



Youth Guarantee Mutual Learning Seminar

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

**Tracking and mapping young people not in education,
employment or training (NEETs)**

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Seminar report

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Youth Guarantee Mutual Learning Seminar

Seminar report

Youth Guarantee Mutual Learning Seminar on 'Tracking and mapping young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)'

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	6
2	What is mapping and tracking?.....	6
2.1	Why is mapping and tracking NEETs specifically challenging?.....	7
2.2	What enables mapping and tracking?.....	8
3	Examples of mapping and tracking systems	9
3.1	Mapping	9
3.2	Tracking.....	13
4	Challenges and possible solutions	16
4.1	Developing systems.....	16
4.2	Using systems.....	17
5	Conclusions	19
6	References	21

1 Introduction

This seminar was hosted by the Croatian Ministry of Labour and Pension System and brought together representatives from national ministries, public employment services (PES), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and youth organisations from the host country (Croatia) and 16 Member States¹. Other participants included independent experts, representatives from the European Commission and Cedefop, and the Mutual Learning Services Team. The seminar examined the following points:

- The set-up of NEET mapping and tracking systems, including, the information collected, arrangements for cooperation between different organisations responsible for young people, the level of government at which systems are set up, who is responsible for coordinating these systems, and different protocols for sharing and protecting data;
- The operation of NEET mapping and tracking systems to monitor and support NEETs including, how information collected is used to contact NEETs, to design measures, or to define target groups and target areas, who can use the information and in which way, once reached, how NEETs are referred to appropriate services and provided with targeted measures.

2 What is mapping and tracking?

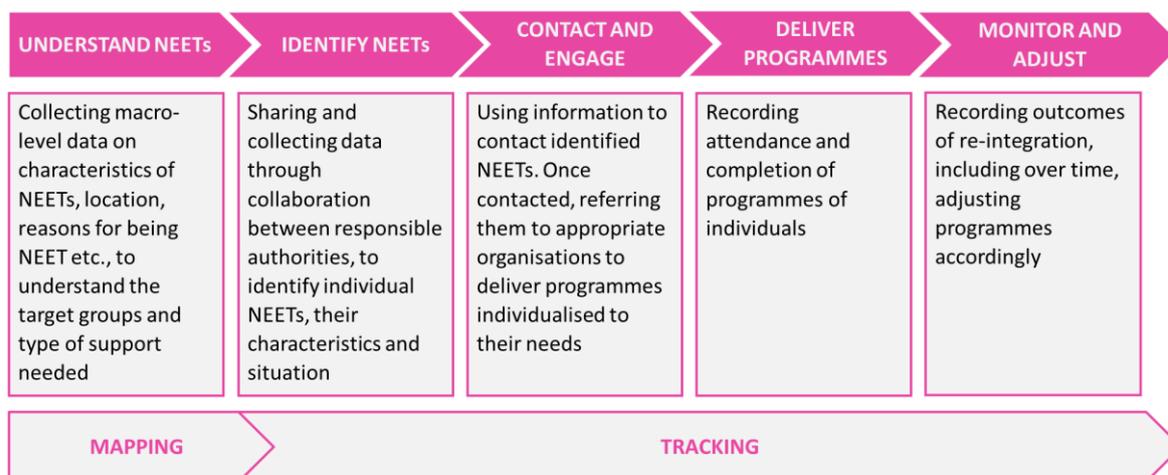
In order for responsible organisations to provide appropriate support for NEETs so that they can be re-engaged and successfully progress to education, training or sustainable employment, it is important first that they can be identified and contacted. This is especially important as NEETs are a heterogenous group of people who have varying needs. Their needs must then be assessed and understood in order to re-engage them, and the most appropriate organisations must be involved in providing assistance (information, advice and guidance) and support.

Mapping is crucial in this process as it makes it possible to understand the characteristics of NEETs at a macro level: where they are, who they are, the reasons that they are NEET, and what their needs are. This information then enables organisations responsible for NEETs to be able to identify the geographical areas on which to focus, the target groups that are in need of support, and what types of support are needed for the profile of NEETs.

Tracking leads on from this, allowing responsible organisations to maintain information about individuals. This can be those at risk of being NEET in order to prevent them becoming NEET, as well as those that are already NEET in order to support them back into education or the labour market, and to see the progress they are making. Tracking involves sharing data on individuals between organisations – be it education providers, PES, social and youth services and non-governmental actors with information on and contact with young people. Bringing together data on young people and their situation allows them to be reached more effectively. It also enables responsible organisations to refer each individual to the appropriate service and to design and redesign measures so that they are effective in re-engaging them.

¹ AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SE.

Figure 1. Mapping and tracking in the context of outreach, engagement and activation



Source: ICF

The expected benefits of mapping and tracking for NEETs and the organisations which can support them into education, employment or training are shown to be:

- **Early identification and prevention:** this includes being forewarned of who is at risk of becoming NEET before it happens so support can be put in place;
- **Identification:** mapping enables knowing and understanding the characteristics of all NEETs to understand their diversity and their needs;
- **Needs assessment:** this includes mapping the individual and overall needs of all NEETs and the support needed to make progress towards education, employment or training, in order to assign the most appropriate agency/ies to provide assistance (information, advice and guidance) and identify support from what is available;
- **Identifying and commissioning support:** this includes using needs assessments of NEETs to identify a pathway to re-engagement/activation and having pathways, such as training and pre-employability courses, in place for NEETs to take up;
- **Monitoring progress towards re-entering education, employment or training:** this includes collecting information on trends in the number and characteristics of NEETs and the outcomes of support and activation approaches to measure success in addressing the needs of NEETs. These can also provide indicators of performance;
- **Quality assuring policy measures:** this includes providing performance data to assess the success of measures to reduce NEET numbers or specific subsets of NEETs, reduce the time to re-engage NEETs, and increase the numbers in sustained employment or competing education and training courses.

2.1 Why is mapping and tracking NEETs specifically challenging?

The specific transitory nature of this age group clearly makes tracking difficult and means some young people can be lost unless information is shared between organisations responsible.

For those outside compulsory education:

- Young people can be found in a wide variety of education and training providers so they do not progress as a cohort in a standard way and the information about them

is held by a variety of agencies. They may be in vocational training, a traineeship, an apprenticeship or some form of pre-employability support;

- Not all young people in education or training will have their attendance registered or closely monitored by their education provider once they have ended compulsory schooling. They may drop out without notice from vocational training or university so their non-attendance is not known speedily or their non-attendance is not something which the education provider follows up;
- Not all young people participating in education or training will have their destinations tracked. This can be done around the time they finish (usually a survey of intended destinations) and/or again at a later date, such as six months after, when their destination (further training/education or employment) is likely to be fixed. A recent study of VET tracking systems in Member States found that some countries carried these out for whole cohorts of young people leaving lower or upper secondary education (including vocational) and some countries carried these out for those leaving initial VET².

For the inactive and active unemployed:

- Not all young people will register with a PES or any special service for young people if they become unemployed, drop out of an apprenticeship or complete a course of learning without future plans in place. The extent of this can depend on the incentives to register, such as the availability of welfare payments and support for finding appropriate employment or training, and trust in the PES; in 2013, Eurofound's analysis indicated that over half (57%) of NEETs aged 15-24 were not registered with PES. In some Member States, notably Bulgaria, Malta, the Netherlands and Romania, 80% or more of NEETs are not registered;³
- If they obtain welfare benefits through another organisation, young people who are not looking for training or employment because of their health or caring responsibilities may not register with a PES;
- Young people frequently move between short and temporary employment and between vocational training and employment.

2.2 What enables mapping and tracking?

The following elements are key for both mapping and tracking to take place:

Collaboration: this is between national ministries and national agencies responsible for young people as well as between national agencies, local providers of education and training and youth organisations. This is especially important for NEETs, as they are a diverse cohort of people. In some cases, these have come about through agreement, in others through statutory requirements to cooperate and to provide information on young people. In some countries, there is a low awareness among education and training providers that they should be involved in sharing data on pupils. Youth organisations can also play an important role, as they already work with young people and have information on them.

Leadership: there needs to be one defined lead authority to enable this process to happen effectively and to coordinate the work of the different organisations involved. It is important that the lead agency brings together all relevant actors at the outset, as

² Beadle, S. et al, (2018) Mapping of VET graduate tracking measures in EU Member States, Final report, European Commission

³ Eurofound, (2016) Exploring the diversity of NEETs

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1602en.pdf

approaching each actor individually takes more time and creates more difficulties in ensuring collaboration.

Using and sharing administrative data: in some cases, this is existing data, with arrangements put in place to share it so that NEETs can be identified and/or their identity passed to another organisation (referral). In most cases, this has required arrangements to be put in place to enable sharing – ranging from seeking direct permission from young people registered, to using personal codes/identifiers to link young people's records in different systems, to signing protocols of collaboration to enable different databases to be shared and used by various organisations. When gaining consent from young people, it is important to clearly outline how this data might be shared with another agency that will support them, or with researchers and evaluators in order to identify if the support that is being provided is beneficial.

Using alternative sources of data: where administrative data is not available, young people can be systematically surveyed to fill gaps in the information available from education and training providers and PES. These can be carried out for whole cohorts or for those leaving education and training (before, at the point of or within 6-12 months). Gathering qualitative data on NEETs is also beneficial for understanding the psychological factors affecting NEETs, as well as their attitudes and behaviours. This can be done through interviews, surveys, or by working with local partners and youth organisations who could provide this information. Social mapping has also been used as a data collection tool in Brussels (Belgium) and the Netherlands to complement data on NEETs.

Identifying young people who are at risk of becoming NEET: where providers of education and training have systems to alert themselves that young people are at risk because of poor attendance/motivation and a lack of plans for transition to further education/training or employment, for example. With consent they can be referred to other agencies to provide support.

3 Examples of mapping and tracking systems

There has been a general move over the past few years towards putting in place processes to map and track NEETs. However, many countries have no single system to ensure that all NEETs are mapped, tracked and referred. The following examples give an indication of some of the processes and different arrangements across the EU that aim to map and track NEETs.⁴

3.1 Mapping

Member States present at the seminar use different data sources to map their NEET population:

- Ad-hoc primary research (surveys) on NEET population (Malta⁵),
- Ad-hoc secondary research (analysis of available surveys e.g. LSF and SILC) on NEET population (Portugal),
- Linking administrative data to provide information about the employment and education situation of cohorts of young people (Austria, Belgium, Croatia⁶, Germany).

⁴ There is no EU wide study of the systems for mapping and tracking NEETs so the examples are drawn from a range of secondary sources including information shared at the seminar which may not be up to date and not provide full details

⁵ Co-funded under ESF

⁶ Co-funded under ESF

Through the collation of government register data sources in **Malta**⁷, a NEET census was conducted to identify NEETs as well as analyse their characteristics and expectations with regard to education and the labour market. Further information on their needs came from one-to-one interviews. Information was collected on their educational attainment, location, family background, social benefits, among other things. Legislation allows for data sharing between education authorities and the PES, as they both fall under the same Ministry for Education and Employment. The census came about when starting the first Youth Guarantee project in 2013-14.

The report from the NEETs census defined three groups of NEETs:

1. Core NEETs. Individuals who are not currently employed or in education, have no future plans in relation to employment or education, have a negative educational experience, and have minimum motivation.
2. Floating NEETs. Individuals who would like to engage in some form of education or employment, but need guidance and support to develop a plan that suits their career ambitions, goals, and capabilities. These action plans are essential for keeping an individual on track and preventing him/her from becoming a core NEET.
3. Interim NEETs. Individuals who are taking a short break from their education or employment. This could be due to transitioning from education into employment (i.e. searching for a job) but otherwise they have a set career or educational plan.

The census also enabled the identification of major factors contributing to NEETs remaining inactive. One of the major contributory factors in Malta is family situation, as parents tend to take care of children up to a much older age. Part of this is due to the small size of the country, meaning that students in universities can still live at home, which ultimately limits the pressure for them to work. The census also identified mental health issues as a large contributory factor, which previously was not recognised.

The mapping therefore highlighted the need to amend some of the measures offered to NEETs, tailoring them to individuals' profiles. An initiative was introduced where profiling takes place as soon as the young person receives support and they receive tailor-made training. On the basis of the mapping, inactive and floating NEETs are then sent a personal invitation to join the Youth Guarantee scheme. The scheme is also advertised to young people through social media, newspapers and other communication channels. Outreach activities to inform young people of services available to them also include work with educational institutions and promoting the scheme at events.

In **Portugal**⁸, mapping NEETs was critical for the development of the Outreach Strategy to NEETs (2017). Mapping was conducted through analysis of the micro-data of Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and the Survey on Income and Living Conditions. The use of anonymized microdata which could be linked between these two datasets identified enabled a mapping of the geographical distribution of NEETs by individual characteristics. It also enabled (through applying a probability regression model (probit) approach to the LFS micro-data) to determine the probability of young people being inactive according to individual characteristics (age, sex, level of education and geographical location) and reason for inactivity.

The results of the probability regression model were then used to design specific service lines and assign priority to groups of inactive young people living in different regions⁹. As a result of the analysis, the national Outreach Strategy (2017) coordinated by the Instituto do Emprego e Formacao Profissional (IEFP) focuses on NEETs not registered

⁷ European Commission, SWD (2016) 323 final The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on

⁸ Corbanese, V and Rosas, G. (2017) Guide for developing national outreach strategies for inactive young people

⁹ ILO: *Profile of young NEETs in Portugal, 2017*

with PES and those who are registered but long term unemployed. They are tracked by local partnership networks in a range of support provided by social centres, youth organisations and training providers until they can be reintegrated into training or employment.

Austria has had a mapping system in place for the past six years. The Labour market and educational career monitoring system (BibEr) uses administrative data on individual young people from six different sources: National Registry, social insurance data, PES, Register of Educational Attainment, current educational data, and data on pay slips. This data provides personal and locational information: type/date of graduation, employment status, unemployment and PES status, qualifications, education attained, current education status, income, and employer. It enables the mapping of four groups of young people: graduates, drop-outs (from school, apprenticeships, university), early school leavers (ESL), and NEETs. The data is used to gain more knowledge about young people, what they are doing after their education, young NEETs, early school leavers etc. The database links numerous different data sources and allows the Ministry of Labour to follow-up and see what these young people are doing for up to 24 months after leaving education¹⁰. The data is also used for producing research reports and studies to gain more details about young people. These studies do not only comprise the quantitative data available from this database, but are also complemented by other PES data, questionnaires, qualitative studies etc. Results from the studies have been used to further develop existing measures, such as youth coaching and production schools, as well as design the 'Education Training till 18' tracking system. Moreover, the BibEr data is used as the basis to calculate the data for Youth Guarantee monitoring.

The region of Flanders in **Belgium** has also recently started to implement a mapping system, which links its education database with its PES database in order to gather information on the characteristics of NEETs. Social mapping has also been used as a data collection tool in **Brussels (Belgium)**. This involves using knowledge and expertise of local organisations – like youth clubs or NGOs – to retrieve qualitative information on young people.

In **Germany** each federal state has its own school system, thus making it difficult to collect common data on NEETs. Moreover, the PES in Germany is not part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, but is an independent public authority. Generally, data protection makes it very difficult to share data. Nevertheless, by law the PES is required to provide counselling to young people, but requires information on young people to do so. Therefore, schools are legally required to ensure that during pupils' first week of school, parents sign a consent form allowing the school to transfer pupils' data to the PES. With the formation of the new government this year, Germany aims to have a mapping and tracking system for NEETs which the PES would be responsible for.

Croatia's mapping system

In **Croatia**¹¹, NEET mapping has been functional since November 2017 and made possible by a **Cooperation Agreement on Data Exchange** between the Ministry of Labour and Pension Systems, the Ministry of Science and Education (Former Ministry of Science), the Croatian Employment Service (PES) and the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute. During working group discussions for developing Croatia's first Youth Guarantee implementation plan, the need to create more informed policies for

¹⁰ Some examples of such monitoring are available here:

http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung_und_kultur/bildungsbezogene_erwerbkarrierenmonitoring_biber/index.html

Further information can be found here: Federal Statistics Austria (2015), Results from Educational Careers Monitoring (BibEr). Available at: http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/BibEr_Bericht_2015.pdf

¹¹ SWD op cit

engaging young people was identified. The system is designed to **identify unregistered NEETs and their characteristics** (age, qualifications, whereabouts), with the aim of further developing the system so that the PES can in the future contact and engage young NEETs, provide support, and monitor them until they have entered training or employment. Development of this mapping system has been primarily funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) (85%) and the Croatian state budget (15%).

Data to identify NEETS is drawn first from two different **administrative registers**, one on school leavers from primary and secondary education, and the other on leavers from higher education. This data is then matched with data on the unemployed registered by PES and those insured within the pension system as employed. This provides a database of NEETs held by the Croatian PES.

The Institute of Economics in Zagreb was commissioned to conduct a statistical **analysis of NEETs as at November 2017** using this **anonymised database**. The analysis identified where NEETs are located, which schools they had attended and their socio-demographic characteristics. This has begun to inform PES and other agencies working with NEETs about the services and support needed.

One aspect revealed through this analysis was that improvements need to be made in the exchange of data between the actors involved, in order for the Croatian PES to receive more and better data. At present, the personal details of the NEETs cannot be shared with agencies working with NEETs because consents have not been obtained. Ways of addressing this limitation are being explored in more detail.

Career guidance centres (CISOKs) play an important role in reaching out to young people. While run by PES, the centres are separate from PES in order to be more trusted by and accessible to young people. The centres provide them with individualised support for career development; young people can either register or use the service anonymously. The CISOKs use a partnership approach with local authorities, NGOs, chambers of commerce, schools, universities, etc. to build services according to local and regional needs. By having data on NEETs' characteristics and factors that lead young people to become NEET, the centres could use this in designing prevention activities and targeting specific interventions. The PES can contact the CISOK centre to find out in which area a NEET belongs to and therefore identify which services are closest to them. **Local level youth organisations** which young people trust are used to identify and contact young people and encourage them to use the CISOK. However, despite being part of the PES, the data collected by the PES on NEETs is not currently available to the CISOKs due to data protection issues.

As the mapping system is relatively new, Croatia still faces a number of **challenges** in further developing it:

- While the register of school leavers from primary and secondary education provides data of a high quality as school diplomas are printed from this register, the higher education register has some **quality issues** as it was developed for the purpose of tracking student rights. The biggest issue is varying from institution to institution availability of (micro) data needed for forecasting NEET status.
- The NEETs data has been compiled for **one year group**, so does not capture all NEETs over an extended period of time. This limits the scope of the data.
- Contacting individual young people identified from the mapping directly is currently not possible due to data protection.
- The Croatian PES currently does not hold sufficient micro data to make accurate prognosis of which young persons are at risk of becoming NEET.
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs' **population register** holds the most complete data on young people, including information on young people that have formally registered when leaving Croatia. However, the Ministry's law outlines the exact purposes which the data can be used for, which poses a barrier to the Croatian PES

in accessing this data. In order to share this data with the PES for the purposes of mapping NEETs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs needs to outline that the data will be used for this specific purpose too. This could then potentially enable a more complete picture of young NEETs than that currently available.

- Currently, there is a **lack of data on socio-demographic characteristics of NEETs**, such as health which might throw a light on support needed. Initially, the Croatian PES considered using health insurance data held by the Ministry of Health, as everyone in Croatia has a right to this. This was initially found to be not possible because the Ministry of Health do not own this data and would therefore be unable to share it. Since then, the Croatian PES has found it holds information on individuals' insurance status, which they would only need to cross-check against the health insurance data. This could potentially mean they would not need full access to it, thus overcoming this obstacle.

3.2 Tracking

In **Luxembourg**¹², there is a digital register of all secondary age pupils, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education which can map early school leavers. The regional offices of the Local Action for Youth service reach out to all pupils approaching their end of schooling as well as to drop outs, who are flagged by schools on the system on a monthly basis. They make direct contact with early leavers in order to establish their current activity/status, their reasons for dropping out, as well as provide them with guidance.¹³ They also directly reach out to drop outs from Youth Guarantee programmes by visiting their home; these drop outs are referred by PES staff who provide the Local Action for Youth Service with their contact details. The Local Action for Youth workers based in youth centres seek to determine what they are currently proposing to do and provide guidance and support to ensure a smooth transition or to prevent early school leaving.

Similarly, the **Netherlands** has a coordinating body for early school leavers (ESL)¹⁴. As part of a Youth Unemployment Approach (2013-15), a national level agreement requires schools and local PES to provide monthly data on ESL without a basic qualification, who are not in education or employment, and are not receiving social benefits, to one of 39 Regional Registration Coordination Centres (RRMCs). These are led by one of the municipalities in the region. The centre captures all ESL up to the age of 23 (whether they have a job or not) so they can be referred to and contacted by local organisations to provide support (either to return to education or to find work or training) and share information. A National Ambassador was appointed to ensure the new approach was adopted and effective and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment requested for the data on NEETs to be collated and published so that municipalities are incentivised to support NEETs.

This is now being extended in 10 pilot areas to NEETs aged 23-27. The Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is closely working with these 10 municipalities and receiving feedback from them on the type of information they need. This close cooperation is crucial, as it allows the Ministry to test different approaches and receive feedback from municipalities.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Cedefop - A unique service that centralises the information on early leavers. The Local Action for Youth (Luxembourg). Available at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/content/unique-service-centralises-information-early-leavers-local-action-youth-luxembourg>

¹⁴ European Commission (2015) PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs; Garanzia, G, (2015), Dutch initiatives to prevent and tackle unemployment
<http://www.garanzagiovani.gov.it/Documentazione/Documents/piano%20di%20implementazione%20Paesi%20Bassi.pdf>

The development process requires technical IT tasks to be outsourced to a non-profit foundation with experience of merging data files. Initially, designing the data flow proved to be challenging because of data protection regulations. It was therefore important to begin the data flow with the main source of the data, the Ministry of Education, which can identify young people aged 23-27 without a basic qualification and no enrolment in education. This data file also includes their citizen service number and date of birth. The Ministry of Interior, who is the administrator of the Dutch population register, then matches each citizen service number to a municipality in order to check their address. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment then checks with the PES which of these young people are not receiving an income¹⁵ and social benefits. This data is then sent to the municipalities who can contact and engage the young people identified. The system relies heavily on cooperation with other partners, such as other ministries, executive agencies, legislation departments and IT experts. This can be challenging, so to facilitate this, it is important to ensure that all decisions from partners are formalised.

Despite the extensive data sources, some information can still be missing: for example, some young people have erased their registration with the municipality and therefore there is no data available on their current address of residence. The use of social maps as an additional tool can therefore help complement this data by identifying where the NEETs are located. This was developed in Amsterdam West by identifying local organisations, such as barber shops and religious institutions, who could identify where young people are in the neighbourhood. For example,

In **Wales**¹⁶, the local authorities require schools to monitor pupils' attendance and their transition intentions as they approach school leaving age. This ensures that support is provided by the school or other agencies before they leave and those deemed at risk are mapped and tracked until they continue in education, employment or training. Between the ages of 16 and 18 this continues with other education and training providers alongside schools. Coordination and leadership by local authorities has helped to make a difference in reducing numbers of NEETs.¹⁷

In **Bulgaria**¹⁸, an information exchange between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy identifies young people who are not registered as unemployed. To provide tailored support to stay in education, as well as information on work and training, the national Activation of Inactive Persons programme uses youth mediators, encourage registration with PES offices at a local level¹⁹. Youth mediators appointed to a municipality have agreements with schools and sports centres to identify the NEETs and visits these places to offer different services to NEETs.

In **England**, local authorities are required to monitor NEETs between the ages of 16 and 18 with 'arrangements in place to confirm the current activity of all these young people at regular intervals'.²⁰ They must provide information on NEETs in a standard system, NOMIS. This is in part maintained through schools and other training providers under a duty to notify the local authority of early leavers (London has a pan-London notification system) and in part through tracking surveys of the destinations of all those aged 16 and 17 each year and by PES providing information to local authorities of new registrations by those aged 18 and 19. Effective collaboration between local agencies

¹⁵ In the case of Netherlands, 'no income' was defined as earning EUR 437 or less.

¹⁶ Welsh Government (2015) Formative evaluation of the YEPF (Patel R, Beadle, S and Thomas H)

¹⁷ Welsh Government, (2016), Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Formative evaluation follow-up study <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2016/160713-youth-engagement-progression-framework-follow-up-study-en.pdf>

¹⁸ EMCO database, Bulgaria country fiche

¹⁹ Co-funded under ESF.

²⁰ Department for Education, (2018) Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on participation of young people in education, employment and training

and mapping has been found to be a key factor in reducing the number of NEETs under the age of 19.²¹

In **Latvia**²², the local authorities are responsible for mapping ESL and inactive young people. Based on their characteristics (qualifications, motivation) they are referred to service providers with specialist workers established by the government to work with the local authorities. They are responsible for outreach work to register them and to re-engage them including through local initiatives until they have entered training or employment.

In **France**, the government has taken steps towards reaching NEETs through 'platforms to follow-up and support drop-outs' (PSAD) with the objective of supporting young people without diplomas or professional qualifications. This includes teacher training to track school leavers and providing opportunities to return to education or training. The PSAD are coordination structures gathering all the local-level stakeholders in a particular administrative area responsible for supporting early leavers (i.e. education and training providers, guidance centres and associations promoting the social inclusion of youth). The national government provides the different stakeholders a list of early leavers in the administrative area. The list is revised in order to identify individuals who are not yet receiving support from any of the platform's stakeholders, who then work together to find an optimal solution for those identified. Coordination can be done through the official technical meetings of the PSAD or among the partners via informal channels²³. It is also compulsory for all young people aged 16 and above to be registered and to attend a Citizenship and Defence Day, where ESL can be identified and their details referred to the PSAD.

Austria has recently introduced a tracking system (Reporting System of Education Training till age 18), in response to a compulsory education law being passed in 2016, which aims to ensure that all people aged 15-18 continue education to age 18. As a result of this law, relevant institutions (schools, PES, apprenticeship offices, the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions, and legal guardians, among others) are obliged to submit the data they each hold on young people to Statistics Austria. This data covers: date of birth; gender; citizenship; address of residence; starting date and description of respective education/training; end date, termination form and description of education/training; education/training identification number; (if accessible) further contact details. These datasets are then cross-referenced with each other to build a profile of the young person, and those who have not continued education are then identified. Youth coaches will then contact the young people identified as NEETs. Sanctions are put in place for parents if they are not ensuring their children re-enter education. However, a challenge with this lies in the lack of data on the parents to allow this sanctioning. Such data is not included in the legislation, and the Ministry of Labour needs to find a solution for contacting those parents who are non-compliant. One potential solution for this could be the use of the database on family allowances, but currently the Ministry of Education cannot share this.

In **Estonia**, a Youth Guarantee Support System (YGSS) is in place to find young people who are NEETs 'without good reason', and direct them to Youth Guarantee activities. Work on this first began in 2016 and was completed this year. A recent change in legislation (Social Welfare Act) was required to facilitate this system due to the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), stating who would process the data, which data and for what reasons. Data feeds in from nine registers, creating a very comprehensive dataset that includes information on the young person's address, email, number, educational background, and if they studied in Estonian or Russian. Altogether, the system is currently being used voluntarily in 31 municipalities

²¹ Ofsted, (2010), Reducing the number of young people who are NEETs: what works and why

²² ILO (2016) Policy brief on outreach strategies for young NEETs (pdf 544350, Corbanese, V and Rosas G)

²³ Cedefop, VET toolkit on tackling early leaving: Good practice fiche on PSAD

and five partner municipalities who are testing the system until 2020 covering 40% of young people aged 16-26. All partner municipalities employ a case handler to contact the young people identified. Case handlers use a case management guide on how to contact the young people and what the process should entail. A letter is first sent to the young person and then the case handler follows up on them via other methods. The total budget allocated to this system was EUR 660,000, with 85% of funding from the ESF and 15% from the state budget.

In **Sweden**, the law states that municipalities are responsible for tracking NEETs and offering activities to re-engage them. The municipalities have their own data systems for mapping and tracking so there are fewer issues regarding the sharing of information. However, reporting this information to the national level is more difficult. Similarly, municipalities in **Denmark** have the responsibility to follow up NEETs.

4 Challenges and possible solutions

4.1 Developing systems

Setting up systems to collect and maintain accurate data: it is essential that a system has information on all young people in the defined age group so that the NEETs can be identified, how long they are NEET and what their destination is (education, training or employment). The key challenges tend to be getting agreement to create and fund the development of a common, formalised system for tracking and mapping where administrative register data cannot be combined or drawn upon. As such data is often collected at local level, common systems need to be replicated and maintained by local agencies. Where agencies are funded by government bodies, they can be required as part of these contracts or agreements to collect, record and share data, such as being required to undertake destination surveys or make standard referrals when young people leave training. This process can also take a lot of time and it's important that a clear and flexible schedule is developed, ensuring transparency regarding any delays.

Determining information to hold in a common system to track and map NEETs: it is clear that the information required is personal data and ought to include gender, disability, age/date of birth, address/contact details and some history of education, training and employment. To enable administrative data to be used, it should include a personal code.

Developing protocols to share and use personal data: Using existing administrative data can reduce costs but it has generally been collected for another purpose (such as welfare or attendance payments) meaning it was not necessarily envisaged that it could be shared with other parties or for the purposes of tracking and mapping. Data holders therefore need to establish whether data protection legislation allows usage of this data for other purposes. More often than not, data sharing agreements have to be established between agencies and data holders need to set up new arrangements to obtain permission from individuals so that the data can be shared. This can take a considerable time. With new data for tracking and mapping to be collected, these arrangements can be built into the processes developed. Developing protocol agreements can be a difficult and very technical process. It is therefore important to ensure that all people involved in developing database have a clear understanding of expectations and that staff from an IT background are working closely with policy teams to achieve their aims.

Ensuring political will to allow the collection and exchange of data: in order to change legislation for data sharing, or create protocols for partnerships, political will is required to bring all actors on board. This was essential in **Estonia** for making an amendment in legislation to facilitate the introduction of the tracking system, YGSS. During the initial development of this system, there was some political resistance to changing the law, due to fears that using personal data contradicts the Estonian

constitution which ensures people's privacy. Nevertheless, the policy purpose for collecting and using such data was strong enough to override these fears. In the **Netherlands**, a comprehensive data monitoring system was developed to provide evidence to the government and service providers of the need to intervene in tackling the very high ESL rates. This collection and public dissemination of statistical evidence on ESL rates played an important role in securing political buy-in, raising political awareness and political will to intervene. By publicly reporting statistics on young people at the local and neighbourhood level, for example in newspapers, municipalities are also facing more political pressure to explain these numbers and intervene accordingly.

Enabling data to be shared and used: while using data collected for administrative procedures means that there are no additional data collection costs, there are still costs to enable the use of this data for analysis.²⁴ To develop tracking and mapping data using administrative registers requires considerable resources, time and effort to overcome technical and legal hurdles to enable data to be used.

These hurdles can include:

- Administrative data variables may not be adequate for NEET tracking. It is usually very difficult to make changes to well-established administrative databases so they are responsive to the data needed about NEETs such as their employment status, for example.
- Administrative data requires linkage between education registers and possibly financial and employment registers. All need to have a personal code that can link the data.
- The amount of data can be massive and requires a lot of cleaning. This means the analytical time/cost is high and the results may be hard to extract in a form that can be used by agencies.

Gaining permissions from individuals to share personal data (at date of registration or point of referral) is paramount for tracking and mapping NEETs since agencies need personal data to make contact. Being able to analyse this data is also essential for taking a more preventive approach, where algorithms are developed to predict who will become NEET. This is an approach currently being used by the **Netherlands**, where models are being developed to predict who is becoming an ESL.

Establishing cooperation and coordination between national organisations/agencies as well as local/regional agencies Developing national level collaboration with a joint strategy and action plan in place is key to provide direction to local/regional agencies to establish common systems. This can take time to set up and requires measures such as establishing oversight task and finish groups, setting milestones and reporting on progress, and requiring agencies to work together through statutory changes or funding conditions. For example, in the **United Kingdom** some funding is provided to organisations with conditions that ensure there is sharing of information. ESF funding is also provided on the condition that relevant organisations collaborate and work together. Other conditions which could be built into the provision of funding include the definition of common outcome indicators. As well as financial incentives, it is a statutory requirement in most parts of the UK that local authorities have to track young people up to the age of 19.

4.2 Using systems

Contacting and engaging young people: once individual NEETs are identified through tracking systems, the next step is to contact and engage them in receiving the necessary support. It is important to ensure this contact is effective so that the young person is not lost in the system again. Different methods and organisations can be used

²⁴ D Figlio, K Karbownik, K Salvanes, (2015), Education Research and Administrative Data, in: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, Working Paper Series, WP-15-13.

to contact young people. These can involve physical contact, as is the case in the **Netherlands**, or virtual methods via social media which are used in **Portugal** and **Sweden**. Youth associations and networks of partner organisations are also used in Portugal to contact young people in an informal manner, in order to make the young person feel comfortable.

Data protection laws should be seen as a positive tool which can protect young people. Creative solutions to engage NEETs without circumventing data protection laws and contacting young people without their consent can be found. The introduction of GDPR can also provide an opportunity to think in more detail about how to collect, use and share data. Caution should be paid to the ethical issues surrounding the collection of tracking and monitoring data on young people, as unintended negative consequences can arise, for example young people disengaging even further if approached without consent, or certain schools and areas being avoided by parents if data published on young people in these areas shows negative trends such as high ESL rates.

One of the biggest challenges for engaging young people is their lack of trust in public institutions. Some Member States have introduced one-stop-shop services for young people with new branding and building premises that are different from the PES, so that young people feel comfortable in using these services. The YEAs and CISOKs in **Germany** and **Croatia** respectively are in separate locations to the PES. By having a new name and location for the one-stop-shop centres, young people feel more at ease to enter them. Other countries have used an organisation separate from the PES as a way of establishing trust. Having one single point of contact also contributes to building a relationship with young people and keeping them engaged. At the point of referral, young people can lose motivation and get lost in the system again. One stop shops and single points of contact can help ensure the young person is consistently engaged, supported and guided throughout the process, without being passed from one institution to another. In **Brussels (Belgium)**, if a young person builds a relationship with a street worker, then they will continue their contact with that worker to ensure continuity. Having a single point of contact is highly beneficial as for some young people, this is the first time that they have continuity and someone looking after them.

Peer to peer support is also used in some countries to build trust with young people. **Slovenia** uses peer to peer support by training young counsellors to support young unemployed people. Young counsellors are considered to be best able to promote services and engage young people, by offering advice on how the support they had received helped them.

Trust is also built by providing young people with good quality offers. Young people need to be assured that there is something beneficial for them to gain by engaging in support measures. This highlights the need to not only identify young inactive NEETs, but also employers who can provide support, particularly at the local level. If a young person engages with the hope that they will receive a good offer, and this is not delivered, they can lose even more trust in public institutions. Matching is important in this respect, as what a counsellor might expect to be a good offer might not match what the young person sees as a good offer. In such cases, the young person may take the offer that is given to them, but this might not be sustainable. Likewise, it is important to also identify the employers who can accommodate young people that might be facing personal difficulties, such as mental health issues.

Approaches to monitoring NEETs' progress: agencies working together on activities to re-engage NEETs need to know what progress they have made and what the level of risk is in re-engaging each young person who is NEET. To assist with allocating resources for support and decide who best to provide support, agencies may need to assess the level of risk with each NEET and classify NEETs by the progress made to transition them to education, training or employment.

Responses to destination surveys: surveys have weaknesses. These are primarily around the lack of accuracy in responses around employment history and pay (they are

self-response tools) and response biases. This can be associated with three challenges: (a) the difficulties of contacting all young people after they have finished education or training when their contact details may become out of date (b) ensuring a high response rate (size, representative characteristics of respondents) and c) individual follow up by outreach agencies for non-respondents. In **Portugal**, for example, quality issues arose with data collected through a survey because young people working in the informal economy are not likely to declare this employment status.

Successful destination surveys to identify NEETs tend to be carried out soon after completion of the education or training, those at risk on completion are referred immediately to agencies, surveys are sent electronically, an incentive to compete may be offered and non-responses are followed up. The **Netherlands** carried out a survey with young people one year and a half after leaving education, asking them to state what education, training, or employment paths they pursued, if any. The survey also asked for consent to track these young people for the next 10-20 years by using their personal ID. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in **Croatia** also conducts an annual survey with pupils asking them about their education and/or employment plans. They are also asked if they face any personal difficulties, such as health issues, and if they require career guidance. Those most at risk are then referred to the CISOKs to ensure early intervention.

Measuring outcomes/performance: while minimising the number who are NEET and capturing all those who are NEET in the system are key measures of agencies' performance, systems should also be capable of measuring how long young people are NEET and assessing whether NEETs with different characteristics have been supported equally. When defining outcomes, it is also important to focus on ensuring young people take the right step and are not pushed into employment which might not be sustainable. Therefore, the intended outcome should be to ensure young people progress towards something sustainable, instead of focusing on putting people into employment as a first step. Generally, tracking surveys are added on to the administrative data in order to track the extent to which young people have progressed without receiving support. Involving young people in providing feedback to adjust the measures they're receiving is also important. In the case of **Germany's** YEAs, it has proven to be difficult to monitor a one-stop-shop system, as there are numerous institutions involved, each with their own targets. Instead, the YEAs have regular meetings to discuss what services are missing and what needs adjusting, as well as ask for feedback from young people on what needs improving.

5 Conclusions

It is evident that there are matching register systems and referral systems in place to map NEETs. Some of the referral systems are maintained by agencies working with young people; some require young people to refer themselves or consent to be referred by agencies. To track NEETs once they have been recognised as NEET, information generally has to be exchanged and shared between the agencies working with them until they have progressed into education, training or employment or collected from follow-up tracking surveys. Collaboration between the relevant organisations responsible for young people is therefore key, especially for NEETs who are a diverse and heterogeneous group with varying needs. Nevertheless, effective collaboration also requires defining a lead authority to coordinate the work of the different organisations involved and bring all relevant actors together.

The quality and scope of mapping and tracking data on NEETs is variable. Approaches to mapping and tracking NEETs also vary considerably between Member States. This is because of the extent of administrative register systems they have in place to do this and their ability to exploit these at national and crucially at local level where the agencies working with young people who are NEET operate to provide support. Political will is

also an important factor which affects these variations across Member States. Political will is necessary to enable the collection and exchange of data, whether this is through changing legislation or creating protocols for partnerships. Although political will has been stronger in some countries than others, experiences have shown that this can be built through the collection and provision of concrete evidence which highlights the need for intervention. Such evidence can be used to raise public awareness of the issues faced by NEETs and thus put pressure on governments to intervene.

Data protection is another key challenge, but one which can be overcome through new and creative ways. Although some Member States provide legislation that allows contacting young people, in many Member States this is not possible. Nevertheless, other solutions can be found, for example through anonymous mapping of data on NEETs which can enable the design of more targeted measures. Stakeholders need to first define what they wish to achieve from the collection of such data and then create the necessary systems which can allow for this. It is also necessary to pay caution to such data protection and ethical issues in order to not disengage young people even further if they are approached without consent.

Particularly in contexts where the sharing of data between organisations is largely prohibited, local organisations play a very important role in identifying NEETs, making the necessary contact and engaging them. Mapping and tracking should therefore also be focused at the local level where local organisations are closest to young people. Working with local networks can also allow for alternative methods of collecting data to fill in any necessary gaps. Social mapping is a good example of how Member States have worked with organisations at the local level to map NEETs. Moreover, local organisations are also able to provide more qualitative information on young people, for example regarding psychological factors affecting their participation in education and employment. Surveys can also be used as an alternative source of data to fill in gaps in information, where administrative data is not available. Once NEETs are identified, contacting them and keeping them engaged is the next important step. This is especially important considering the lack of trust young people have in public institutions. A variety of methods can be used to contact and engage young people and ensure that trust is built, whether it's using one stop shops which are placed outside the PES, using local organisations that already are connected to young people, having a single point of contact to ensure continuity, or using peer to peer support. The provision of good quality offers also ensure that young people do not feel let down by the institutions. Working with employers, especially at the local level, can help identify these opportunities for young people.

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