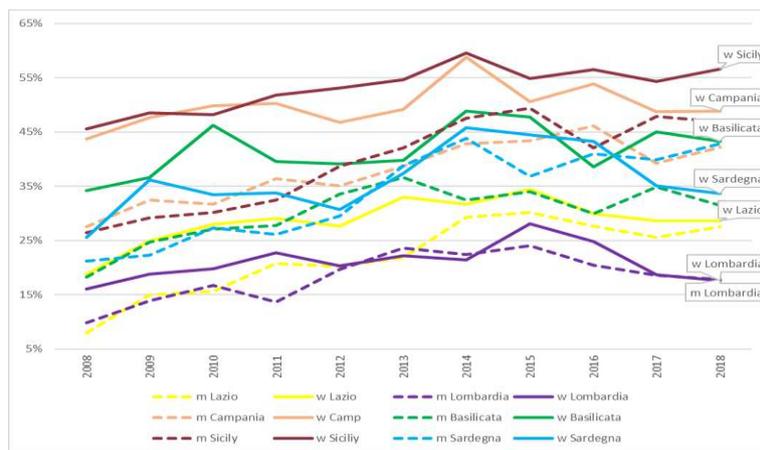


Fig. ES2: Temporal evolution of NEET rates per gender and region, selected Italian metropolitan and coastal/ island regions, 2006-2018

| NEETS 25-29 | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| Country | 2018 | % change 2018-2008 |
| Italy | 961.824 | 55% |

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Policy responses in Italy

Italy presented a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan on 23 December 2013 and the scheme started in May 2014. Italy would receive resources of approximately 567 million €, under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). Another 567 million € from the European Social Fund (ESF) would be added, in addition to the national co-financing, estimated at 40%. The overall availability of the Program would therefore be approximately 1,513 million € (Youth Guarantee Implementation plan, 2013).

According to The Youth Guarantee Italy (2018), in 2016, a significant percentage (60.6%) of young people leaving the Italian YG scheme undertook an offer within 4 months of registration. In the meantime, 75.2% of the young people during the same year had been waiting for an offer for more than 4 months, revealing a progressive accumulation of young people whose needs are not met in time.

Coverage of the NEET population has improved in 2016, compared to two years earlier, but was still low (14.1%). Registration, through an online portal, is voluntary. Young people registered to the Public Employment Services (PES) but not in the YG, may still receive an offer or benefit from national or regional measures but are not included in the data (Youth Guarantee Italy, 2018).

In 2016, a large percentage (58.0%) of those who left the scheme, was known to be in a positive situation 6 months afterwards. The percentage is underestimated since positive personal developments such as non-subsidised education and self-employment measures cannot be monitored after exiting the YG (Youth Guarantee Italy, 2018).

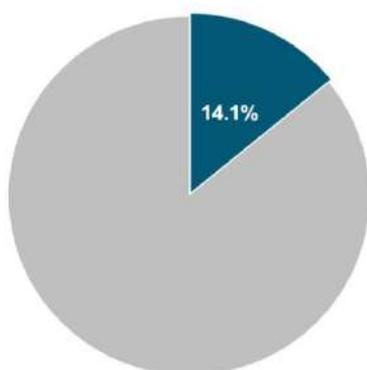
Methodological note on the impact study conducted by YOUTHShare project

In YOUTHShare project, we aspire to assess the Youth Guarantee for the study countries (Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy) for several years and to provide an integrated estimation of the implemented policies related to it. Specifically, we are going to use the Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee (2017). According to the Framework, the methodology and the indicators for monitoring the implementation and the results of the Youth Guarantee comprise three levels of monitoring; i) Aggregate Monitoring: Macroeconomic Indicators, ii) Direct monitoring of YG delivery, iii) Follow-up of individuals who have exited the YG preparatory phase. The data will be derived from the Youth Guarantee Offices of each study country (Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy).

YG monitoring data 2016

Proportion of NEETs covered by the YG, 2016

% NEET population aged 15-24



Out of all young people that exited the YG in 2016...

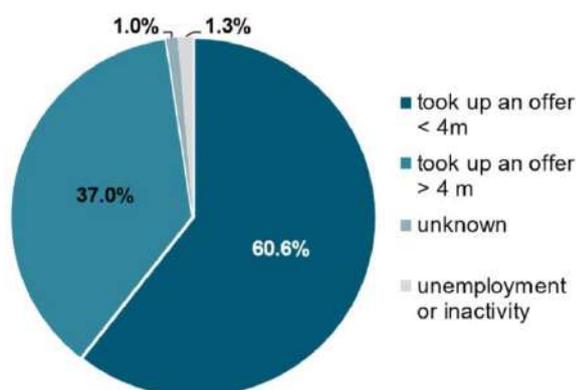


Fig. IT3 YG monitoring data, 2016, Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database 2016

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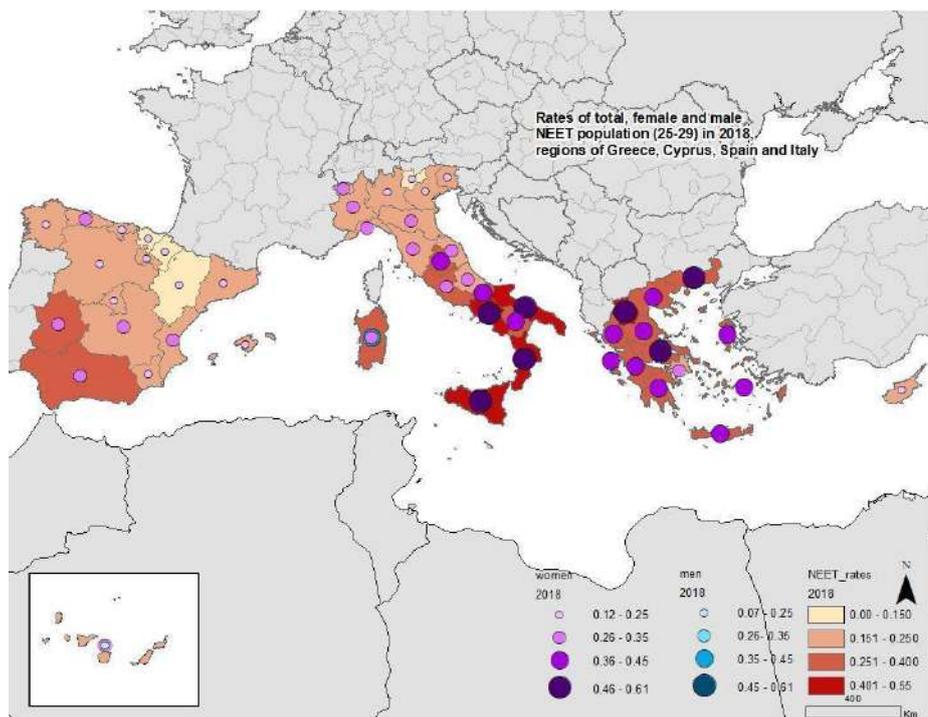
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 - c. National Statistic Agency of Spain (INE), www.ine.es
 - d. National Statistic Agency of Italy (Istat), www.istat.it

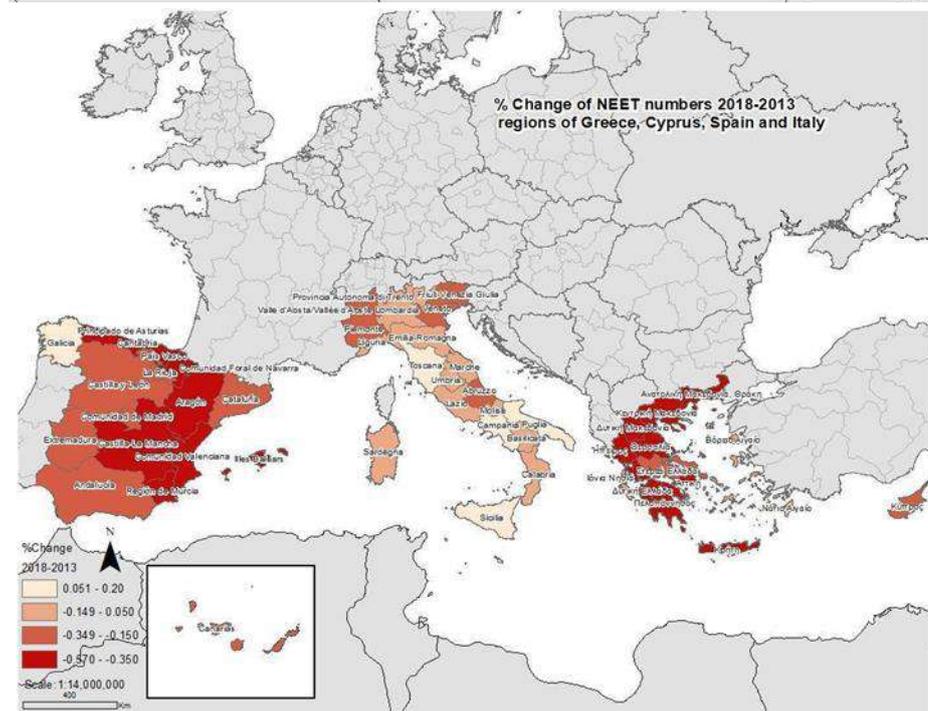
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Appendix Maps / Tables



Map. 1 Total NEET rates, female and male NEET rates (2018). Regions of Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy.



Map. 2 % change of NEET between 2013 and 2018. Regions of Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy

Table: % Change of NEETs population between 2008 and 2018

| NEETS 25-29 | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| Country | 2018 | % change 2018-2008 |
| Cyprus | 12.310 | 47% |
| Greece | 167.799 | 3% |
| Spain | 514.835 | -15% |
| Italy | 961.824 | 55% |

Implemented By

