

## HETYA

### Heritage Training for Young Adults

# **Youth with a degree, but not yet an employee - challenges in the transition from education work**

## A comparative study of European young adults

KA2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices

Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education

n. 2015-1-IT02-KA204-015018

Erasmus+

HETYA – Heritage Training for Young Adults

European Challenges in the Transition from Education to Work: A Comparative Study of Young  
Adults not in Education, Employment or Training

Vestfold, 11 October 2016

© 2017, Lasse Sonne, Sofia Elamson & Christine Rendahl Stenersen

ISBN:

## 1. Foreword

This report is a part of an EU-project and represents an intellectual output (Intellectual Ourput 02) in the Erasmus+ project Heritage Training for Young Adults (HETYA). The HETYA project is funded under key action 2: co-operation for innovation and the exchange of good practises that most impacts the field of strategic partnerships for adult education. The following partner organisations participates in the HETYA-project: Provincia di Livorno (co-ordinating organisation), Provincia di Livorno Sviluppo, University of Florence, Jamtli, Bulgaria Economic Forum and the Universiy College of Southeast Norway.

## 2. Table of contents

1. Introduction
  - 1.1. NEETs
  - 1.2. Participants in the HETYA project
  
2. Bulgaria
  - 2.1. The Quality Data
  - 2.2. The Bulgarian Sample
  - 2.3. The Main Findings
    - 2.3.1. Work Experience
    - 2.3.2. Soft Skills
    - 2.3.3. Tools and Services
    - 2.3.4. Social Networks
    - 2.3.5. Mobility
    - 2.3.6. Expectations
    - 2.3.7. Other
  - 2.4. The Qualitative Data Analysis for Bulgaria
    - 2.4.1. Unemployment in Bulgaria
    - 2.4.2. NEETs
  
3. Italy
  - 3.1. The Italian Sample
  - 3.2. Main Findings from the Quality Study
    - 3.2.1. NEET status' duration
    - 3.2.2. Interest for the Museum Context
    - 3.2.3. Work Experience
    - 3.2.4. Job Mismatch
    - 3.2.4. Soft Skills
    - 3.2.5. Tools and Services
    - 3.2.6. Social Networks
    - 3.2.7. Expectations
  - 3.3. The Qualitative Data Analysis for Italy
    - 3.3.1. Gender

- 3.3.2. Education
- 3.3.3. Health
- 3.3.4. Social and Cultural Background
- 3.3.5. Ethnicity
- 3.3.6. Location
- 3.3.7. Labour Market: The Mismatch
- 3.3.8. Cultural Background: the mind set
- 3.3.9. Economic reason
- 3.3.10. Duration

#### 4. Norway

- 4.1. The Qualitative Data
- 4.2. The Norwegian Sample
- 4.3. Main Findings from the Quality Study
  - 4.3.1. Work Experience
  - 4.3.2. Tools and Services
  - 4.3.3. Soft Skills
  - 4.3.4. Social Networks
  - 4.3.5. Mobility
  - 4.3.6. Expectations
- 4.4. The Quantitative Data Analysis for Norway
  - 4.4.1. Age
  - 4.4.2. Gender
  - 4.4.3. Health
  - 4.4.4. Ethnicity
  - 4.4.5. Education

#### 5. Sweden

- 5.1. The Qualitative Data
- 5.2. The Swedish Sample
- 5.3. Main Findings from the Qualitative Study
  - 5.3.1. Work experience
  - 5.3.2. Soft skills
  - 5.3.3. Tools and services

- 5.3.4 Social networks
- 5.3.5 Expectations
- 5.4. The Quantitative Data Analysis for Sweden
  - 5.4.1. Unemployment in Sweden
  - 5.4.2. NEETs
  - 5.4.3. Education
  - 5.4.4. Gender
  - 5.4.5. Location
  - 5.4.6. Ethnicity
  
- 6. Comparative Quantitative Analysis
  - 6.1. NEET Rates in the Participating Countries in the HETYA Project
  - 6.2. Differences among the Participating Countries
  - 6.3. Similarities among the Participating Countries
  - 6.4. Risk Factors
  - 6.5. NEET Subgroups
  
- 7. Comparative Qualitative Analysis
  - 7.1. Work Experience
    - 7.1.1. Bulgaria
    - 7.1.2. Italy
    - 7.1.3. Norway
    - 7.1.4. Sweden
    - 7.1.5. Conclusion
  - 7.2. Tools and Services
    - 7.2.1. Conclusion
  - 7.3. Social Networks
    - 7.3.1. Conclusion
  - 7.4. Soft Skills
    - 7.4.1. Italy
    - 7.4.2. Norway
    - 7.4.3. Bulgaria
    - 7.4.4. Conclusion
  - 7.5. Expectations

7.6. Other

8. Concluding remarks

References

### 3. List of figures

Figure 1: NEETs in Norway 2013 aged 15-29 in percent of the total population.

Figure 2: Unemployed in Norway and their educational background (in percent).

Figure 3: NEET rates in the age group 15-24 in 2015.

Figure 4: Statistical differences among the Nordic countries and Bulgaria and Italy.

Figure 5: Sex ratio among NEETs.

Figure 6: Categorization of soft skills.

## 1. Introduction

The need to improve basic transversal skills among young adults in Europe who are not in full-time education, employment or training, also called NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), is a challenge shared among European countries. Its resolution is a key challenge to avoid social exclusion and loss of European competitiveness. At a European level, attention has been on young people no longer going to school or following a training path, or not in employment. Participation in active citizenship is at the core of any society in development. It involves risks of reintegration problems when young adults for a long time are staying outside the labour market or educational system. The Erasmus+ project Heritage Training for Young Adults (HETYA) has the ambition to find new ways of integrating young adults into employment, education or training by making use of cultural heritage.

Young people and young adults in Europe who are not in full time education, employment or training (NEET), but have graduated with a university degree such as bachelor, master or a PhD, are the subject of continuing policy concern. Still, however, relatively little research has been conducted on the issue. In this report, it is analysed who the NEETs with a higher education degree are and what the reasons are for that they have become NEETs. In this context, it has been important to collect data on the lack of competences of the NEET target group making obstacles to be in full-time education, employment or training. NEET young people and young adults is a diverse group. Treating them as a single category, merely on the basis of what they are not (in education, employment or training), may not be the best basis for forming a policy and setting policy targets for the target group. In this comparative analysis of NEETs with a higher education, different indicators has been taken into consideration, such as that a NEET might not necessarily be a person with social problems but might be a person taking a planned break in education or training. This comparative analysis thus also has as its ambition to conclude if there are different causes for being a NEET in different parts of Europe, that is, in Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden, the four countries analysed in the report.

Based on the findings in this report that give a better insight into who the NEETs are in four different countries in Europe it has been possible to give some qualified answers on who the NEETs are. The report answers the question of important similarities and differences in the four different countries regarding NEETs. Finally, the report suggests specific areas of importance in order to develop a European method with the purpose of improving possibilities for the NEET target group in Bulgaria,

Italy, Norway and Sweden to enter or re-enter into employment, education and training by making use of cultural heritage such as for example the museum institution.

### 1.1. NEETs

“NEET” refers to a person between 15 and 29 years who is not in employment, education or training. The term has its origins in the UK where it emerged in the late 1980s because of changes in the country’s benefit regime, which made many 16- and 18-year olds without access to unemployment benefits (Eurofound 2012:19). Since then, the concept has developed and has today become relevant due to the recent economic turbulence in Europe. The financial crisis, euro crisis and recession have come to affect especially younger Europeans hard. In 2011, 14 million people under the age of 30 could be categorized as NEETs within the EU (Eurofound 2015) and at EU level this group is seen as one of the most problematic ones when it comes to tackling the issue of youth unemployment (Eurofound 2012:1).

The share of NEETs varies widely between the member states, from 7,8% in Sweden to 24,6% in Bulgaria in 2011 (Eurofound 2015), and the characteristics of the NEET populations varies as well. When it comes to the countries in the HETYA study, Swedish NEETs are for instance more likely to have work experience and be low skilled, while the Bulgarian and Italian NEETs are inactive and stand without work experience (Eurofound 2012:41). This should be considered in analysis, together with the fact that the reason(s) for becoming a NEET also varies greatly. Some have difficulties to find work due to health issues or disability, others are not qualified enough when it comes to education or work experience.

The place where one lives can matter; living in remote areas increases the probability of becoming a NEET, as well as having immigration background which makes it 70% more likely to become a NEET compared to nationals. This heterogeneity is acknowledged by the EU, and it is emphasized how this must be taken into account in policy design when trying to solve the problem (Eurofound 2015).

The consequences of being a NEET can be seen on individual, national and European level, and the concerns regarding the issue are both social and economic. There are significant economic costs for a state when parts of its young generation, willing to and meant to be working or studying, are inactive for a long time. It has also been noted how the NEETs are at risk for becoming disengaged from society, which can result in having a lower interest in politics, refraining from voting in elections and

gaining lower trust in society's institutions, which in the end makes the issue a question of democracy (Eurofound 2015).

## 1.2. Participants in the HETYA project

As stated above, there are many different reasons to why young people may become NEETs, which makes them a heterogeneous group. Therefore, no universal solution covering all problem areas exists – the different NEET sub-groups demand differentiated measures. With this in mind, the HETYA project has chosen to narrow down their target group.

HETYA aims at the part of the NEETs who have actually acquired higher education, such as a bachelor's or a master's degree at university. In order to compare this group with a group without education, the HETYA-project has decided that the Swedish sample consists of young adults without education.

Studies show how young people with lower education are three times more likely to become a NEET compared to others (Eurofound 2015), so the target group of HETYA have an obvious advantage since most of them are higher educated. In general, this should be a resourceful group with a lot of potential, probably ready and eager to start working, and society would have a lot to gain in both social and economic terms from integrating these people into the labour market. However, the transition between a university degree and a relevant job may not always be smooth, possibly even less so in the globalized and digitalized society that European youth are facing today. HETYA aims to equip this group with the skills and competence needed in going from education to employment.

## 2. Bulgaria

### 2.1. The Qualitative Data

The qualitative data collection in Bulgaria where conducted within the methodological frame set by the HETYA project. The data were collected with questionnaires, which the participants filled in themselves.

### 2.2. The Bulgarian Sample

The Bulgarian group consists of twenty people, eight men and twelve women, aged 22-34 years old. They have all completed higher education and are at the time of the study searching for jobs relevant to their education, or for an education or other opportunity.

Some of the people from the sample are highly relevant to the museum sector since they have education which goes hand in hand with this. Firstly, four of the participants have a Bachelor's degree in Archaeology and are about to finish their Master's degree within Archaeology and secondly, they also have experience from working on different archaeological sites as well as in museums. One of the participants has a PhD in Archaeology, also with working experience from archaeological sites. Furthermore, three of the participants have a Bachelor's degree in History.

Among the rest of the sample, the type of education varies, but all of the participants have at least a Bachelor's degree. Eight of the participants have a Master's degree and four of the participants are in the final stage of their master studies. Other education types present in the data material except for the ones mentioned above are for instance European Studies, International Business, Political Science and Tourism.

## 2.3. Main Findings from the Qualitative Study

### 2.3.1. Work Experience

Only three of the participants from the sample state not having any work experience, while the rest have been active on the labour market. Due to the scant information given, it is somewhat unclear, but it seems like at least twelve of the informants have working experience from a field that is also relevant to their education.

### 2.3.2. Soft Skills

Since several of the participants from Bulgaria have considerable work experience, it is reasonable to believe that they have developed a range of important soft skills which are useful for moving on in their career. Many of those with a lot of experience are good at pointing out their qualifications, to highlight the different types of skills and competences they have acquired and developed through previous jobs. It seems like the soft skills developed in particular are communication and organizational skills, as well as personal management.

*“Through my experience I gained good communication and organizational skills and I also learned to manage time well. Working with different colleagues taught me to be patient and open in order to give and learn the best I can.” (Participant 3)*

*Box 1.*

The majority of the sample are quite vague when asked about the future and what they plan to do to improve their situation. Very few can tell exactly what their plans are. Some of them are about to finish their education which is their answer to the questions about future plans, but after this the plans are somewhat unclear. Many simply state that they hope to have a job in their field, they want to start work, etc. This could be related to soft skills regarding decision making and personal and professional life planning, implying a lack of this. This may also be reflected in the fact that many of the participants did not answer the question about what their biggest weaknesses were, or how they tried to manage and improve these.

*“Looking for new opportunities.”* (Participant 6)

*“I’ll keep on searching for a job.”* (Participant 9)

*“Looking for a good job.”* (Participant 17)

*Box 2.*

Some of the participants express being very emotional in some situations, and that they do not cope well with too much pressure. It is also pointed out by several that they can get stuck in details, making it unnecessary time-consuming to perform a task. In light of these statements, it seems like the participants could improve their soft skills regarding emotional intelligence and stress management, as well as their ability to make decisions and plans.

All things considered, it seems reasonable to assume that these are the biggest weak areas regarding the participants’ soft skills:

- Emotional intelligence (recognize, analyse, manage and develop emotions)
- Stress management
- Personal and professional life planning
- Decision making
- Planning
- Failure management

### 2.3.3. Tools and Services

None of the participants mentioned to have any difficulties using different tools or services, e.g. search engines, databases or employment centres, to search for a job or educational/training activities. However, a few of the participants mention that general search engines are not useful for finding work relevant to what he or she has studied.

*“Tools for job search – the Bulgarian websites jobs.bg and jobtiger.bg, the websites of museums, galleries etc. Unfortunately these tools are not efficient in the field of history.”*

(Participant 19)

*Box 3.*

The participants use a wide range of different tools: various national search engines, Facebook, LinkedIn, job fairs and networking events, etc.

#### 2.3.4. Social Networks

When being asked about whether the social network that participants belong to is useful for getting a job, being better qualified, educated or trained, most answer that social networks are useful. The majority says that social networks are important, and half the sample underline the importance of these. Almost all of the participants also mentions “friends” (among others) when answering how they got in contact with different tools and services searching for work or training/education. Three of the participants do not consider social networks useful for the purpose of getting job or becoming more qualified, educated or trained.

*“In my field of work so far it is really important to give and receive information from friends and colleagues because a lot of the positions we are applying for are not necessarily publicly announced.”*

(Participant 3)

*“I find social networks very useful. People often create groups in Facebook for example, for those things in which they are most interested (IT jobs for example) and that way you can find a job too.”*

(Participant 9)

*“There are some companies that work with references. If a friend is an employee in that kind of company, he/she could refer you for an available job position. He/she could also tell you everything about the disadvantages and the benefits.”*

(Participant 10)

*“My family and my friends are always supportive and helpful and they have been one of the reasons for me to be more ambitious in my studies.”*

(Participant 3)

Box 4.

#### 2.3.5. Mobility

Four of the participants have experience from working or studying abroad, and two of them also express being open for going abroad to gain more experience. The survey does not include any specific question concerning the topic of going abroad.

*“I would like to have some working experience in an international setting (for example countries in East Asia, North Africa and Western Europe before I go for a master’s degree. /.../ I am trying to gain some international experience, which would give me a different perspective of the things around me and help me improve.”*

(Participant 13)

Box 5.

#### 2.3.6. Expectations

Some of the participants aim for higher education, while others are thinking about going abroad. As mentioned before, many of the participants are a bit vague in how they plan their coming three and six months, but hope or plan to start working.

*“I intent in that period of time to find a suitable degree program in a Bulgarian or International institution, preferably with a grant, and/or some kind of more permanent job related to my studies.” (Participant 3)*

*“I would either start the internship in China or just participate in some youth exchanges while looking for a good opportunity.” (Participant 13)*

*“Hoping to have a job!” (Participant 19)*

Box 6.

### 2.3.7. Other

A handful of the Bulgarian participants express wanting to improve their language skills.

*“What is important to me is continue learning Russian and Spanish and other languages, most likely Ukrainian, Italian, French and Turkish /.../ I think it’s important to develop further the talents I possess, such as learning languages, writing, translating, as others as I believe it’s better to rely on improving your strengths than on reducing your weaknesses.” (Participant 15)*

*“Next months I will plan to stay in Bulgaria and to learn languages. I want to learn Russian and to add my English and German knowledge.” (Participant 14)*

Box 7.

## 2.4. The Quantitative Data Analysis for Bulgaria

The quantitative data is collected by Bulgaria Economic Forum. The information comes from National Statistical Institute (NSI), which is responsible for statistics regarding the economic, demographic and social development in Bulgaria (National Statistical Institute 2016a).

### 2.4.1. Unemployment in Bulgaria

There were 305 000 unemployed people in Bulgaria in 2015, unemployment rate being 9.2% (National Statistical Institute 2016b). The unemployment rate has dropped compared to the previous two years.

#### 2.4.2. NEETs

248 000 people aged 25-34 years could be classified as NEETs in Bulgaria in the year 2015. Eurofound (2015) defines NEETs from the age of 15, which means that more people than what is shown in the statistics probably belong to the NEET group in Bulgaria.

The NSI data show that there are differences depending on where in Bulgaria people live. Most of the NEETs are living in the cities and there are also regional differences, the southwest region and the south central region being most affected.

During the years 2013, 2014 and 2015, more women than men were NEETs in Bulgaria. It was also more likely to be a NEET if you had lower education. There are less NEETs among those who had a university degree, while those who only graduated high school or received education below were more frequent. The group who graduated high school are almost the same size as the group of people whose education is categorized as “lower”.

The data from NSI show that a lot of the NEETs are searching for their first job. But many of the NEETs also have working experience from before, and the data shows various reasons for why they have become NEETs. Some have left their job because they were not satisfied with the working conditions, while others give personal or family reasons for leaving. Many have become NEETs due to redundancy, but the number of people in this sub-group have decreased since 2013 and 2014. A common reason for joining the NEET group is also because a seasonal or temporary job has ended.

### 3. Italy

In this chapter, we provide the reader with the main findings that came out of the analysis of the questionnaires collected in Italy (sample from young NEETs who live and studied in Livorno and around Tuscany). The Italian qualitative data has been collected and researched by Francesca Torlone from the University of Florence (Torlone 2016).

#### 3.1. The Italian Sample

The Italian sample from Livorno and Tuscany region is mainly composed by 30 NEETs, mostly women (73%). As mentioned, 20 NEETs are confirmed in the Italian sample whilst the remaining 10 NEETs are to be involved in the Focus Group when the questionnaire will be delivered to them to complement the ongoing research.

Each of them has been in contact with the Province of Livorno as they applied to a public competition in order to take part to the HETYA activities (blended learning activities and onsite training in a foreign museum in one of the foreign HETYA countries (Bulgaria, Norway, Sweden). Thus they had to express their interest in getting trained abroad in a blended format.

The Italian HETYA NEET cohort is a diverse group. Young people are NEET for different reasons:

- some are unemployed and looking for work
- others have short-term unemployment experience due to education, temporary job or training experience just ended (i.e. recently graduated)
- others have been in education and training due to the lack of job
- others have difficult family environment
- some plan to enter university studies hoping it will lead them to a decent job
- others planned some education that did not start

*I would like to find a job that is coherent with my background, education and training but still nothing. I am trying to go abroad but funds are missing and am trying to figure out how to collect funds. (Participants 1-3)*

*My temporary employment just ended and I am looking for something more.*

*I got my university degree few months ago so I am trying to understand what to do to search for a job although my sector is actually quite hard due to the economic crisis. (Participants 17-19-25-28)*

*I am looking for a job but cannot find anything. I want to be independent from my family also economically. My parents try to support me but they do not want me to go abroad as they are afraid. Maybe I am also a bit scared about that. They suggested me to study accounting but I did and still do not like it at all. So I must find something else although I may not have the proper qualification (i.e. I would love to work with kids). (Participant 18)*

*I planned to be enrolled in a University Master in Pisa but it was cancelled for the next academic year. (Participant 4)*

*I plan to study at university level as I am fed up with the job-on-call that I got so far. (Participant 13)*

**Box 8.**

There is no evidence that NEET status is linked to family or personal reasons (like having care responsibilities or being young parents), as proved in other researchers (i.e. Eurofound, 2014; Sisson & Jones, 2012; Cuervo, & Wyn, 2011).

### 3.2. Main Findings from the Qualitative Study

#### 3.2.1. NEET status` duration

- One participant aged 23 is out of the labour market and education and training and actually looking for a stable and decent job to leave call on-demand as waitress. The last education is dated back to 2012
- One participant aged 22 never got a stable job so far and is actually studying Graphic and Design to be better skilled for what she plans to do for living (in the meantime she gets some baby-sitting and voluntary occupations)

*I work as waitress on request. At the same time, I look for a permanent job and go on cooperating with organisations on a voluntary basis. (Participant 8)*

Box 9.

*I am volunteer in several associations and cooperate with them on request (i.e. on Christmas, for particular celebrations) as well as I like babysitting whenever needed and requested. (Participant 16)*

Box 10.

- One participant aged 19 plans to study law at the university in the coming months (by 2016)
- Two participants aged 25 and 30 ended their university studies months ago and are looking for a job since then. One of them also considers to be better educated in a post-university Master

*I have been graduated in Pisa in East Affairs and have been searching for a job for some months. I plan to go on and also consider the opportunity to get a Master or a PhD diploma. (Participant 25)*

*I am law graduated and plan to get a coherent job. If not, I plan to go for a post-University Master to strengthen and enlarge my knowledge and competences or go and study abroad. (Participants 29)*

Box 11.

- Others aged 25-29 remain NEETs longer considering that in the HETYA questionnaire we included in “occupation” also training experiences that did not lead to any permanent or temporary job. So the experience of paid and permanent work is scarce in our sample whilst casual and holiday jobs are.

*I never got a job so far, just training experiences and voluntary collaborations in the Regional Civil Service.*

*My last work experience refers to the stage I got at the University International Relations Department.*

*No working experiences, only stage as part of learning activities (i.e. 150 hours as stage in a bakery).*

*I have got several experiences in stage within organisations. (Participants 2-14-18-19)*

Box 12.

### 3.2.2. Interest for the Museum Context

Some people from the sample are very highly motivated in getting better skilled and trained in the museum area and context as to make it their job for the future. This is also for young people who have an educational background not linked to the museum context.

*I work as a volunteer in the museum and am very much interested in getting more professionalization in such an interesting setting. (Participant 1)*

*I would like to improve my education in the museum field and in general in cultural goods.*

*I plan to finish my voluntary cooperation in the museum and do hope there will be a chance to get some permanent or temporary job in the field of sea biology in any museum or research centre abroad. (Participants 2-3-13-18)*

*I am interested in going on studying and better trained as I want to work in the cultural communication field and promote the culture brand for Italy. (Participant 23)*

Box 13.

### 3.2.3. Work Experience

HETYA data collection highlights that the lack of initial work experience is one of the most common barrier to work. This is also in relation to the high certification that kept participants in studying instead of working: poor qualification is not so high in our sample (as it is used to be among NEETs cohorts). Most of them are graduate people (holding a university degree and, in some cases, looking for a PhD specialisation or a post-University Master whilst 6 participants (30%) do hold a high-school certificate or a qualification, and two of them plan to study at the university Foreign Languages and Law). This may be related to the features of the actual labour market, in need of better skilled and more competitive workers. This illustrates the need to focus in our survey not on school leavers but on transitions of those who have gone on to do additional education and training.

*I studied Sea Biology at the University. Due to my unemployment I plan to search for a PhD research project, especially abroad (New Zealand and Australia are of high interest for me) or I also consider to work as volunteer in any organisation/institution that might be interested in my CV and professional background like research centres in sea biology, aquarium, natural history museums, private organisations, etc. For anything that is not strictly coherent with my background I might search for short-term cooperation (i.e. photography that is my hobby). (Participant 3)*

*I want to go on with my university education that I stopped and get the university degree in Archaeology, improve my professionalization for my professional plan to be an expert in museum communication by attending a Master in Social Media Marketing while studying at university. (Participant 23)*

*I think to reinforce my competences with a Master, Specialisation courses or a PhD research project to be submitted to my University. (Participant 25)*

Box 14.

### 2 3.2.4 Job Mismatch

In our sample we found difficulties in knowing the labour demands and the skills employers need (*for soft skills see below*) as well as adapting to professional tasks. This may lead to the worrying situation where NEETs may risk not to make any transition into employment after leaving education.

*I applied for a vacancy in a local company preparing fish to be sold. I expected to wrap fishes but then I have been asked to clean it and make it ready for selling. I was not able to do that (as I never did it before) so after the first day I had to quit. After my upper secondary studies in accountancy I am still trying to get a job in a different field as I am not interested at all in this. I'd like to babysitting or working with children but due to my lack of education in the field it is very difficult to find a job. So I do not know what to do. I try everywhere anything that can provide me with economic independence from my family. (Participant 18)*

Box 15.

#### 3.2.4. Soft Skills

Block 2 (“Questions on skills and competences”) has hardly been answered. It may reveal that young people, especially the ones with no work experience/training experience, do not know the types of skills and capabilities required by the labour market. In particular few of them perceive the importance of soft skills - such as communication, time management, self-motivation, team working, organisational skills, problem-solving - to access and maintain employment. The demand for these skills has been increasing over time. This can be also related to the lack of experience in the workplace for most of the Italian participants (*see above*).

For those young people with less developed soft skills, accessing the labour market is likely to become more difficult. Participants having experience with customers (for voluntary or short-term experiences) have such perception.

*I have been working in international and multicultural team so I know how important is to be able to treat people and communicate with them, also in the organisational perspective.*

(Participant 6)

*In my school-work alternance experience I worked as receptionist in some hotels. Then I realised the importance of communication skills towards customers. (Participant 13)*

Box 16.

Soft skills that emerged from questionnaires are of different kinds.

*My strong point is social/relational skills, managerial and coordination abilities as well. I feel strong in communication, public relations and digital skills.*

*Problem solving is one of my strong points. I think I am good at relations, self-initiative, creativity, planning.*

(Participants 1-2-6-14-19)

*I consider results-oriented attitude one of my good points as well as proactivity, adaptability, leadership, stress management.* (Participant 3-24)

*I know of intercultural and multicultural group management.* (Participants 6-30)

Box 17.

Few participants answered questions on “areas of improvement”.

### 3.2.5. Tools and Services

Web sources are the most common tool in use among young NEETs in Italy. More specifically general job searching databases and portals and in some cases some specific web sources are mentioned. They are considered quite easy in use but mostly not very useful in terms of results.

Agencies and local government web sites are also used. Social networks like LinkedIn are not so widely used. All participants know Employment Centres although they are not highly satisfied about their service. Some participants prefer to meet potential employers in person and attend job fairs, open days, submit their application in person. Tools may differ depending on whether they are used for education and training purposes or for job searching goal.

*I often use Infojobs, the web site of the Livorno Province, Indeed, Career jet, Job rapido, mondo lavoro. I also consult specialised web sources like Archeojob, Artjob, National Parks, Aquarium, Museums. Others are: Idol, Clicklavoro, Bacheca, Infojob, Alma Mater.*

*I refer to job matching agencies as well (Manpower, Monter, Randstad, Intempo, Ali. Giovani Sì and Garanzia Giovani are quite useful as well as newsletters, local newspapers.*

*(Participants 1-2-3-8-23-29)*

*In my experience employment centre are not useful as scarcely in line with my professional profile. No concrete support from them. Useful German portals. (Participant 6-23)*

*For my education and training I regularly consult web sites of universities. (Participant 2-4-30)*

*Box 18.*

### 3.2.6. Social Networks

*My family, friends, colleagues in previous occupations, relatives and people around me are very important and supportive in my job searching as they know my attitudes and interests and warn me on the job and/or education solutions that better may satisfy me. The coordinator of one of the courses I attended in the past contacted me for a training experience as she liked the way I acted in the classroom. My parents also suggested me to go on studying at university and to study “Economics and Arts and Cultural Activities Management”. (Participant 1-4-6-11-23)*

*No kind of support at all from any member of my personal and social networks.  
The most comes from my capacities. (Participant 2-17-25)*

*They helped me and still help me a lot as they know employers who might have vacancies and are in networks where word of mouth is very important. The relevance of my networks is in terms of economic support, direct contacts with potential employers, knowing real open vacancies. The emotional support I got from my family is also crucial for me. (Participant 3-13-14-28-29-30)*

*My father suggested to study accountancy although I was not really interested in that and did not like it at all. I did it but now I do not want to work in this field so I am trying to find a job which is not connected with my educational background and I find difficulties as employers look for trained and educated employees in the field.  
(Participant 18)*

Box 19.

Networks do play a variable role depending on their robustness and link to the employment sector young people want to be included in. The impact of family background - and social class – on young people’s trajectories is strong (as showed by the wide literature on the issue). Parental occupation, education and socio-economic status do influence the way young people face their transitions. I.e., should parents, friends, relatives be unemployed or without a stable employment young people need to trust other tools to manage their NEET status.

The kind of support networks can provide is different: by advice and opinions, economic support, open vacancies, emotional support. Support is about insertion into the labour market and into professionalization pathways.

### 3.2.7. Expectations

Our sample trust they will get mostly some education, training and voluntary occupations opportunities in the coming 3 and 6 months.

Few of them believe they will get the occupation they are looking for. Some others do not have a clear idea about their coming future.

*I hope in the coming months to be better skilled and to have the possibility to have an experience abroad, maybe within the HETYA research as well.*

*I hope to work. (Participant 1-4-5-7-9-14-17-18-19-26)*

*I hope to have the possibility to practice knowledge and skills I acquired so far in the field I have been educated and trained: web marketing in cultural settings.*

*I will be working in the Graphic Design that I want to finish studying. (Participant 6-16)*

*I plan to look for a PhD course, submit a PhD research project, get in contact with Heads of research centres, in Italy and abroad and work in the field.*

*My plans are to finish my professionalization and look for the pertinent job. I may evaluate to start a Master while working. (Participants 3-23)*

Box 20.

### 3.3. The Quantitative Data Analysis for Italy

NEETs among 15-29 years were 2,3 million (25,7% of the total number). (Istat, Noi Italia 2016). The band considered by the National Institute of statistics is from 15 to 29 (including e.g. early school leavers from 15 to 19 years, who don't get a diploma, and the unemployed people after the degree, from 24 to 29 years).

These data are related to quantitative reporting by published studies, official data and research at national level, with regional differences and details.

### 3.3.1. Gender

The percentage of female NEET is usually higher than the male's, on average of 10-11 percent. This big gap is usually due to the leaving of labour market by women to have and attend children or take care about family, because Italy hasn't enough welfare measures to favour work/life balance, so young women often have to choose between job and family.

### 3.3.2. Education

Among young adults (30-34 years old) 25.3 percent get a degree in 2015. (Istat, Noi Italia 2016). Italy has a low percentage of graduates in front of the EU27 level: people from 30 to 34 years old are the 23.9 percent in front of the EU 38 percent (Istat, Education and Training, 2015). The employment rate of graduates (25-34 years old) was 62 percent in 2014 - 20 percent lower than the developed world ([www.rapportogiovani.it](http://www.rapportogiovani.it)).

Among the graduates in 2014, 18.8 percent were males and 29.1 percent females. The graduates' percentage was lower in the South Italy (19.7 percent), higher in the North (25.3 percent) and very high in central Italy (28.7 percent). (Istat, Education and Training, 2015). In the Tuscany region they are 23.1 percent (Istat, Noi Italia 2016).

### 3.3.3. Health

The Eurofound research on the NEET condition (2011) pointed out among the main risk factors to become NEET the disability (40% more than the others). But following the recent Eurofound research (Exploring the diversity, 2016) illness or disability is only one among the seven subcategories of NEET universe.

### 3.3.4. Social and Cultural background

To be an inactive NEET is typical related to the social, family and cultural background within which the person grows up and the school where he/she learns. According to the research "Ghost" (2015) by the onlus WeWorld, among four inactive NEETs, one had experience of early school leaving (failure, interruption or many changes of path).

In fact, the social background seems directly related to the success of education and training path of the young people: in 2013 the son of parents with the basic school level (compulsory education) had a high rate of early school leaving (27,3%), while the children of graduated parents had a very low

rate (2,7%). The family of origin is so important that in 2013 the NEET with parents having the compulsory education were the 33,3%, while those coming from graduated parents were the 11,1%. (BES: Benessere Equo e Sostenibile, CNEL-ISTAT report 2014).

#### 3.3.5. Ethnicity

The Eurofound report on the NEET condition (2011) among the main risk factors to become a NEET pointed at the cultural background of immigrants (70% larger risk more than non-immigrants), with a family based on low salary, having the parents with low level of education (2 times higher), unemployed (17% more risk) or divorced (30% more risk). Finally, it is easier to become a NEET with a low level of education (3 times higher risk). The risk increases even more if the person lives in places far away from populated areas.

#### 3.3.6. Location

The highest percentage of NEETs is to be found in the South of Italy - on average more than 35% - than in Central Italy (from 19 to 21%) and only the North of Italy has a lower percentage of NEETs: from 19 to 17%. In Tuscany the NEET percentage was 19.7% in 2015 (Istat, Noi Italia 2016).

#### 3.3.7. Labour Market: The Mismatch

A problem with young adults in Italy is that they after having earned an academic degree they still have a lower level of skills than requested by the labour market. In general, they after completing a degree have a high level of education/training but the labour market does not necessarily demand the education or training conducted. Finally, there is a lack of tools to guide and match the job search (Job Centres, guidance services, etc.).

#### 3.3.8. Cultural background: the mind set

In Italy young people becomes independent from original family and become adult very late. It's usually accepted that they stay at home and often are economically engaged to the parents/family until they are more than 35 years old.

### 3.3.9. Economic reason

The crisis from 2009 to 2013 reduced the number of workplaces. The fiscal problems and taxes for companies are still high in Italy. The phenomenon of illicit work is sadly common in Italy.

### 3.3.10. Duration

Recent studies report that young people became NEET on average for two years, while they are still looking for a job (active NEETs), both through the Public Employment Services and their personal network. They are estimated to be about one million in total number.

The other part (inactive NEET) are not interested to find a job (e.g. because they're opening their own company or are uncertain or help the family, or they work only sometimes, etc.) or are discouraged, depressed, with low level of self-esteem and remain stationary, sometime at risk of social diseases and marginalisation. (Rapporto Giovani 2016).

## 4. Norway

### 4.1. The Qualitative Data

The qualitative data collection in Norway adopted the methodological frame set by the HETYA project. The Norwegian sample consists of 17 people aged 24-39 at the time of selection. They all live in Norway. They have completed higher education and are at the time of selection seeking jobs that are relevant to their education or for an education or training opportunity. We collected the qualitative data by conducting individual interviews.

### 4.2. The Norwegian Sample

Our sample consists of seven men and ten women. Six of them had completed a bachelor's degree at the time of selection. Six had completed a master's degree at the time of selection. One had a degree from a vocational college. In addition, four are in the process of completing their master's thesis. All the participants in our sample are currently seeking work that is relevant to their education. Almost all of them currently have a job that they consider irrelevant to their education, or they have a temporary job and cannot seem to get a stable work contract. Complete unemployment amongst people with higher education is rare in Norway.

### 4.3. Main Findings from the Qualitative Study

The sample from Norway is a diverse group, but the reason for their NEET status is attributed to six issues:

1. Hardly any specific work experience
2. Lack of professional life planning skills
3. Loss of motivation
4. Issues with self-confidence
5. Reluctant to relocate
6. Lacking a professional social network

#### 4.3.1. Work Experience

The majority of our sample have very little or no work experience in the field they are now trying to enter, and mention this as one of their weak areas. All the participants have sufficient experience from other parts of the labour market; in fact, most of them have worked more or less since they were 16-year-olds. Thus, work experience in general is not the problem, but field specific work experience is deficient. The following examples are suggestive:

*The employers require a lot of experience when they advertise vacancies today. Often at least five years, so I feel that I cannot compete... I feel that the employers are afraid to take a chance with graduates; they do not want to spend time or money on training. (Participant 8)*

*I lack work experience as an accountant. For instance, when I apply for a job they often require at least two years' experience in the field, sometimes even five to ten years. Consequently, I do not stand a chance. (Participant 10)*

Box 21.

#### 4.3.2. Tools and Services

None of the participants in our sample seems to have any problems with facilities for finding a job. They know many tools and services and how to use them. Everyone uses databases on the internet. They report that they have always known about these websites, and they do not find them hard to use. One problem is that there are far too many applicants for the jobs. They find it hard to stand out when applying through the internet. Statements like these are descriptive:

*There are maybe about 200 applicants, it is extremely hard to stand out. (Participant 10)*

*There are often about 100 applicants for a job. Even though I am qualified for the job, many applicants are even more qualified. (Participant 11)*

Box 22.

Another problem is that applying for a job requires a lot of time and many of the participants have a job while they are looking for a job relevant to their education, and they feel that they do not have the time to apply for all the jobs they would like to. This can also be perceived as a motivational issue. The following examples are illustrative:

*Yes, I find it hard to apply for jobs because it just takes a lot of time, and it is a lot of work. This is the main reason I constantly avoid applying for jobs. I know it is important to apply for jobs, but it just takes too much time. (Participant 5)*

*The search itself is easy; it is when you actually try to apply that the difficulties start. Then you often have to register your information on many different pages; that takes a lot of time. After you have completed your CV, you also have to write a covering letter; this is cumbersome, it takes a lot of time, and I seldom have that much time. (Participant 6)*

*It takes a lot of time, especially if you want to write a good covering letter. Sometimes there are good jobs available and you feel like you can do really well, then you want to write a good application letter; and that takes a lot of time. (Participant 14)*

Box 23.

#### 4.3.3. Soft Skills

The participants in our sample have quite a lot of work experience. Most of them have worked more or less since they were 16-year-olds. They seem to have a good understanding of certain skills and competences that are required to enter the job market and find job security. In particular, soft skills related to the team dimension seem well- developed in our sample.

*I address my colleagues in a pleasant manner, even when I have to give them some negative feedback.*

(Participant 4)

*I am very adaptable in social settings.* (Participant 9)

*I am a social person and I easily adapt to any situation, which contributes to a good working environment.* (Participant 14)

Box 24.

Few participants' report that they have ever received any negative feedback from an employer or a colleague. Some of them have identified some weak areas themselves. The weak areas comprise the following soft skills:

- Motivation management
- Personal and professional life planning
- Decision-making
- Failure management
- Public speaking
- Planning
- Stress management

This brings us back to some of the main findings in our sample. We can see a lack of professional life planning. Many participants have not thought about what comes after school, what type of work they want to do or can do with their degree. They have not been proactive during their education when considering how to get a good job after their graduation. The following case illustrates how some participants lack professional life planning skills:

*I have talked to many of my classmates and during our five-year education most of us have never thought about what comes next. We have not thought about what we actually want to work with after graduation, we have just focused on our studies and reckoned that it will turn out all right.* (Participant 10)

Box 25.

The participants who have just graduated seem optimistic about their situation and expect to have a relevant job during the coming 6 months. In contrast, we see that the participants who have had the NEET status for about a year are rather negative about their job prospects. They do not think it is possible to get a good job with their education. This could be linked to the soft skill “Motivation management”. The case of these participants is especially striking:

*I used to be very career oriented, but now I feel less motivated. I hope to be more motivated again soon. (Participant 1)*

*It is very discouraging to be repeatedly turned down. Accordingly, in periods I do not apply for so many jobs, I kind of give up. (Participant 6)*

*I still apply for some jobs, I want a job as a biologist, but I have to face the facts and maybe abandon the dream... I might go back to college to finish my master's degree, but I am not motivated at all now. (Participant 7)*

Box 26.

Failure management issues can be linked to another of our main findings; self-confidence issues. The majority of our sample group seem to have self-confidence issues. This manifests itself in various ways. Some are afraid of rejection and do not dare to apply for their dream job although they are qualified. Many mention that they are scared of making mistakes; therefore, they are performing their tasks rather slowly. Others report that they find it quite uncomfortable talking to people they do not know; hence they try to avoid them. These cases are especially striking:

*One of my bad qualities is that I am not that social. I prefer to stay at home. This is something I feel I need to work on. (Participant 2)*

*It is about my confidence; I feel that others can do things better. I am scared of asking questions, because then they will know that I do not know how to do something. I have tried to work on this, but I am still scared to admit that I do not know how to do some tasks in a work situation. (Participant 3)*

*I am very interested in a company. I have not applied for a job there yet, although I am qualified, because I do not think I have any chance of getting a job there. I guess it is easier not applying than risking the rejection. (Participant 5)*

*I am a cautious person. I just will not contact people I do not know, I just won't do that. (Participant 8)*

*I want to start with a job I am overqualified for because I need to feel that I can manage the tasks... I am afraid of doing anything wrong. I am afraid of not being good enough. This is something that holds me back, and this is the reason why I want a job I am overqualified for... This is about my own insecurity. (Participant 13)*

Box 27.

In addition to the soft skills mentioned earlier, few in our sample have any work experience that requires soft skills in business/organisation. It is likely that they have less developed skills concerning business/organisation:

- Leadership
- Assessment
- Performance management and evaluation
- Economics, budgeting
- Marketing (in relation to oneself, to the service/product)
- Planning
- Change management

#### 4.3.4. Social Networks

All of our participants find social networks highly useful in getting a job, and have found a job through their personal network on multiple occasions. When they are trying to enter another area of the labour market after completing their degree, most of them report a lack of personal contacts that can help with information about good jobs or recommendations. The following cases clarify this issue:

*In my line of work, social network means everything! Whom you know and whom you have worked with are more important than which college you graduated from, or your grades. Your education does not really mean anything... In the district where I live now, I do not know anyone in the specific sector I wish to work. (Participant 2)*

*Without a good social network, it is almost impossible to find a good job. It is even more important when you have higher education... I do not know that many in my field yet.*

(Participant 6)

*Social networks are the most important when you are looking for a job. If you have a good social network, your grades from school do not mean anything. Not everyone knows this, but I do. (Participant 10)*

Box 28.

#### 4.3.5. Mobility

Many of the participants in our sample think that they could get a good job if they moved to another part of Norway, but they are reluctant to do so.

*I want to find a job in the same county as I live in... I have learned that I cannot commute.*

(Participant 5)

*I could most likely have got a job where I did my internship during my studies. They asked me to apply for a job, but I wanted to move back home and get a job there. (Participant 6)*

(On the question about applying for a job outside the municipality she lives in): *No, I have not applied anywhere outside Oslo. (Participant 11)*

Box 29.

#### 4.3.6. Expectations

Most of our participants expect things to improve in three to six months. All of them have some sort of plan for the coming months regarding their situation. Those who are currently unemployed expect to have a job within three months, maybe not a job that is relevant to their education, but a job nevertheless. Some of our sample group plan to go back to college, since they reckon they need more formal competence to get ahead in the labour market, but most of them feel they have more than enough formal competence, all they really need is experience. However, the plans for the future are in general quite vague. These cases will illustrate the typical attitude among the participants:

*I expect to have a job in three months. (Participant 2)*

*I think, or at least I hope, that I will have a job in three months. (Participant 3)*

*Three months is a short time, I think my situation will be the same, but maybe I will have a new job....*

*In six months, I expect to have a new job. (Participant 5)*

*I expect the job situation to be the same in three months. I also reckon to have started on my new education in three months, definitely in six months. (Participant 7)*

*Box 30.*

The vague plans for the future can also be attributed to problems with the soft skill “Personal and professional life planning”.

#### 4.4. The Quantitative Data Analysis for Norway

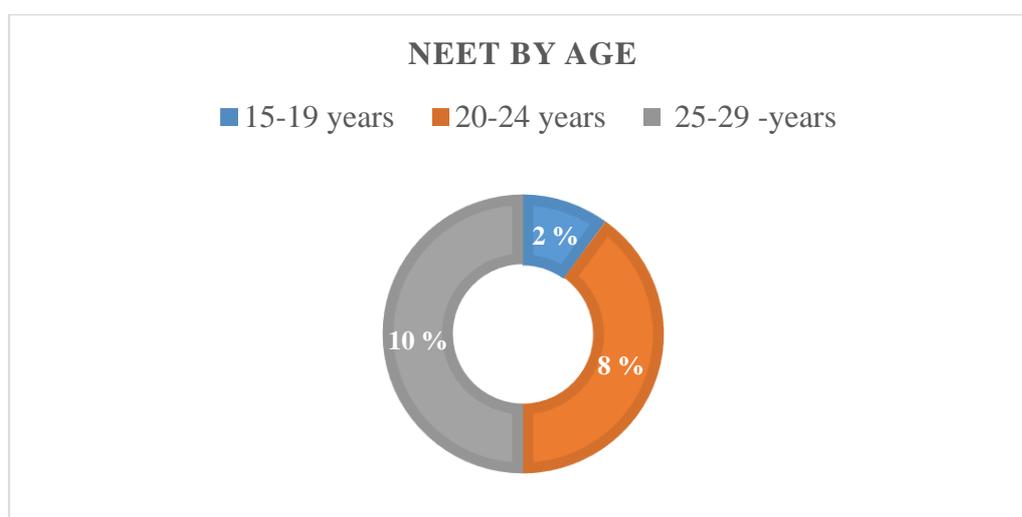
The quantitative data analysis is based on statistics provided by Statistics Norway (ssb.no), which has the overall responsibility for official statistics in Norway. The quantitative data concerns NEETs in general, not specifically NEETs with higher education.

There were 139 000 unemployed persons in June 2016, adjusted for seasonal variations. This corresponded to 5 per cent of the labour force (people who are able and willing to work). The biggest increase in the unemployment rate has been in the oil-related industries (Statistics Norway, 2016a).

#### 4.4.1. Age

The national statistics agency in Norway (ssb.no) categorize NEETs as young people aged from 15-29. Seven per cent of the total population aged 15-29 belong to the NEET group in 2013. Among people aged 15-19 only 2 per cent were NEETs, compared with 8 per cent in the group aged 20-24 and 10 per cent in the group aged 25-29. Accordingly, one tenth of the age group 25-29 are not working or attending any training or education (Statistics Norway, 2016b).

Figure 1: NEETs in Norway 2013 aged 15-29 in percent of the total population.



Source: Statistics Norway: <https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/artikler-og-publikasjoner/young-people-who-are-not-in-employment-or-education>.

#### 4.4.2. Gender

Statistically, there is no significant difference between men and women except for those in the age group 25-29, where there are more women. In this NEET group, 12 per cent are women and 8 per cent are men. This is probably connected to childbirth and childcare. However, the unemployment rate is higher among women also controlled for the childbirth and childcare variable (Statistics Norway, 2016b).

#### 4.4.3. Health

Among NEET who have been categorised as a NEET for five consecutive years, 51 per cent are receiving health-related benefits from the state. Ninety-four per cent of this group were still receiving

such benefits five years later. This leads us to conclude that impaired health is one factor for young people being NEETs (Statistics Norway, 2016b).

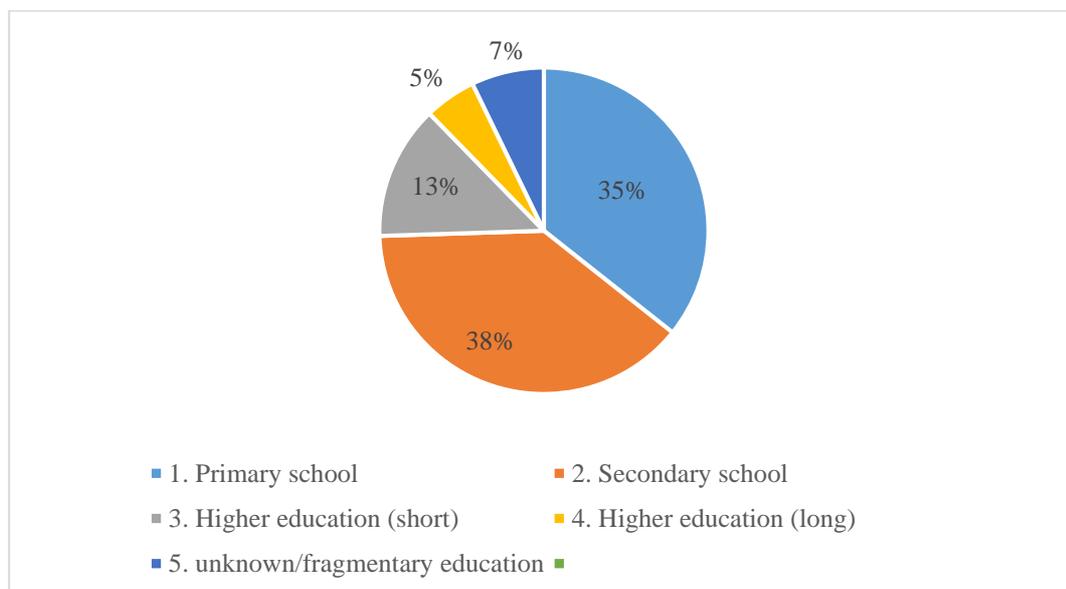
#### 4.4.4. Ethnicity

Among immigrants that are not born in Norway: 25 per cent were NEETs in 2012. Twelve per cent of immigrants born in Norway by immigrant parents were NEETs, in contrast to nearly 8 per cent among the rest of the population (Statistics Norway, 2016b).

#### 4.4.5. Education

In general, unemployed people have less education than equivalent groups (Statistics Norway, 2016c). There were 79 158 people aged 15-74 registered as unemployed in Norway in November 2015. The following figure shows the highest acquired education levels for people who were unemployed in November 2015.

Figure 2: Unemployed in Norway and their educational background (in percent).



Source: Statistics Norway: <https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/regledig/aar/2016-01-19>.

As the chart shows, the major issue concerns NEETs with a low level of acquired education. However, the number of persons with a higher education registered as unemployed increased by 13 per cent from November 2014 to November 2015. This increase was mainly in Southern and Western Norway, due to the decline in oil-related industries (Statistics Norway, 2016c).

## 5. Sweden

### 5.1. The Qualitative Data

The qualitative data collection in Sweden has followed the methodological frame set for the HETYA project. The data was collected through interviews.

### 5.2. The Swedish Sample

The Swedish sample consists of five people, two men and three women, aged 21 to 26. The participants from Sweden differ from the other countries' participants in two aspects. Firstly, they are lower educated. Four of them have finished upper secondary school, while one has only finished primary school. Secondly, they also differ in that four of the participants are on sick leave. This makes the Swedish sample represent another type of NEETs than the participants from the other countries.

### 5.3. Main Findings from the Qualitative Study

3

#### 4 5.3.1 Work experience

The work experience among the Swedish participants are mostly characterized by being temporary and short-termed. One of them have worked in a shop for two years, but this is the exception when it comes to continuity. The other work experiences mostly consist of seasonal jobs, practices, participation in youth projects and similar. It does not seem to have resulted in anything durable or to have given any chance to develop any specific career opportunity, and some of it appears as quite random. One exception from this is that of the participants have studied the Arts program at secondary school, focusing on music. He has then been a part of a musical team as a summer job. In other words, this participant has work experience from something that actually is relevant for his education.

Since a majority of the sample are on sick leave, this has also been the reason for some of them for leaving their job position, and not applied for a new one.

*I had a temporary job as a kitchen worker for one month, and thereafter sporadically. I have also been in the summer fiddler team for four summers. (Participant 1)*

*I have been working as a cleaner at a cinema for one and a half year. I quit because of sick leave. (Participant 2)*

Box 31.

## 5 5.3.2 Soft Skills

The participants' work experiences may be quite diverse and irregular, but have of course also been a chance for them to develop different soft skills and given them some insight in which of these they need to improve. When talking about their strengths, it seems like the participants have developed some of the skills categorized as individual skills such as stress management, individual autonomy and emotional intelligence.

*I can take responsibility, work during pressure and I have a pleasant approach. (Participant 1)*

*I am adaptable, focused, loyal and organized. That I had to be in my former workplace. I was responsible for the web page, purchasing and delivery, and I had to be thorough. (Participant 3)*

*I can handle stress and I am eager to learn. (Participant 5)*

Box 32.

However, they also seem to experience some difficulties related to individual skills. Weaknesses mentioned among a majority of the sample are told to be insecurity, that they are shy, they do not take initiatives and a lack of enthusiasm. This could be connected to individual soft skills such as motivational and failure management, individual autonomy, decision-making and emotional intelligence. Some also seem to lack soft skills related to the team dimension, such as people management and communication, in that they state being shy and not socially competent. Since few of them have any longer work experience, they have not yet had the chance to develop soft skills related to business and organization, such as learning about organizational culture and values, leadership skills, etc.

Furthermore, the participants have not fully developed the soft skills concerning personal or professional life planning. All of them state that want to study, and they want to work, but most have not yet figured out what this would mean to them in a more precise way. Those who mention more specifically what they want to do, have not taken any measures to make it a reality yet, such as actually applying for an education. However, a majority of the participants had been in contact with or were in contact with job coaches, which could be helpful to their personal and professional life planning.

*I would like to work as a music teacher and try to live as a touring musician. I could imagine to study to become a music teacher eventually. (Participant 1)*

*I plan to get an education. (Participant 3)*

*I want to study. Either law, or to become a pharmacist or a teacher. (Participant 5)*

*Box 33.*

### 5.3.3 Tools and services

Using different tools and services in their look for job or education do not appear as a problem area for the Swedish participants. They have knowledge of the most common web pages and databases, and state that they do not find them difficult to use. What they instead consider hard is to meet the demands of the employers, and to get an interview.

*Most jobs require years of experience /.../ The employers have high demands, it is hard to get in without any experience, so the tool is not that useful then. (Participant 1)*

*Not all jobs are announced there, and it is not easy to get an interview. (Participant 2)*

*Box 34.*

The tools and services mentioned in the interviews are mainly the employment office webpage and a few other web pages for job search. Two of the participants also mention having a coach assisting them in finding activities such as training or practice, as well as trying to guide them in what to do in the future.

Since a majority of the participants were on sick leave at the time of the interviews, most declared that they were not using any specific tools or services at the moment, especially not when it came to jobs because they were not really looking for work due to their condition at the time.

### 5.3.4 Social networks

All of the participants in the Swedish sample agree that social networks are or could be useful to them in some way. A majority mentions family and relatives who try to help them with finding jobs or activities.

*My grandmother told me about the coaching centre. (Participant 1)*

*The few contacts I have are quite motivated. My dad is constantly looking for job opportunities among acquaintances. (Participant 3)*

*I have been working for my parents. (Participant 4)*

*I would like to do some practice. Dad usually helps me. (Participant 5)*

Box 35.

### 5.3.5 Expectations

The participants were asked about possible work, training and/or studies during the coming three and six months. For those being on sick leave, expectations were quite uncertain, which is understandable due to their health conditions. As stated above, all of the participants said that they wanted to work or study, but they do not seem to think that this will happen in the next three or six months.

Box 36.

*I expect to have a better view on jobs and what road I should take. (Participant 1)*

*I don't know. Could be something, maybe not. (Participant 4)*

*I will keep going as usual and hopefully I have started studying. In a year, I do not want to be on sick leave anymore. (Participant 5)*

## 5.4. The Quantitative Data Analysis for Sweden

The quantitative data for Sweden have been retrieved from *Statistiska Centralbyrån* - The

Central Bureau of Statistics, which is a Swedish national administration. Useful information was also found in one of the governments' official investigations, about Swedish youth who do not work or study (Statens offentliga utredningar 2013).

#### 5.4.1. Unemployment in Sweden

The total unemployment rate for Sweden in 2015 was 7.4 percent, adjusted for seasonal variations (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2016).

#### 5.4.2. NEETs

Sweden has a low share of NEETs compared to other member states. In 2012, 7.8 percent people under the age of 30 were not in employment, education or training in Sweden (Eurofound 2015).

#### 5.4.3. Education

Swedish NEETs often have a low level of education, such as upper secondary school or lower. In 2012, only 38 percent of the NEETs aged 20 to 24 years had gone through upper secondary education. 30 percent had only achieved primary education (Statistiska Centralbyrån (2015). In Sweden as in elsewhere in Europe, requirements for education has increased and those who drop out from or never proceed to upper secondary education often face difficulties (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2013:13).

#### 5.4.4. Gender

There are as many women as men among the Swedish NEETs, but the share of women increases from the age of 22. According to SCB, this is probably due to the fact that more women than men are on parental leave (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2013:108). SCB also points out how having children at young age will increase the risk of joining the NEET group, since parenting could affect schooling in a negative way. This in turn might make it less likely to engage in higher education or get into the labour market in the future (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2013:74).

#### 5.4.5. Location

The share of NEETs varies between the Swedish counties and municipalities, as well as within them, making it a bit difficult to point out where one can find the highest and lowest rates. It seems clear,

however, that the risk of joining the NEET group are higher for those who live in deprived areas with less resources compared to those living in more resourceful areas (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2013:112).

#### 5.4.6. Ethnicity

In 2012, 27 percent of the NEET group aged 20 to 24 years were foreign born. 7% were born in Sweden, but had parents who were foreign born, and 10 percent had one parent who were foreign born and one parent who were born in Sweden. Compared to the rest of the population, foreign born were overrepresented in this group (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2015).

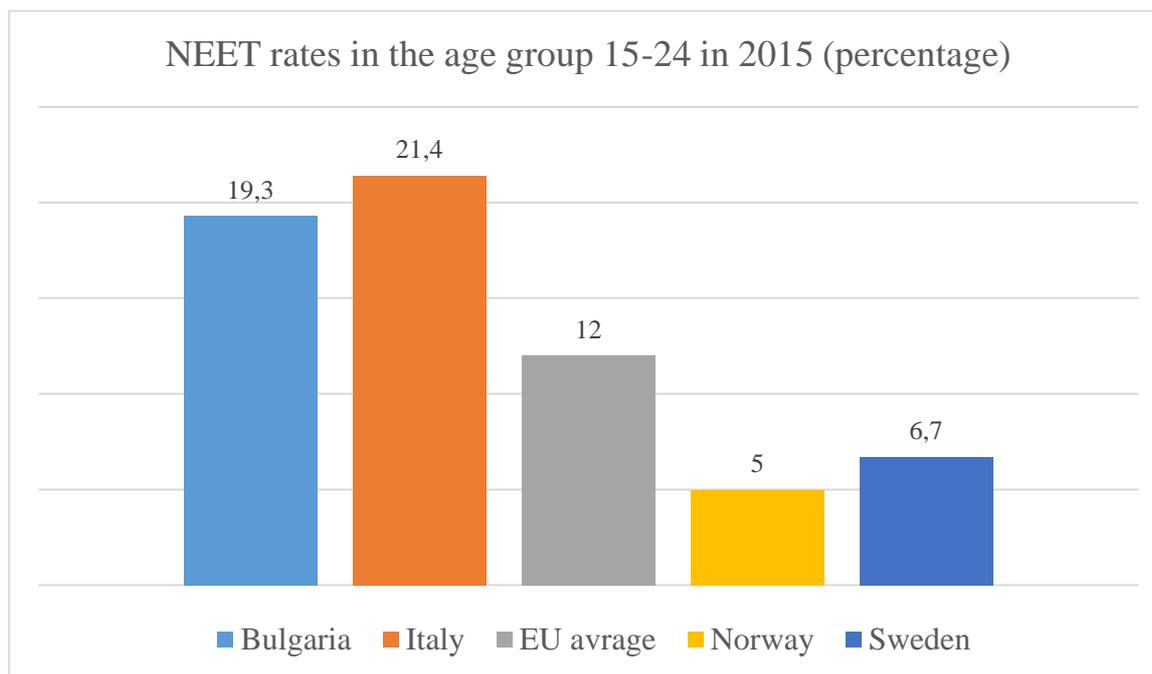
## 6. Comparative Quantitative Analysis

This section examines patterns of similarities and differences across the quantitative data on NEETs in Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden. This comparative quantitative analysis will not consider only NEETs with higher education: it will include all NEETs. NEET rates in the participatory countries in the HETYA project

### 6.1. NEET Rates in the Participating Countries in the HETYA Project

The size of the NEET population differs significantly between Norway and Sweden on one hand and Bulgaria and Italy on the other hand. In the age group of 15-24 there were 19.3 percent NEETs in Bulgaria in 2015, in Italy there were 21.4 percent. However, there were 5 percent NEETs in this age group in Norway. In Sweden, the number of NEETs were 6,7 percent. The EU average was 12 percent in 2015 (Eurostat).

Figure 3: NEET rates in the age group 15-24 in 2015.



Source: Eurostat: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.

### 6.2. Differences among the Participating Countries

The size and the features of the NEET population vary significantly in Europe, also in the participating countries in this project. The Nordic countries are characterised by a low NEET rate compared to the EU average. Further, most NEETs in the Nordic countries have previous work experience. In addition, the share of NEETs with a lower educational level is higher than the EU average and the share of those with a tertiary education is well below the EU average. Furthermore NEETs in the Nordic countries are not discouraged (below the EU average), this could indicate that in many cases being a NEET is a choice, and not a sign of structural barriers for young people in accessing the labour market (Eurofound, 2012).

According to the Eurofound report (2012), Bulgaria and Italy share some common features as well. In these countries, the majority of NEETs have no work experience or they have less work experience than the EU average. Further, a large percentage of the NEETs have a lower education level, in addition the share of those with a tertiary education who are NEETs is well above the EU average. Moreover, the share of discouraged workers are higher than the EU average. This seems to indicate structural problems in the transition from education to the labour market. In Bulgaria and Italy, ending up

as NEETs seems involuntary and it is more likely a result of numerous barriers that hinder a successful transition to the labour market (Eurofound, 2012).

Figure 4: Statistical differences among the Nordic countries and Bulgaria and Italy.

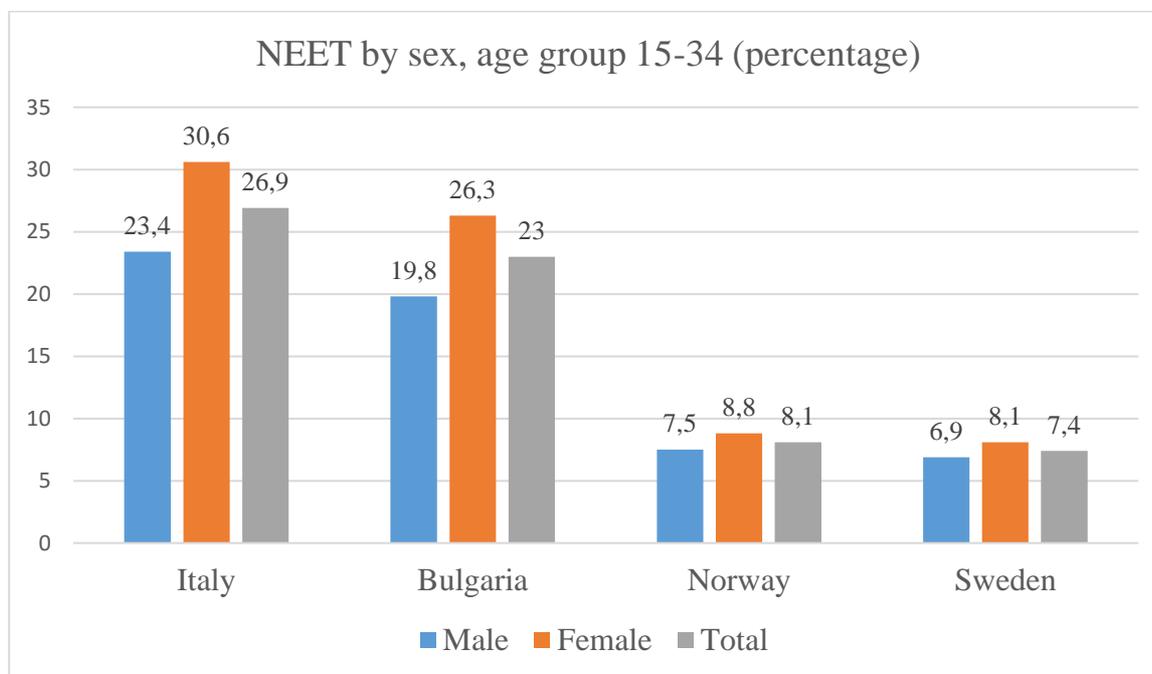


Source: Eurofound (2012). NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

### 6.3. Similarities among the Participating Countries

Youth unemployment ratio by sex from Eurostat shows that there are more female NEETs than male NEETs in all four countries.

Figure 5: Sex ratio among NEETs.



Source: Eurostat: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.

### 6.4. Risk Factors

Eurofound (2012) analysed the characteristics of NEETs aged 15-29 in Europe. Eurofound concluded with these individual risk factors:

- Education: Young people with a low level of education are three times more likely to be a NEET than those with tertiary education, and two times more likely to be a NEET than those with a secondary education.
- Immigration background: Young immigrants are 70 per cent more likely to become a NEET compared to nationals.
- Health: Young people with some kind of disability are 40 per cent more likely to become a NEET compared to others.
- Location: Living in remote areas increases the likelihood of becoming a NEET up to 1, 5 times.

Beside these individual characteristics, Eurofound (2012) underline that family background have significant impact on the probability of being a NEET:

- Divorced parents: Having parents who are divorced makes it 30 per cent more likely to become a NEET.
- Unemployed parents: Young people who have parents who experienced unemployment increases the likelihood of being a NEET by 17 per cent.
- Household income: Coming from a household with a low income makes it more likely to become a NEET.

### 6.5. NEET Subgroups

NEET is referring to a very heterogeneous population, with a range of subgroups. Eurofound (2012) have identified five subgroups within the NEET population:

- The conventionally unemployed, the largest subgroup, which can be further subdivided into long-term and short-term unemployed.
- The unavailable, which includes young carers, young people with family responsibilities and young people who are sick or disabled.
- The disengaged include young people who are not seeking jobs or education and they are not constrained from doing so by other obligations or incapacities. This subgroup also includes discouraged workers as well as other young people who are pursuing dangerous and asocial lifestyles.
- The opportunity-seekers: young people who are actively seeking work or training, but are holding out for opportunities that they see as befitting their skills and desired status.
- The voluntary NEETs: those young people who are travelling and those constructively engaged in other activities such as art, music and self-directed learning.

## 7. Comparative Qualitative Analysis

This section summarizes the main findings from the data collected in Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden relative to the HETYA-project.

## 7.1. Work Experience

The qualitative data collection indicates that lack of work experience is a barrier for NEETs to enter or re-enter the labour market. The statistics presented in the section “Comparative Quantitative Analysis” shows that the situation is not the same in Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden. In Italy and Bulgaria, there is a statistical probability that NEETs do not have work experience. In the Nordic countries, NEETs often have work experience. These statistics do not specify that this concern NEETs with higher education, it concerns NEETs in general. The qualitative data collected by partners in the HETYA project support the statistics, with the exception of Bulgaria where 17 out of 20 respondents have previous work experience. A closer look at the qualitative data shows that there are different problems concerning work experience in the four countries.

### 7.1.1. Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, most of the respondent's state that they have work experience (17 out of 20). Many of them also have work experience relevant to their education. The Bulgarian sample seems to be a resourceful group; many of the respondents have experience in project work, administrative work and experience with management and leadership. Nevertheless, many of them state that they are now unemployed and looking for job opportunities. It seems like they are mainly interested in work or learning opportunities relevant according to their education. The situation outlined by the Bulgarian participants indicates that this group of highly educated NEETs do have previous work experience, none of them specifically point out any need for more work experience. The Bulgarian sample also fit the category opportunity-seekers; young people who are actively seeking work or training, but are holding out for opportunities that they see as befitting their skills and desired status.

### 7.1.2. Italy

In Italy, it seems like the problem is a lack of initial work experience. Many of the participants in the Italian sample have trouble finding any kind of job. They fit with the description conventionally unemployed. Hence, ending up as a NEET is involuntary, and is the result of various barriers (for example the crisis on the job market) that obstruct a successful transition from being a student to finding a job.

### 7.1.3. Norway

The Norwegian participants specify that they lack field specific work experience after they have completed their university education. They have work experience in general, but not sufficient experience

from the parts of the labour market they are now trying to enter after completing their college degree. Many of the participants state that they cannot compete in the labour market due to a lack of field specific work experience. The Norwegian participants are opportunity-seekers; young people who are actively seeking work or training, but are holding out for opportunities that they see as befitting their skills and desired status.

#### 7.1.4. Sweden

The Swedish participants have some work experience, but lack continuity and stability. Most of their work experience consists of seasonal jobs, short-term practices and participation in different activity projects. The participants mention that it is hard to get a job interview without experience, since the employers often want someone who already has the knowledge and skills necessary. Another obstacle is of course their health condition, which slows their progress both when it comes to work and education opportunities.

#### 6 7.1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the situation is not the same in the four countries. In Italy, the participants need work experience in general. The Swedish participants also seem to lack work experience in general, since their experience is limited. In Norway, the participants have been active in the labour market since they were 16-year-olds. They still find that they do not fulfil the demands for work experience after they have completed their university degree. The Norwegian participants need more field specific work experience. Whereas the Bulgarian participants in general have the most relevant work experience, many of them have had jobs relevant to their education, but still, they are now unemployed.

#### 7.2. Tools and Services

The participants were asked about what kinds of tools or services they used when searching for jobs or other educational or training activities. On this question, several different kinds of sources were stated. The use of web sources is the most widespread among all the participants, which should be expected since the sample consists of young people, probably comfortable with using computers, searching the web, etc. Most of the participants mention national databases as a common tool for job searching.

Almost none of the participants in any of the involved countries express any difficulties with using the different tools and services. They are familiar with the procedure of searching for jobs on the internet, in different databases for example, and how to apply for jobs online. This is not a problem for these young people. However, some of the Italian and the Bulgarian participants point out that while they don't have any trouble using these tools and services, it doesn't come with results. Some of the Bulgarian participants, for instance, mean that this kind of job searching tools are not useful when looking for jobs that are actually relevant to the type of education he or she has.

The participants from Norway express other problems surrounding the process of applying for jobs online. There are simply so many applicants for the jobs they are looking for, that they "disappear" among all these. They find that it is hard to stand out in an online job application when they are competing with hundreds of other applicants. Some of them also lack a bit of motivation, saying that finding the jobs is quite easy but the process in applying for the job demands a lot of time. They express a will to write a good application letter for a desirable job, but also recognizes that this is a time consuming process.

The Swedish participants agree in that the different tools and services are easy to use, and that the problem rather is to actually be called to an interview. They suggest that the employers have high demands. For those being on sick leave, they do not really use the different tools and services at the time of the interviews, since they were not ready for work at the moment. Besides this, it should also be mentioned that the Swedish participants are the only ones who use job and/or motivational coaches. This could indicate that this group feel like they need extra support when it comes to planning their future, or in finding education or work. The participants from the other countries are probably more outgoing in general, since they already have an education, thus have a goal that is somewhat more clear. The Swedish participants may need more guidance.

There are other kinds of tools and services mentioned in addition to the traditional online search engines. Social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn do not seem to be widely used, but are mentioned by some participants from all the countries involved. Job fairs and networking events are also suggested, foremost from the participants in Italy and Bulgaria.

### 7.2.1. Conclusion

In summary, it seems like the participants do not have any problems with using the most common tools and services for job searching. They are familiar with using computers and filling out online

applications, meaning this is not a big problem area. The difficulties regarding this traditional form of job searching seem to appear partly because the jobs relevant for some of the educations in question do not appear in this channel, partly because it is hard to compete when hundreds of other people apply for the same job.

This suggests that the participants should consider other methods when looking for jobs, besides the traditional way with applying for those jobs that become publically announced. The mentioned job fairs and networking events are a good example here. Social networks should not be excluded either; opportunities can show up when joining sites such as LinkedIn or different Facebook groups. When searching for a job, one could also consider to seek an employer directly, to show interest and leave an open application. It is of course not granted that these suggested methods will work for everyone at any time, but the point is that when managing the part of the job searching process regarding different tools and services, many of the participants could gain from broadening their mind and try out new ways.

The participants were also asked about the importance of social networks in their job search, which will be discussed in the next section.

### 7.3. Social Networks

Social networks (family, friends, relatives, acquaintances etc.) have value because they allow access to resources and valued social attributes such as trust, reciprocity, and community values. One important aspect is social support, which can be essential in the stressful situation unemployment can be. Another important aspect while seeking jobs is the information that flows through your social networks. Information that comes from your social network is timely and trustworthy, and can give you a competitive advantage (Kadushin, 2012). However, the information you receive through your social network depends on who you know and the resources of your contacts. So, to what extent do the participants from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden find social networks useful when seeking jobs?

Participants from all four countries state that they find social networks important and useful. The participants underline the importance of getting information through personal networks because they can acquire information they otherwise may not obtain. Participants from all countries mention that they receive information about job openings through their social networks, and some point out that it

is valuable if someone at a company knows you when you are applying for a job there, otherwise it may be hard to stand out of the crowd.

In Norway, many participants state that they have found a job through their personal network on multiple occasions. However, after completing their university education, they report a lack of personal contacts that can help with information about good jobs, or recommendations in the sector of the labour market they are trying to enter now (relevant to their education).

#### 7.3.1. Conclusion

To conclude, many of the participants from all four countries perceive social networks as useful. The social networks are useful for both social support and for receiving information. Nevertheless, in order to receive useful information, you must know someone with valuable information. In the context of seeking jobs, the most valuable information concerns job opportunities; consequently, you will get the most useful information from someone connected to the same sector of the labour market as you are interested in. As stated before, some participants lack work experience (in one or another form), this may be a reason for the lack of contacts in the sector relevant to their education, as the Norwegian sample states.

#### 7.4. Soft Skills

The expression “soft skills” refer to character traits and interpersonal skills that describe a person`s relationships with others. These skills are often perceived as desirable qualities by employers and are an important asset to hard skills (formal skills). When applying for a job, your hard skills may get you an interview for the position, but you need soft skills in order to get the job, and keeping it. In the HETYA project, the soft skills have been divided into three categories:

Figure 6: Categorization of soft skills.

Individual soft skills	Soft skills related to the team dimension	Soft skills related to business/organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual autonomy, optimism</li> <li>• Stress management</li> <li>• Motivational management</li> <li>• Emotional intelligence (recognise, analyse, manage, develop emotions)</li> <li>• Personal and professional life planning</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Problem-solving</li> <li>• Failure management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual in relation to others (peers, superiors, etc.)</li> <li>• Negotiation</li> <li>• People management</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Assertiveness</li> <li>• Listening capacity</li> <li>• Conflict management/prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational culture and values</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Performance management and evaluation</li> <li>• Economics, budgeting</li> <li>• Marketing (in relation to oneself, to the service/product)</li> <li>• Result-oriented attitude</li> <li>• Public speaking</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Change management</li> <li>• Diversity management</li> </ul>

Source: Methodological frame for Intellectual Outputs A.2 developed by the University of Florence, 2016.

In order to shed light on the participants understanding of, and study their acquired soft skills, the participants were asked questions about their skills and competences. Which are their strong areas? In addition, which are their weak areas?

The acquired soft skills and the understanding of the required soft skills in the labour market by the participants seems to be associated with the level of, and type of work experience the participants have. As explained in the section “Barriers to enter or re-enter the labour market” the type of, and the degree of work experience vary in the four samples in this project.

#### 7.4.1. Italy

In the Italian report, we can see that due to the lack of work experience it seems like many participants in the Italian sample do not know the type of skills required by the labour market. We can therefore assume that many of the soft skills are insufficient in the Italian sample.

#### 7.4.2. Norway

In the Norwegian sample the participants have work experience. Therefore, they seem to have a good understanding of certain skills and competences that are required to enter the job market and find job

security. In particular, soft skills related to the team dimension seem well- developed in the Norwegian sample. The weak areas pointed out by the Norwegian respondents comprise of several individual soft skills and a couple of soft skills related to business/organisation:

- Motivational management
- Personal and professional life planning
- Decision-making
- Failure management
- Stress management
- Public speaking
- Planning

As described in the section for the Norwegian qualitative analysis: in the Norwegian sample, we can see a lack of professional life planning. Many participants have not thought about what comes after school. What type of work they want to do or can do with their degree. They have not been proactive during their education when considering how to get a good job after their graduation.

We can also see a decrease in motivation the longer the Norwegian participants have been searching for a job relevant to their education. The Norwegian participants who have been searching for a job for about a year are rather negative about their job prospects. They do not think it is possible to get a good job with their education. This can be linked to the soft skill of motivation management.

Issues with decision-making, failure management, public speaking, planning, and stress management could be attributed to self-confidence issues. This manifests itself in various ways. Some are afraid of rejection and do not dare to apply for their dream job although they are qualified. Many mention that they are scared of making mistakes; therefore, they are performing their tasks rather slowly, or paying too much attention to details. Others report that they find it quite uncomfortable talking to people they do not know; hence they try to avoid them. The following examples are suggestive:

*One of my bad qualities is that I am not that social. I prefer to stay at home. This is something I feel I need to work on. (Participant 2)*

*It is about my confidence; I feel that others can do things better. I am scared of asking questions, because then they will know that I do not know how to do something. I have tried to work on this, but I am still scared to admit that I do not know how to do some tasks in a work situation. (Participant 3)*

*I am very interested in a company. I have not applied for a job there yet, although I am qualified, because I do not think I have any chance of getting a job there. I guess it is easier not applying than risking the rejection. (Participant 5)*

*I am a cautious person. I just will not contact people I do not know, I just won't do that. (Participant 8)*

*I want to start with a job I am overqualified for because I need to feel that I can manage the tasks... I am afraid of doing anything wrong. I am afraid of not being good enough. This is something that holds me back, and this is the reason why I want a job I am overqualified for... This is about my own insecurity. (Participant 13)*

*Box 37*

Skills related to business/organisation is hardly mentioned by the Norwegian participants, this could be explained by the minimal work experience that require soft skills in business and organisation in the Norwegian sample. The participants do not seem to be aware of the value of these skills, and probably have insufficient skills connected to business/organisation as well. It seems like the Norwegian sample can benefit from an increase in motivation and self-confidence, in addition to an improvement in soft skills related to business/organisation.

#### 7.4.3. Bulgaria

The Bulgarian sample appears to be the most experienced group in the labour market out of the four countries in the project. Many of them have experience with teamwork, projects and with leadership and management, which also reflects in their statements about their skills and competences.

In the Bulgarian sample we can see an increasing understanding of relevant skills and competences the more experienced the respondent is in the labour market. The respondents with no or very little work experience has hardly answered the questions about skills and competences. However, the participants with quite a lot of work experience seems reflected in their answer; they mention several acquired skills, and also seems more aware of the areas they ought to work on in order to be a more attractive employee.

Similar to the Norwegian sample, we find in the Bulgarian sample that the participants seem to have well-developed skills related to the team dimension. Due to experience in projects, leadership and management, we find that the Bulgarian participants also have a higher degree of skills concerning business/organisation than the Norwegian and Italian sample. However, there seems to be room for improvement in individual soft skills in the Bulgarian sample. The weak areas pointed out by the Bulgarian sample (directly or indirectly) comprise of these individual soft skills:

- Emotional intelligence (recognise, analyse, manage, develop emotions)
- Stress management
- Decision-making
- Planning
- Failure management
- Personal and professional life planning

Several participants mention being too emotional, or being too direct as an area they wish to work on. This could be connected to the soft skill “emotional intelligence” and “stress management”. Similar to the Norwegian sample many participants state that they use too long time on tasks/paying too much attention to details etc. this can be connected to the soft skills “decision-making”, “planning”, and “failure management”, in addition this could be attributed to issues with self-confidence. Most of the respondents in the Bulgarian sample is quite vague when they describe their plans for the coming three and six months, most just state that they will try to find a job, or that they hope to find a job. This could imply a lack of personal and professional life planning. The lack of planning is also manifested in the incapability to answer questions about what areas they need to work on, and how they plan to work on their weaknesses in order to be a more attractive employee.

Overall, the Bulgarian sample have most room for improvement in individual soft skills. Similar to the Norwegian sample, the Bulgarian sample can benefit from an increase in self-confidence. In addition, it seems like the Bulgarian sample also could use some training in the soft skill “emotional intelligence”, especially concerning how to manage your emotions (not being too emotional and not being too direct in the work place), problems with emotional intelligence can also be a symptom of poor stress management a low self-confidence.

#### 7.4.4. Sweden

The Swedish sample have some work experience; however, the work experience is generally limited to short-term work. In addition, most of the participants have health issues that have prevented them from an active work life. A majority of the Swedish participants’ state that they have problems related to relations with other people, like shyness, insecurity and a low self-confidence. It is reasonable to assume that this has a negative effect on many soft skills. The Swedish participants especially need to work on their self-confidence, motivational management and personal and professional life planning skills.

#### 7.4.5. Conclusion

To conclude this section on soft skills we have to point out that the data collected from the four countries display a varying degree of required development in soft skills. Where the Italian and Swedish participants due to a lack of work experience, needs to improve all three categories of soft skills to make their participants more attractive in the labour market. The Norwegian participants needs to improve their individual soft skills. They probably would benefit from motivational training and an increased self-confidence as well. In addition, the Norwegian sample have a narrow understanding of, and do not display skills connected to business/organisation. Due to work experience in projects and with leadership and management in the Bulgarian sample, we find that they could benefit most from development of individual soft skills. To sum up, if participants from all four countries were to follow the same training program, the skills that all participants could benefit from developing is individual soft skills. To be exact, all participant countries seems to benefit from training concerning an increased self-confidence, and these soft skills:

- Decision making
- Failure management
- Stress management
- Planning

- Motivational management
- Personal and professional life planning

## 7.5. Expectations

The samples from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden mostly consists of people with higher education, which suggests that this should be active youth, out searching for jobs, motivated to start working and use the skills that they have earned through education and previous working experience. However, when asked about where the participants saw themselves in three or six months, not everyone were convinced to have a relevant job. While many of them were eager to start working and thought the future looked bright in this aspect, some others were not as motivated. Previous research points out that there is a danger in this: being unemployed for a long time increases the risk to also become excluded from the labour market and from society as well. Young people who end up in this situation are at risk for becoming what is called discouraged; they lose their motivation and the will to search for jobs or other activity, making them not only unemployed but also inactive (Eurofound 2012:9).

Most of the participants from Norway expect to be in a better situation in the coming three to six months. Some are convinced that they will have a job, and if they don't, they have a backup plan such as applying for higher education. The Italian sample expect to get into education, training or voluntary work in the suggested time, but only a few believe that they will find the job that they are looking for. The plan of the others is somewhat unclear; they are not sure what will happen within this future. The same goes for the Bulgarian participants, except what stands out is that many of them mention going for a PhD grade as an alternative. The Swedish participants were not sure about what would happen, which of course mostly explained by their health problems. Their nearest expectations are probably to first get well, it might be hard before that to expect anything job or education related.

Many of the participants from all involved countries have in common that they are quite vague when they talk about the future. Of course they cannot be fortune tellers, but they do not seem to know what their next move will be. Few of them are as clear as the ones that states that they have applied for an internship in China, or that they actually are attending a job interview the very same day that they answered our questions. Most of them only state that they will apply for jobs, that they think that they will have a job soon, that they will look for jobs related to their studies, etc. Since "optimism" is regarded as one of the aforementioned soft skills, the fact that many of the participants are expecting

to find a job or other activity soon suggests that the participants do not risk becoming discouraged just yet; most of them are optimistic about the future. But there may be a difference between expecting something and do or plan to do something concrete to actually make it happen. This could perhaps be related to another soft skill, regarding “personal and professional life planning”.

## 7.6. Other

One of the topics that has been talked about implicitly in some of the interviews is the question of mobility. One of the aims of HETYA is to promote mobility among NEETs, and there is in general a positive attitude toward this in Europe. The free movement of people are one of the European integration’s most well-known features. Despite this, the actual mobility levels in Europe remain relatively low (European Commission 2010:5). Some of the participants in the Norwegian sample express unwillingness to even move outside his or her own municipality or county to look for job, although they recognize that this would probably help them. Some of the participants from Bulgaria, on the other hand, express a desire to go abroad and gain international experience. One of the Italian participants also refers to this, but says that the funds to go through with it are missing.

Regarding the possibility to use the free movement in Europe, it is likely that the knowledge of language is one of the first concerns. A Eurobarometer survey shows that language barriers are one of the main obstacles to cross-border mobility within the EU. It is seen as the biggest practical difficulty that people have encountered or expect to encounter if they should go to work abroad (European Commission 2010:117). Some of the participants from Bulgaria mention a willingness to improve their language skills, which should be to their advantage when searching for jobs and facilitate the possibility of going abroad.

There are obvious obstacles to overcome regarding relocating to another state for work or education, probably due to the mentioned language barriers and also the cultural differences around Europe. This becomes visible also in our samples. Of course it is a lot to ask of a person to leave his or her hometown and/or families and friends for the cause of work, but perhaps there is a way to encourage especially young people who haven’t quite settled down yet to do this, or at least to look further than the city limit.

## 8. Concluding remarks

NEETs in Europe is a diverse group. There are many different reasons for being NEETs. Hence, NEETS in Europe is a group of people facing different challenges in order to leave their status as NEETs. In this report the analyses have focused on young adults having a degree from a higher education institution but not at the moment involved in education, employment or training (or in the Norwegian case in any form of so-called relevant education, employment or training related to their higher education). The countries to be analysed was Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Sweden.

There exist a rather clear pattern of a North-South dimension regarding Bulgaria and Italy on one hand with Norway and Sweden on the other. For example, the NEET group in Bulgaria and Italy is much bigger than the NEET group in Norway and Sweden. While the NEET rates in Bulgaria and Italy is above the EU average, the NEET rate in Norway and Sweden is below the EU average. In Norway, young adults might not have a relevant job in continuation of a high education, but it is rather uncommon to be a NEET. This is not the case in Bulgaria and especially in Italy, where it is rather common to be a NEET even with a high education.

So, what are the most common reasons for being a NEET? What characterises the most common NEET in Europe? The most characteristic NEET across Europe is probably a woman. She is at least 25 years old. She has a bad health, a low or no education and she has an immigrant or minority background. She lives in a deprived area away from an economic centre in her country. In addition, it makes the risk factor even bigger if she has divorced parents, unemployed parents and/or that she comes from a household with a low income. However, being a man facing the same conditions as a woman will also strongly contribute to becoming a NEET.

In this analysis, we have focussed on NEETs having completed a higher education. Therefore, in this case, the lack of competences developed in formal education is not at the core when we locate why NEETs have become NEETs. In addition to the reasons already mentioned that will probably cause challenges and increase the risks to become a NEET, this report also suggests some other important reasons as well for why many NEETs not successfully make the transition into employment after having completed education.

The main challenges do not seem to a question of lack of formal education as such but more a lack of so-called soft or personal skills. First, there is a tendency that NEETs not only lack a professional

network. They also seem to lack the competences to develop a network. They also seem to face other personal challenges in order to get a job/relevant job. There seems to be a lack of motivation and/or self-confidence among many NEETs. Many do not like to talk in public. They have difficulties with planning both their personal and professional lives. They have problems with managing stress and in particular problems with managing failure.

While NEETs with a higher education in general have developed knowledge, understanding and skills during their education, it seems like they still face important challenges when it comes to having a successful work life. These challenges are probably challenges such as attitudes and values in relation to society, work life and one self. It might also be a question of the ability to enjoy life, having the ability to be inspired and develop creativity, and a question of being active, to do something and be progressive – to be able to deal with so-called change management.

Our proposal based on this report in order to use heritage as an arena for developing transversal skills is to, for example, combine entrepreneurship and digital competence development with the development of the soft skills addressed in this report.

## 4. References

Cuervo, H. & Wyn, J. (2011). Rethinking youth transitions in Australia: A historical and multidimensional approach. Research report March 2011. Melbourne: The University of Melbourne.

Eurofound. (2012). NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Eurofound. (2014). Mapping youth transactions in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Eurofound. (2015). Young people and 'NEETs'. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/young-people-and-neets-1> [Accessed 14 September 2016]

European Commission. (2010). Special Eurobarometer 337: Geographical and labour market mobility – Report. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_337\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_337_en.pdf) [Accessed 14 September 2016]

European Commission. (2016, 07.12.). Inclusive growth – a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion. Hentet fra [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/priorities/inclusive-growth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/priorities/inclusive-growth/index_en.htm)

Eurostat. (2015). Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and labour status (NEET rates). Hentet fra [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat\\_ifse\\_20&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_ifse_20&lang=en)

Kadushin, C. (2012). Understanding social networks: Theories, concepts, and findings. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Methodological frame for Intellectual Outputs A.2 developed by the University of Florence (2016).

National Statistical Institute. (2016a). NSI in brief. <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/78/basic-page/nsi-brief> [Accessed 3 October 2016]

National Statistical Institute. (2016b). Unemployed and unemployment rates – national level; statistical regions; districts. <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/6503/unemployed-and-unemployment-rates-national-level-statistical-regions-districts> [Accessed 3 October 2016]

Sisson, P., & Jones, K. (2012). Lost in transition? The changing labour market and young people not in employment, education or training. London: The Work Foundation.

Statens Offentliga utredningar (2013) Unga som varken arbetar eller studerar – statistik, stöd och samverkan. Stockholm: Elanders Sverige AB

Statistics Norway. (2016a). Labour force survey, seasonally-adjusted figures, July 2016. <http://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/akumnd> [Accessed 3 October 2016]

Statistics Norway. (2016b). Not in employment or education – ages 15-29 in Norway and Europe – Young people who are not in employment or education. <https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/artikler-og-publikasjoner/young-people-who-are-not-in-employment-or-education> [Accessed 3 October 2016]

Statistics Norway. (2016c). Registered unemployed, 2015. <https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/regledig/aar/2016-01-19> [Accessed 3 October 2016]

Statistiska Centralbyrån. (2015). 100 000 unga varken arbetar eller studerar. [http://www.scb.se/sv/\\_/Hitta-statistik/Artiklar/100-000-unga-varken-arbetar-eller-studerar/](http://www.scb.se/sv/_/Hitta-statistik/Artiklar/100-000-unga-varken-arbetar-eller-studerar/) [Accessed 14 September 2016]

Statistiska Centralbyrån. (2016). Arbetslösheten tog fart under finanskrisen. <http://www.sverigeisiffror.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/samhallets-ekonomi/arbetslosheten/> [Accessed 4 October 2016]

Torlone, Francesca. (2016). HETYA Project Heritage Training for Young Adults, Qualitative Report – Italy, University of Florence and Province of Livorno, IO A1 – Comparative Analysis on UE NEET, August 2016.