



Youth in education, youth in employment: boosting European policies for social inclusion

18th Cedefop Brussels seminar
Thursday 23 June 2025, 10.00-13.30 (CET)
Physical event

Concept note

General information

Organiser	Cedefop
In cooperation with	The Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU
Format	Physical
Participant profile	Stakeholders from the Permanent Representations of Member States to the EU, representatives from the European Commission and the European Parliament, European Social partners for education, Brussels-based stakeholders working on social inclusion and NEETs
Working language	English

Event aim

Cedefop, in collaboration with the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU, is organising the 18th Cedefop Brussels seminar. These research-driven seminars, held in cooperation with the rotating EU Council Presidencies, draw on Cedefop's research to address issues relevant to European debates on education, training, and employment.

This seminar will focus on inclusion of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) in today's labour market, and the role vocational education and training (VET) can play in this.

The seminar will address four key questions:

- What are the main barriers preventing NEETs from (re)entering the labour market, and how can these be mitigated?
- How can VET and holistic targeted policies support specific groups of NEETs, such as female and remote NEETs?
- What are the profiles and qualifications of teachers supporting NEETs and how can they be further empowered?
- How can microcredentials support the inclusion of NEETs into the workforce?

The seminar aims to inform Brussels-based stakeholders about Cedefop's latest research findings, knowledge hub, and interactive toolkits on inclusion. It also provides a platform to showcase successful intervention approaches for empowering NEETs, foster policy debate, and facilitate networking.



Research and policy context

NEETs are absent from both the labour market and the education sector, placing them at a high risk of professional, digital and social exclusion. In line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and EU strategic goals, VET provides young people with practical opportunities to develop skills and acquire qualifications, serving as [a powerful safeguard against marginalisation](#). The contemporary debate on youth unemployment and social inclusion increasingly emphasises understanding the factors contributing to exclusion, the risk of becoming NEET, and the role of VET in mitigating these challenges. Recent statistics indicate that a significant portion of young Europeans face employment barriers, often due to a lack of relevant skills or experience.

The role of VET in overcoming these barriers is pivotal. Effective VET programmes can equip NEETs with the skills needed for emerging occupations, thereby improving their employability. Evidence from Cedefop's research – available in its online knowledge hub – the [VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#) – demonstrates that targeted VET initiatives can significantly reduce the NEET rate by providing practical, labour-market-aligned skills. The rising emphasis on skills development is no coincidence; recent labour market trends reveal a growing demand for skilled workers across various sectors, including technology, healthcare, and green industries. By aligning VET programmes with these demands, European countries can ease NEETs' transition into productive employment. Beyond the fundamental role of VET, integrating microcredentials and holistic policies tailored to specific needs of NEETs has emerged as a promising approach to support their inclusion further.

Targeted initiatives and specialised support

Targeted initiatives to address the unique challenges faced by specific sub-groups of NEETs – who represent a heterogeneous demographic – are essential. Special attention must be given to [female NEETs](#) and those residing in remote areas, as they frequently encounter additional employment and education barriers. By designing initiatives that reflect their unique circumstances and needs, stakeholders can more effectively support their entry into the workforce.

Educators play a critical role in helping NEETs (re)integrate into employment or education. [Cedefop's recent study on the profile of NEETs teachers in Greece](#) represents a groundbreaking effort to explore the intersection between vocational education and the challenges faced by NEETs. This research explores how educators – specifically VET teachers – can address barriers preventing NEETs from successfully entering the workforce. By analysing European policies, inspiring practices, and empirical findings, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the competences and approaches educators need to engage and support NEETs effectively. The insights gained from this study are essential for upscaling similar research in other European countries and developing targeted strategies that enhance the impact of VET programmes in Europe.

Microcredentials: a flexible pathway to inclusion

One of the most promising aspects of microcredentials is their potential to support social inclusion and expand participation in lifelong learning (Cedefop, [2024](#)). They offer alternative education pathways for individuals who have not completed formal education or who face



structural barriers to traditional learning opportunities. Microcredentials can serve as second-chance credentials, [validating skills](#) acquired through work, volunteering, or informal learning.

In essence, microcredentials provide a flexible and accessible means for young people to gain specific competences, directly relevant to current job market demands. These smaller, stackable qualifications are particularly advantageous for NEETs, as they allow incremental learning and offer tangible proof of skills to prospective employers. Nonetheless, several challenges remain. In addition to financial constraints, time limitations, and restricted access to learning infrastructure, the most crucial barrier preventing NEETs from participating in training is their lack of perceived need for it. To address this issue, individuals must be made aware of their entitlement to up- and reskilling opportunities and receive continuous [guidance](#) and [mentoring](#) before, during, and after training – ideally until they secure employment. Such comprehensive support mechanisms can keep them engaged, and ensure NEETs fully utilise and benefit from the skills acquired.

The seminar

The seminar will bring together key European stakeholders to discuss effective policies and practices for addressing [early leaving from education and training](#) and for activating young people classified as NEETs. By placing vocational education and training at the centre of the discussion, participants will have an opportunity to learn about latest Cedefop findings, explore and debate inspiring good practices and key intervention approaches presented by Cedefop experts. These resources are available through Cedefop's dedicated knowledge hub, including the [VET toolkits for tackling early leaving](#) and [empowering NEETs](#), designed to support policymakers, practitioners and learning providers in addressing the specific needs of groups at risk.

The seminar will also feature a panel discussion with representatives from EU-level stakeholders from the employment and VET sphere. The panel will highlight their critical role in achieving successful labour market inclusion for NEETs, and will address how VET systems can be leveraged to ensure NEETs acquire the skills needed for a dynamic and inclusive European labour market.