

**YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS SUCCEED**

# D1 Country Reports

## D1.4 Country Report: Spain

WP Leader: AUA

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# Country report: **Spain**



## #YoungEntrepreneursSucceed

Implemented by:



ΓΕΩΠΟΝΙΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ  
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The Scaling trust-based partnership models to recharge youth entrepreneurship: Supporting underserved communities with innovative entrepreneurship support instruments (TPM-RYE) project, benefits from €2,3M grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment. The aim of the programme is to activate unemployed youth to access the labour market and promote entrepreneurship.

## Country report: Spain

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# 1 Introduction

## 1 Introduction

The aim of this report is to gather and present relevant data on the Spanish labor market with the purpose of informing decision-making in the context of the project “**YES! Young Entrepreneurs Succeed**” funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Unemployment. The project aims at improving the employment situation for young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs) through innovative approaches and transnational cooperation on labour market issues as well as building youth entrepreneurial support among project’s partners. The NEET rate is calculated as the number of young people not in employment, education or training divided by the total population of young people. It differs by the youth unemployment rates because it takes into account inactive people and does not include unemployed individuals in training.

This report proceeds as follows. The following Section 2 underpins three core themes, which characterize the Spanish job market. In Section 3, the research moves its focus on profiling NEETs in Spain. Therefore, a brief overview of their demographic and socio-economic variables, NEETs composition and regional distribution is presented. A dedicated subsection on the situation in Cataluña is also provided. Section 4 discusses the policy context by analyzing three selected local interventions. The last section concludes and presents Spain’s (and Catalonia’s) outlook and prospects.

## 2 Core themes

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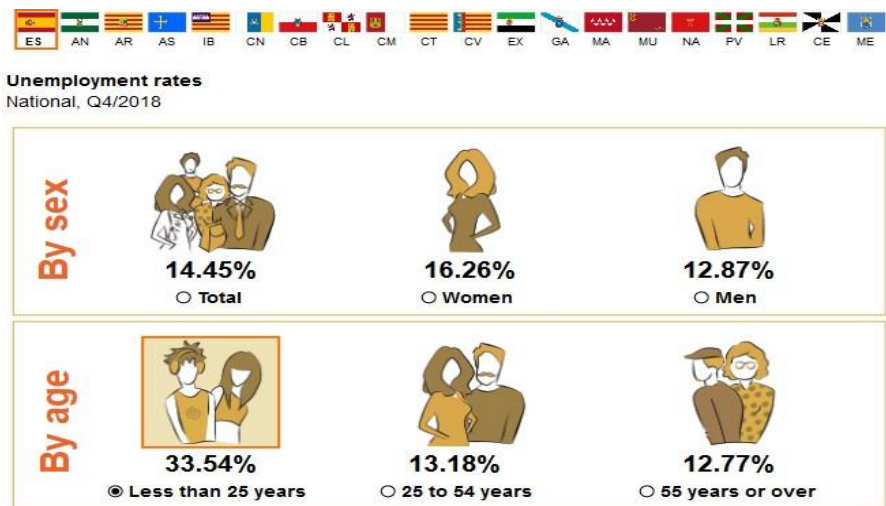
### 2.1 Core theme 1: the changing structure of employment

Spain was hit particularly hard by the financial and subsequent Eurozone crises, which found the country's economy at the peak of a real estate bubble and an overexposed banking system. For researchers and analysts (Galdeano and Rerskaya, 2017; CaixaBank, 2017) recession along with the country's labor market institutions have led to the more dramatic employment contraction and unemployment growth since the 1975 when its transition to democracy began. Despite its impressive performance since 1994 and especially in the period between 2000 and 2007, when new jobs in Spain alone accounted for three out of the ten new jobs created in the entire EU (Mahía del Arce, 2010), unemployment in the country was constantly higher than the EU average (Andres et al, 2009). The increased euphoria resulting from the average annual GDP growth rates of 3.5% in the same period, has tilted focus away from the necessary interventions that could have improved the functioning of the Spanish labour market, which was segmented, characterized by high degrees of duality and rigidities that resulted to limited flexibility in adjusting to external negative shocks and, consequently, took the form of dismissals of workers with very low protection and low or even no dismissal costs (Andres et al, 2009; OECD, 2016) which, apparently, were mainly related to youth and low-skilled employees.

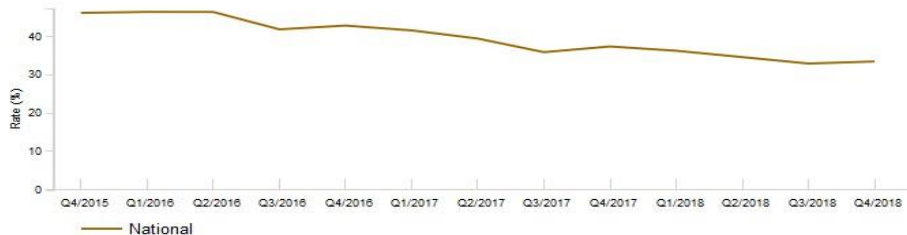
Following the double dip recession which peaked in mid-2013, the Spanish economy has given important signs of an ongoing recovery, especially after 2015. Nevertheless, as the following figure illustrates, the job market is still facing difficulties in reaching the pre-crisis levels of performance.



Figure 2.1: unemployment rates by sex and age (INE; Q4 2018)



**Unemployment rate of the population aged less than 25 years**  
National



The results of Ceuta and Melilla may be considered with caution because they may be affected by considerable sample errors.  
Source: [Economically Active Population Survey - Unemployment rates by Autonomous Community](#)

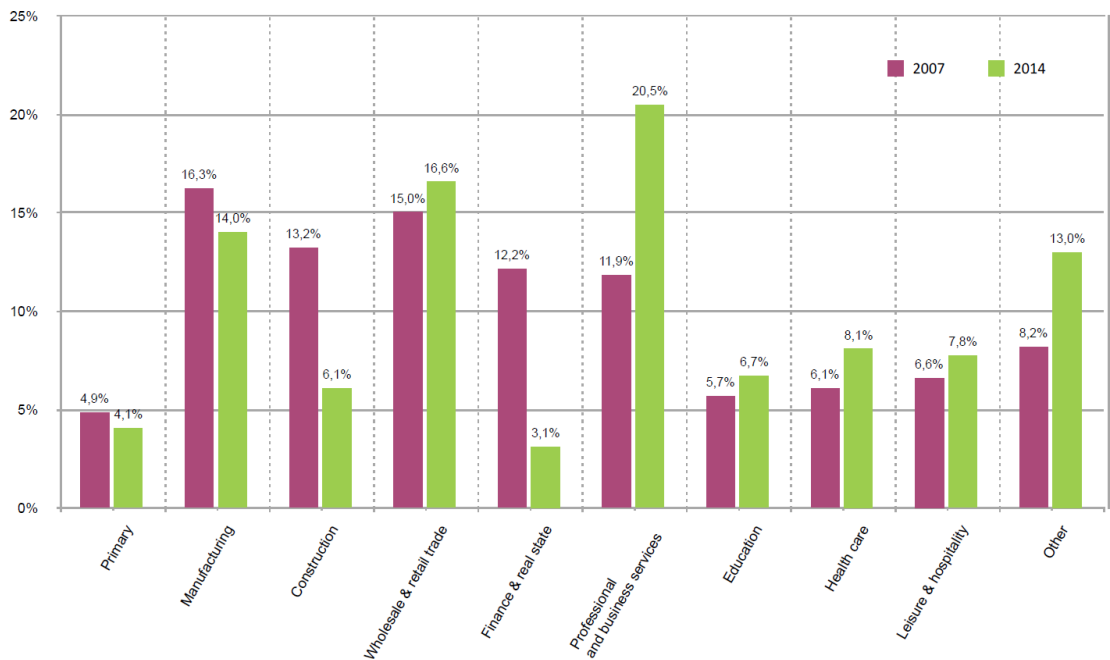
Source: INE, 2019 online database

Youth unemployment as well as long-term unemployment remain at high levels in Spain, despite the ongoing recovery, disproportionately affecting older and less-educated individuals. While long term unemployment has reached its in crisis record in 2010, with one out of four (26%) unemployed individuals belonging to this category, the hardest core group of unemployment, i.e. those out of job for more than two years, kept increasing until 2015 when they accounted for more than four out of ten (44.5%) of all unemployed individuals (Galdeano and Rerskaya, 2017). What is important, here, is to stress the negative relationship between the probability of exiting unemployment and the duration of unemployment spells. Hence, Spain’s high levels of long- and very long-term unemployment entail a risk of social exclusion for the affected individuals, and getting them back to work is a crucial challenge for relevant public policies (Bentolila, 2017).

### The changing structure of employment

The job creation boom which lasted until 2007 was mainly the result of investments in low productivity sectors, mainly construction and services, employing mostly low-skilled labour force and, as will be shown in the next sections, a great number of immigrants. With the bursting of the housing bubble and the collapse of the construction sector, total employment had fallen in 2015 to some 6.1 %, ie less than half of the respective pre-crisis percentage which stood in 2007 at 13.2% of total employment (Fedea, 2016).

Figure 2.2: Changes in sectoral composition of employment, 2007 vs. 2014



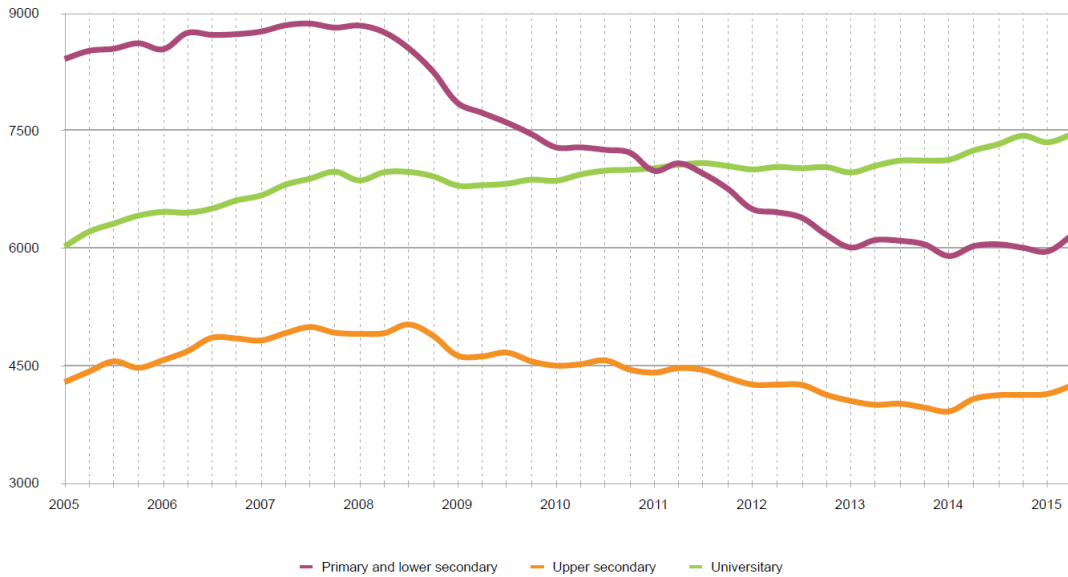
Source, FEDEA 2016

As it may be seen, decreases in employment are not limited to low-productivity sectors; even sectors like manufacturing suffered a considerable contraction, as indicated by the fall of its share in employment from 16.3% in 2007 to 14.0% in 2014. On the other hand, employment grew in sectors like professional and business services, health care and tourism.

Nonetheless, the construction sector is certainly not the only sector that destroyed jobs for low-skilled workers. In total, Spain lost nearly 3 million jobs for low-educated workers and close to 1 million jobs for workers with intermediate levels of education. A different picture emerges with reference to university graduates. As can be seen in Figure 3 that

follows, total employment of (at least) university degrees holders remained constant during the crises and gained pace since 2013.

Figure 2.3: Changes in employment by level of education. SLFS, 2005-2015



Source: Fedea, 2016

Overall, the unemployment rates go down with both age and the educational attainment of the workers. Two out of three young people (68.7%) with only primary education are unemployed. The poor labour market position of youth is reflected also in the fact that even young university graduates suffer unemployment rates of 35% while instead university graduates above the age of 45 enjoy the lowest unemployment rate (10.1%) (Fedea, 2016). The recent shifts in the composition of employment and the selective dismissal of low-educated workers have led to an increase in the degree of mismatch between the supply and demand of skills (Bank of Spain, 2013).

### Where does Spain stand now

According to the latest OECD employment outlook (2018) the labour market situation in Spain has improved continuously since 2015. Employment gained more than 5% since its 2013 low, and unemployment stood at 14.45% at the end of 2018, ie some 12 points below the record level of 2013. OECD projections suggest that these trends will continue in the next two years. Moreover, Spain's performance with regard to the inclusiveness of its labour market, and more specifically on the employment gap for disadvantaged groups (such as youth not in full time education or training, older workers, migrants, persons with disabilities and mothers), is below the OECD average (27.5% vs 24.9%). In addition, the level of precariousness and labour market insecurity of workers in Spain is quite high (3.5 times above the OECD average in 2017), second only to Greece's one which has the poorest performance in this indicator among all OECD countries. Still, real wage growth has been negative since 2016, with the large and increasing share of workers in low-paid, involuntary part-time jobs being one of the key factors behind this adverse wage developments.

This latter point, i.e. the high rates of temporary employment has regained attention of researchers that stress the risks stemming from the recent upsurge in the number of short-term and part-time contracts in the Spanish economy. Historically the Spanish economy was relying extensively on temporary employees; until the recent crises the relevant share accounted for some 30% of total employment, which positioned Spain at the top of the relevant list of countries. As IMF argued (2010) this is one of the reasons that employment in the country is far more sensitive to changes in GDP growth, as this is the less protected part of employees in the job market and, apparently, the first to dismiss in times of distress. Moreover, as short-term employees receive less training, they are usually found in sectors with low skills requirements, and in any event do not have a positive effect in productivity growth. Nevertheless, the return to positive growth rates in recent years, has brought forward an increased number of temporary contracts which reached the pre-crises levels, despite the fact that total employment is still lagging behind. The analytical work of Felgueroso et al (2017) indicate that in 2016 one out of four new contracts had a duration of less than a week, while contracts for a period of more than three months were declining. This is particularly important for youth employment, not only because youth are usually offered temporary jobs, but also because literature stresses that temporary contracts fail to act as stepping-stones to regular employment for many entrants in Spain (ibid).

## 2.2 Core theme 2: The low skills challenge

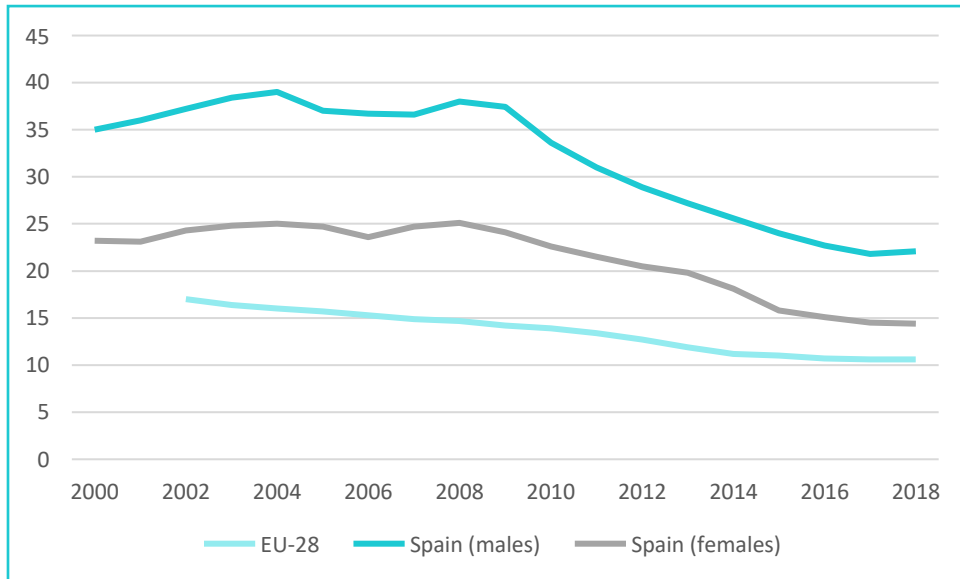
The following section provides an analysis of the labour market supply in Spain. <sup>1</sup> In general, the themes we consider important to address are the following. Firstly, the low skills trap which characterizes a significant number of low qualified people and is partly attributable to high rates of early school leavers. Secondly, we intend to explore the issue of highly qualified individuals, who, paradoxically, have been described as “overeducated yet underskilled” due to shortcomings of the Spanish educational system (Norén, 2017).

Spain’s labour market has been hit hard by the Great Recession. It is estimated that, between 2008 and 2012, almost three million jobs have been destroyed by the crisis (Rocha Sánchez, 2012). When taking into account educational attainment, unemployment increased more for those with lower level qualifications. Low qualified workers have shown to be more sensitive to economic contractions due to the type of industries they work in. The Spanish property bubble characterized by the collapse in real-estate prices in 2008, led to a sharp decrease in jobs available in the construction sector, displacing thousands of workers with low qualifications (Rocha Sánchez, 2012). The real-estate market seems to be also one of the sectors, which attracted a significant number of students during its boom between the mid-90s and 2007. This is because back then salaries in the construction industry were equal or even higher than those in occupations, which required higher levels of qualifications (Jesús Sainz, 2014; Durán López, 2016). Early leavers from education and training is an indicator that refers to young adults between 18 and 24 years old, who have completed at most lower secondary education and are not involved in further trainings.

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<sup>1</sup> All data in this report is based on EUROSTAT (2018) unless otherwise stated.

Figure 2.4. Early leavers from education and training by sex, Spain and EU-28, 2000-2018 (%)



As Figure 2.4 above shows, the rate of early leavers from education and training in Spain has been decreasing since 2008 but it remains still well above EU averages. The gender component of this variable is also worth exploring. The rate of early leavers from education and training is much higher among men than women (the rate of early school leavers was 14.4% for women against 22.1% for men in 2018). Rocha Sánchez (2012) offers an explanation: more men than women tend to leave education because the type of industries which offer placement for low qualified individuals are oftentimes male dominated (construction careers, for instance). Additionally, research has shown that women and men have different cultural attitudes towards schoolwork: women are more diligent and this makes them more likely to achieve higher qualifications. This last trend can be seen, in general, in the whole EU. As the following table 2.1 shows, women are more likely to hold tertiary education degrees (corresponding to ISCED 5-8).

Table 2.1. Population by educational attainment level and sex, %, 2018

	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-8
EU-28 (males)	26.6	47.5	25.9
EU-28 (females)	25.4	44.6	30.0
Spain (males)	44.7	24.6	30.6
Spain (females)	39.0	25.2	35.8

But why is early school leaving a problem? The short answer is because it often leaves individuals live outside standard education, training or labour systems and this can involve many risks. Firstly, early school leavers might find it difficult to re-join education later on or might get into alternative forms of work such as informal employment. Secondly, they might lose behaviors, that are engrained in our daily routines such as a concrete schedule of activities in the morning (going to work or to school) and might have difficulties to join programs afterwards. Finally, they will have reduced lifetime earnings and burden society with higher public costs because of higher likelihood on welfare dependence (Cedefop, 2016).

While it appears clear, at this point, that low qualifications are associated with higher risks of unemployment spells, the following section aims at providing an explanation why even highly qualified individuals might experience unsuccessful transitions into the labour market. During the last recession, data collected between 2007 and 2011, shows that in Spain employment increased for highly qualified people over 30 years old. This means that career prospects of the under 30 appear disadvantageous even when they hold tertiary degrees. Why is that? We believe that possible explanations are related to the lack of relevant skills and their poor practical experience.

Similarly to the Italian case, the Spanish educational system is producing adults who are not particularly highly skilled. Spain's PIAAC survey results show low levels of literacy and numeracy skills and difficulties in using common computer application among the adult population (OECD, 2015). Although Spain has now 39.9% of graduates between 25 and 54 years old with tertiary qualifications (against an EU average of 34.2%), many highly qualified job seekers are rejected by employers because they lack "appropriate skills". While education in Spain is still rather theoretical, general and memory-based, latest developments in educational research have shown how future careers require flexibility and excellent analytical skills since most information can be found remotely within seconds (Norén, 2017).

Additionally, links between schools and the labour market are still rather weak. While Vocational Education and Training systems (VET) are meant to facilitate a direct entry of individuals into the labour market, the Spanish VET is a good example of how weak that link still is. Since the new dual model of work-based training (FP Dual) has been introduced in Spain in 2012, only 0.4% of upper secondary school students are enrolled (against 41% in Germany and 59% in Switzerland, for instance) (OECD, 2018). Finally, Spain has the highest over qualification rate in the EU, demonstrating that there are just not enough jobs for highly qualified people. The satirical play "El método Grönholm", by Jordi Galcerán, portrays the ruthless fight among seven well-educated, successful professionals for an executive position at a large company. A clear message surfaces as the show comes to an end, leaving a sour aftertaste: shoot-first-or-be-shot might be the rule rather than the exception to get a job in Spanish modern world.

### 2.3 Core theme 3: Migration

One might wonder how this situation translates into migration patterns. Migration has always been a main driver of population changes across Europe. In the absence of conflict, migration is usually closely tied with the labour market. People enter or leave a country permanently in the search of opportunities.

People usually associate two migration trends with Spain: Young people leaving the country to find jobs elsewhere and Spain being a main entry point and a destination for immigrants. Both observations are accurate but much less pronounced than generally expected.

We can observe an increase in the number of Spanish emigrants but in general the number of emigrants remains limited compared to other countries. The net emigration is relatively stable over the last ten years at around 30.000-40.000 per year. Interestingly, there is a relatively high number of EU citizens which move in and out of the country. Numbers are only available for the last 5 years but the net emigration of EU citizens is constantly between 5.000 and 60.000 people per year.



Table 2.2: Emigration by age group, sex and country of birth [migr\_emi4ctb], in thousand

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Total number of emigrants</b>	288	380	403	409	447	532	400	344	327	369
<b>Spanish</b>	34	39	44	57	57	71	69	76	69	67
<b>EU-28 excluding Spain</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	151	132	114	110	131
<b>Non-EU28 countries</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	311	199	154	148	170

Source: Eurostat (2019)

Emigrants are someone else's immigrants and Spain has managed to be an attractive location for immigrants. The largest segment is made up of people coming from outside the European Union which drives the overall net migration of the country.

Although, there has been a reduction in the number of immigrants and an increase in the number of emigrants after the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008, immigration began to outnumber emigrations starting again in 2016. Contrary to popular conceptions, Spain continues thus to be an attractive place to move to for people from inside and outside the European Union as shown in the following table.

Table 2.3: Immigration by age group, sex and country of birth [migr\_imm3ctb], in thousand

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Total number of immigrants</b>	599	393	361	371	304	281	305	342	415	532
<b>Spanish</b>	21	19	19	22	21	22	26	30	34	38
<b>EU-28 (excl. Spain)</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	85	94	98	105	123
<b>Non EU-28</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	174	186	214	276	371

Source: Eurostat (2019)

Similar to other previous empires, Spain has close links to regions, which used to be colonies. This explains the significant number of people from former colonies such as Ecuador, Colombia or Bolivia living in Spain. Other large foreign populations are Romanian, Moroccan and British.

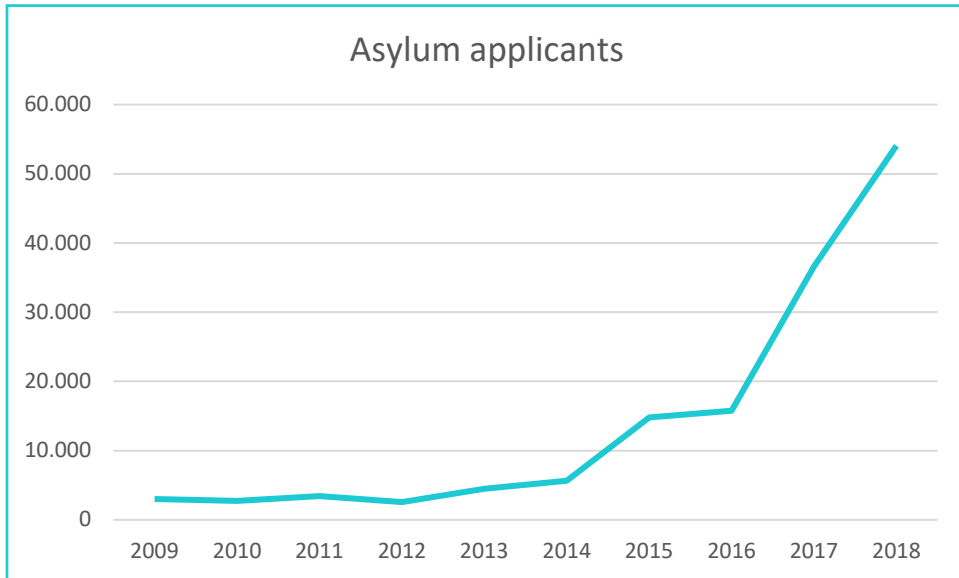
*Table 2.4: Foreign population in Spain, in thousand*

Nationality	Foreign Population
Romania	798
Morocco	774
Ecuador	317
UK	312
Colombia	250
Bolivia	183
Italy	178
China	171
Germany	153
Bulgaria	151

*Source: [http://www.ine.es/en/prensa/np756\\_en.pdf](http://www.ine.es/en/prensa/np756_en.pdf)*

Spain has also seen a sharp increase in the number of asylum applicants starting with the refugee crisis in 2015/2016 although the total number remains below those of other European countries

Figure 2.5: Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr\_asyappctza]



Source: Eurostat (2019)

The key message is that Spain continues to experience both in- and out-migration flows. On one side, significant numbers of young Spanish adults continue to leave the country and search for opportunities abroad. Some of the reasons for this trend have been discussed in the previous section. At the same time, Spain continues to be an attractive destination for many countries outside the European Union.

The flow of refugees will continue to be cyclical but the position close to some Northern African countries will expose Spain continuously to migration and refugee flows.

What is also interesting, however, is to see in which sectors migrants are employed. The following table presents the allocation of migrant workforce into sectors focusing on the pre- and peak-crises years.

Table 2.5: Number of migrants employed by sector 2008 vs 2012 (in thousands)

	2008		2012		Change 2008-2012		% Change 2008-2012	
	Total employed	of which migrants	Total employed	of which migrants	Total employed	migrants employed	of total employed	of migrants employed
<b>Agriculture</b>	816.30	158.90	753.2	180.00	-63.1	21.1	-7.7%	13.3%
<b>Industry</b>	3,174.40	336.70	2,430.70	180.90	-743.7	-155.8	-23.4%	-46.3%
<b>Construction</b>	2,430.90	605.00	1,147.60	179.20	-1283.3	-425.8	-52.8%	-70.4%
<b>Services</b>	13,631.90	1,829.10	12,950.40	1,649.10	-681.5	-180	-5.0%	-9.8%
<b>Total</b>	20053.50	2929.70	17,2820	2009.20	-2771.5	-920.5	-13.8%	-31.4%

Source: Inspires & INE, 2009 & 2013

At the beginning of the crisis in 2008, almost 3 million migrants were employed in Spain, constituting 14.6% of total employment. While in absolute numbers the majority was employed in services (62.4% of total migrant employed), their share of employment in the sector was only 13.4%. When construction is considered, though, where 20.7% of total migrant employment is found, the relevant contribution in the total employment in the sector amounts to 24.8 person. That is one every four employees in construction was of migrant origin. Along the same lines, one in every five workers in the agricultural sector was a migrant, while in industry migrants accounted for 10.6 % of total employment in the sector.

Turning to 2012, six months before the end of the second dip of the Spanish economy, the situation was as follows. The Spanish economy has lost some 2,800 jobs with one out of three (33.2%) being held previously by migrants. Furthermore, migrants employed in 2012 are 31.4% less than in 2008, with the vast decreases being in the construction sector where 7 out of 10 migrants lost their jobs, and in industry, where migrant employed almost halved. The only exception is those decreases comes in rural areas where migrant employment in agriculture actually rose by 13.3%. Overall, it seems that the decrease in migrant employment came in low-skilled sectors (i.e. construction) and in activities which require low specialization and skills within the other sectors of the economy (in industry and services).

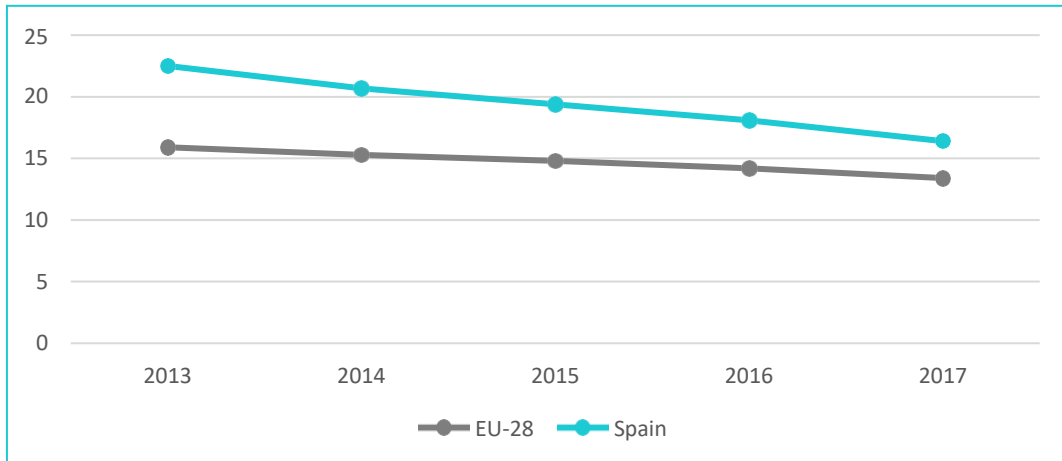
# 3 Statistical overview of NEETs in Spain

### 3 Statistical overview of NEETs in Spain

The NEET concept was introduced in the late 1980s, in the UK, to elaborate on young people, in the age group between 16-18 years old, that were not in education or training at high risk of social exclusion (Salvà-Mut et al, 2018). In Spain, the term was first discussed much later by the media, in 2014, with reference to the personal characteristics of this cohort of young people as the critical drawbacks of their unemployment (idleness, passiveness, apathetic attitudes etc.), with little reference to the structural obstacles of the job market (Rubio and Ibanez, 2018). Onwards, many studies by international institutions (Eurofound, 2012; 2014; European Commission, 2018; European Commission - JRC Technical Reports, 2018) advocated beyond this media discourse, on the real disadvantaged positioning of the country in comparison to other European ones in regard to the rate of youth unemployment and especially NEETs. The vast majority of these reports conclude that the most determining factor for the severe situation of NEETs in Spain is the economic crisis and the overall structure of the job market. In fact, since 2008, the NEETs ratio rose from 13.8 to 26%, whereas for the EU as a whole, this percentage rose from 17.2 to 19.7% (Salvà-Mut et al., 2018).

In the last five years the rate of young people aged 15-29 who are not in education, in employment nor training has been falling in Spain (from 22.5% to 16.4%). Nevertheless, more than a decade after the burst of the crisis, as shown in Figure 3.1 albeit the closing gap, NEET rates in Spain are still clearly above the Europe average levels (15.9% against 13.4%).

Figure 3.1. NEET rate, 15-29 years, Spain and EU-28, 2013-2017 (%)

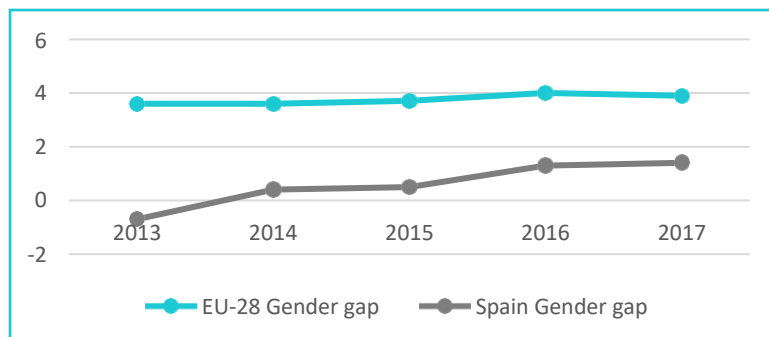


Source: EUROSTAT, 2018.

### 3.1 Demographic variables

The gender gap in the youth employment rate for EU28 (15-29) has declined<sup>i</sup> between 2007 (8.4%) and 2016 (5.9%), due to a greater decrease in young men’s employment than in that of women’s. In reference to NEET rate it is rather high for young women aged 25-29 years reaching 24.3%, compared to 15.3% of men in the same age group. In addition, a 67.5% of female NEETs in this age group are inactive.

Figure 3.2. Gender gap of NEETs aged 15-29 years, Spain and EU-28, 2013-2017 (%)

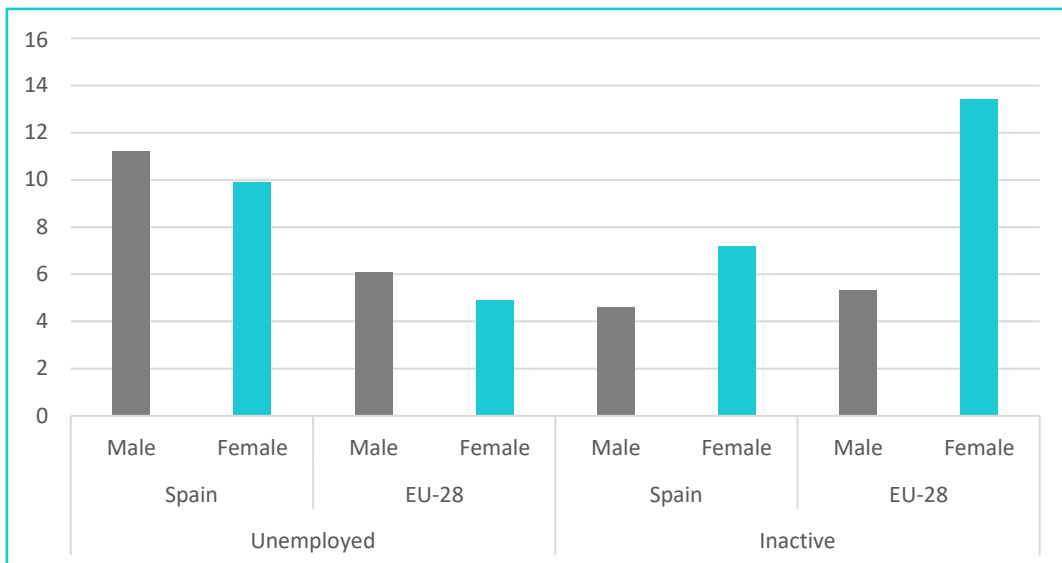


As Figure 3.2 shows, in Spain young males between 15 and 29 years old were as likely to fall in the NEET group as their female counterparts up till 2015. From 2016 and 2017 we

observe a slight turn in growing NEET rates for the female population and the gender gap increased to 1.4% but still remains far below the Europe average (3.9%). It should be noted, however, that the 2012 labour market reforms have been severely criticized by experts due to the anticipated negative impact on women (Vancea and Utzet, 2018 quoting also Gonzalez & Segales, 2014 and Ballester, 2012).

The gender variable seems to play a significant role both in Spain and across the EU when analyzing the labor status of NEET youth. As figure 3.3 suggests, while within the NEET group young men are more likely to be unemployed (looking for a job), young women are more likely to be inactive (not actively looking for a job).

Figure 3.3. NEET rate for people aged 15-29 by sex and activity status, Spain and EU-28, 2017, %



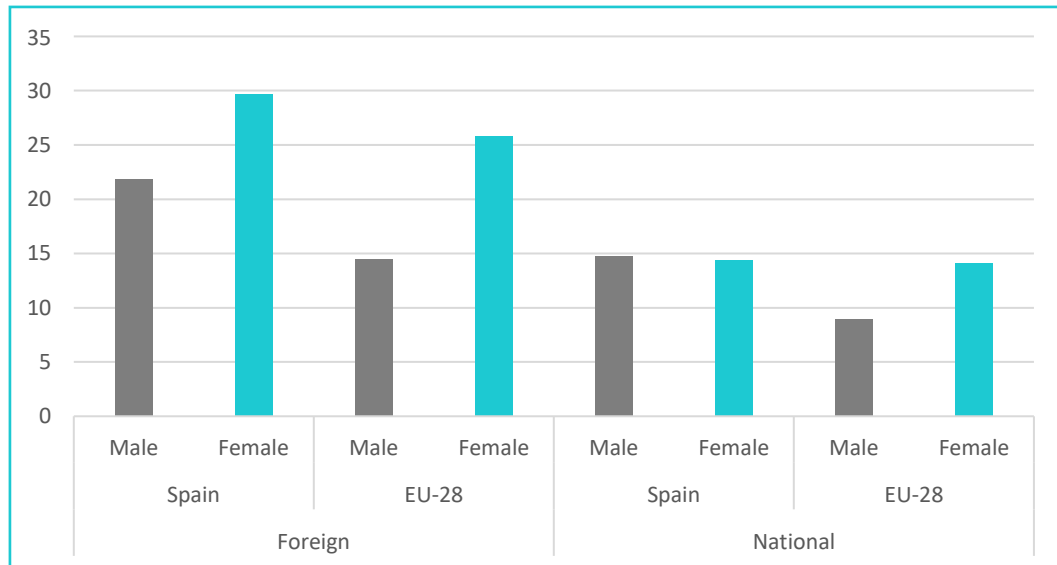
Source: EUROSTAT, 2018.

Having an immigration background also increases the risk of becoming NEET. Across Europe in 2017, NEET rates for young people with migration backgrounds (20.3%) were almost 8 percentage points higher than for their national counterparts (12.6%). However, an analysis of youth unemployment by gender and country of birth reveals that young women with a migration background (here represented by the foreign country of birth) have the highest NEET rate (29,7%) in Spain (see Figure 3.4). This figure is even higher than the EU-28 rate (25,8%) for foreign women and also higher than the male rate (21,8%). It should be noted, also, that according to recent research the role of female migrants in domestic work is pivotal and usually underestimated, and rarely captured in full by



official data, as working relations in such activities usually take place in the informal economy (Vencea and Utzet, 2018).

Figure 3.4. NEET rate by country of birth, people aged 15-29, Spain and EU-28, 2017

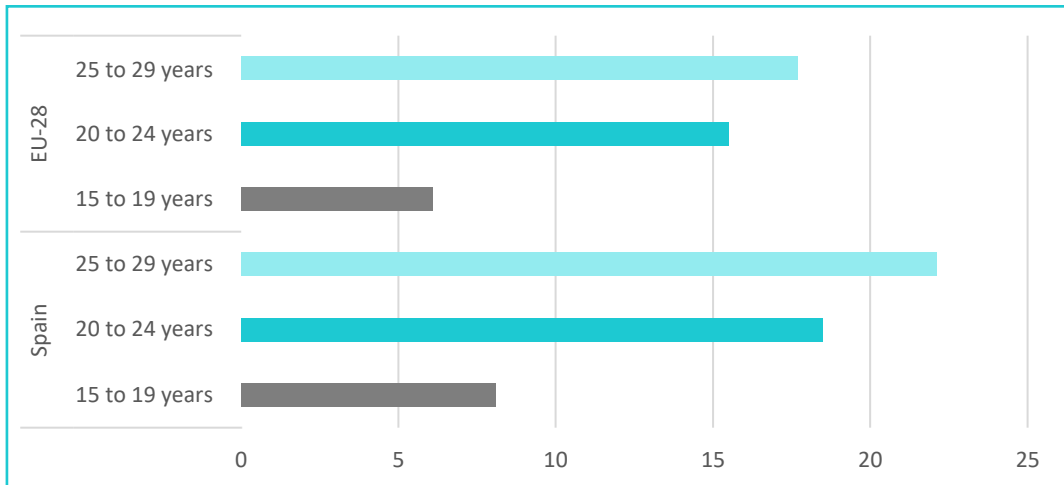


Source: EUROSTAT, 2018.

An important dimension that should be taken into consideration when one focuses on youth with migrant background relates with the observed higher risk of leaving the education system early. As Cedefop (2018) argues, for reasons ranging from the challenges migrant students face with the language and the often limited support they have both from institutional structures as well as their families, on average in the EU the early school leavers rates for students with migrant background are quite higher than the ones of native born students. These rates stood in 2017 at 9.6% for native students and at 19.3% for foreign-born students. The situation appears to be even more dramatic in Spain as the the rate of early leavers for Spanish students stood in 2017 at slightly over 15%, while the respective rate for foreign born students was more than double.

Turning to the age variable, it seems that it also plays a key role in profiling unemployed young adults. In line with Europe averages, data confirms that also in Spain the risk of becoming NEET increases with the age. Figure 3.5 gives evidence that NEET rates are higher in the subgroup of young adults aged 25-29 compared to those in the groups of young adults under 25 years old. NEET rates for youth under 25 years old might be closely linked to the rate of early school leavers.

Figure 3.5. NEET rates by age group, Spain and EU-28, 2017

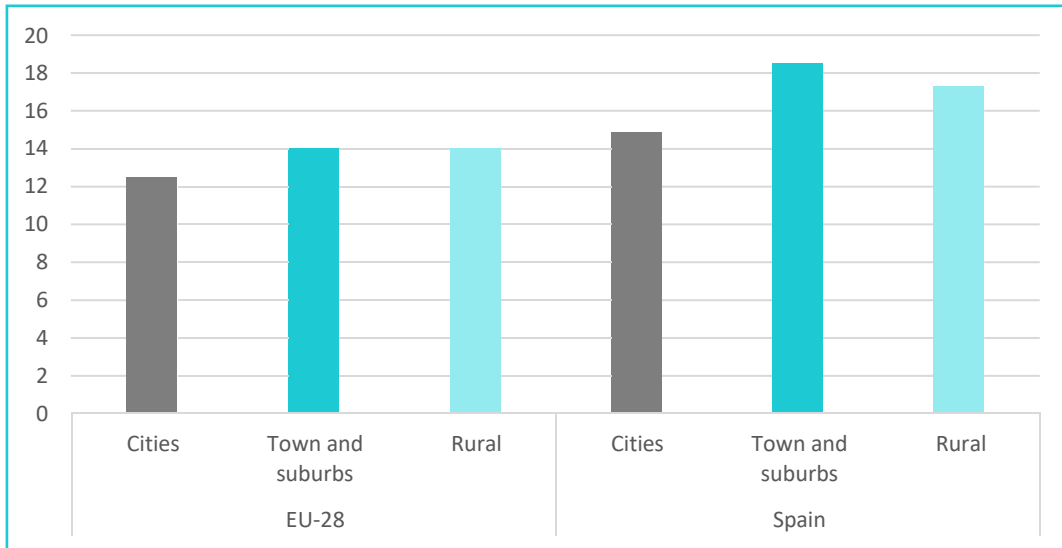


Source: EUROSTAT, 2018.

This interesting dimension of the situation within different age groups of NEETs in Spain, was confirmed also by the recent research work of Vancea and Utzet (2018) which found that in 2016 the age group 25-29 indicated the highest NEET rate with 24.2%, followed by the age group 20-24 with 21.2%. Interestingly enough, the authors suggest to focus also on the age group 30-34 where NEET rates account for 22.9% of Spanish youth in the same age group.

Finally, in Spain the degree of rurality plays a significant determinant of the risk of young people to become NEETs. As Figure 3.6 depicts, in Spain, NEET youth seems to be located more in the rural and periurban areas of the country. However, one should also keep in mind that cities may prove to be a harder setting to identify and map NEETs. Overall, though, in all degrees of urbanization, Spain moves constantly above the relevant EU average.

Figure 3.6. NEET rate by degree of urbanization of people aged 15-29, Spain, 2017

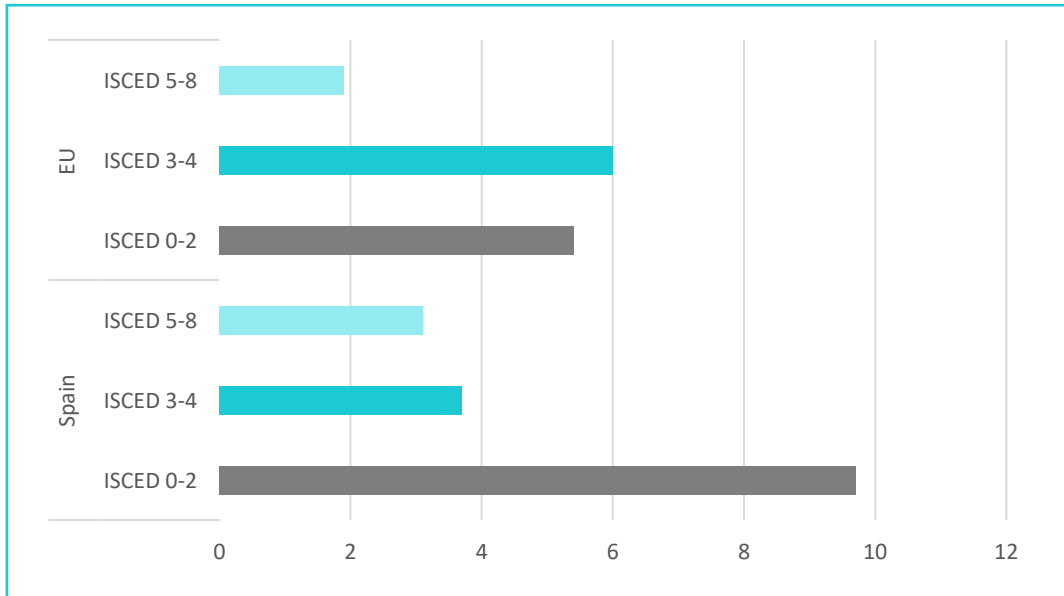


Source: EUROSTAT, 2018.

### 3.2 Socio-economic variables

One of the most used socio-economic variables when analyzing unemployment is educational attainment. Data suggests that on average in the European Union, tertiary education still represents an effective protection against unemployment as NEET rates decrease with increasing levels of education. In Spain, the situation as shown in figure 3.7 advocates also on the importance of a high educational attainment. In fact, young people with low education (ISCED 0-2) are those more at risk of becoming NEETs. The NEET rate for people with a tertiary level of education (ISCED 5-8) is lower than the NEET rate of young adults with a medium educational attainment level. The latter NEET group, however, is the only category in which Spain performs better than the EU average.

Figure 3.7. NEET rate by educational attainment of people aged 15-29, Spain and EU-28, 2017



Source: EUROSTAT, 2018.

With regards to other relevant socio-economic variables, Robson (2008) found that in a sample of European countries with data collected between 1994 and 2001, the general trend is that increasing levels of household income are negatively correlated to the probability of falling into the NEET group. Basically, NEETs tend to come from poorer families. In a later empirical study by Shinozaki (2012) on NEET predictors in Japan, however, the effect of family income on NEET status seems to have a U-curve shape. Specifically, higher levels of family income decrease the probability of becoming NEET up to a certain point and increase it after that point. The most vulnerable ‘NEETs’ in Spain tend to come from families with the lowest levels of education. Vancea and Utzet document in their research of 2018, that NEETs in Spain had more unemployed friends, and were coming from poorer family backgrounds in comparison with their non-NEET counterparts. Moreover, parents’ expectations in terms of educational achievement of their children at age 14 tended also to be lower for NEET than for non-NEET men in this age group. Such evidence has, apparently, led recently to the introduction of specific policies and measures to encourage and support youth return to formal education and training.

### 3.3 NEET composition and vulnerability

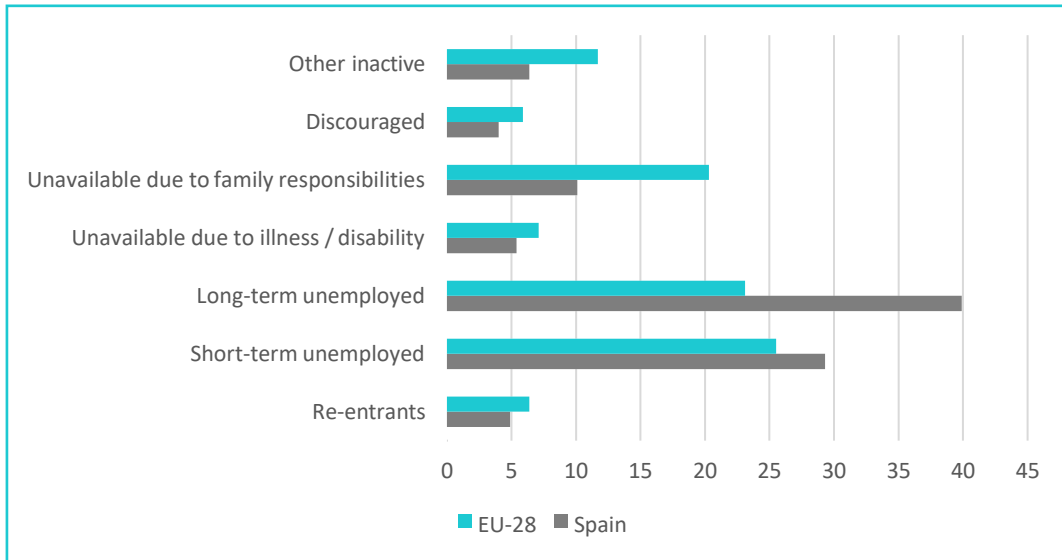
The most recent Eurofound report (2016) on NEET diversity proposes a division of the NEET population into seven sub-groups (re-entrants, short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, unavailable due to family responsibilities, unavailable due to illness or disability, discouraged workers and other inactive) based on the EU Labor Force Survey. This categorization goes beyond common demographic and socio-economic variables and

tries to identify reasons for an individual's NEET status in order to help policy makers and interventions' planners.

According to the report, the different categories are characterized by diverse degrees of vulnerability in terms of labor market participation and risk of social exclusion. Re-entrants and short-term unemployed display low to moderate degrees of vulnerability. Unavailable due to illness or disability and long-term unemployed and discouraged workers are classified as highly vulnerable groups since they are the people more at risk of social exclusion. Finally, the categories of unavailable due to family responsibilities and other inactive are a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable NEETs, who require a further analysis to determine their potential labor market participation and risk of social exclusion.

Figure 3.8 below provides an overview of NEETs in Spain according to the seven Eurofound categories described above. We can clearly see the vulnerable position of the biggest group of NEETs in Spain which is made of long-term unemployed (40% - almost double than the EU average). Secondly, short term unemployed (29.3%) are exhibiting higher than the EU average rate (25.5%). This is indicative of the jobs lost during the crisis years and the great influence of the economic crisis to the job market. Other subgroups such as the share of discouraged workers, unavailable due to illness or disability are lower than the EU average suggesting that the country has put in place effective measures of social support. In any case the overall reading of the figure states that the NEETs group in Spain although it is dominated by the unemployed it still is rather heterogeneous.

Figure 3.8. Composition of the NEET group in Spain and EU-28 (%), 15-29 year olds (2013)

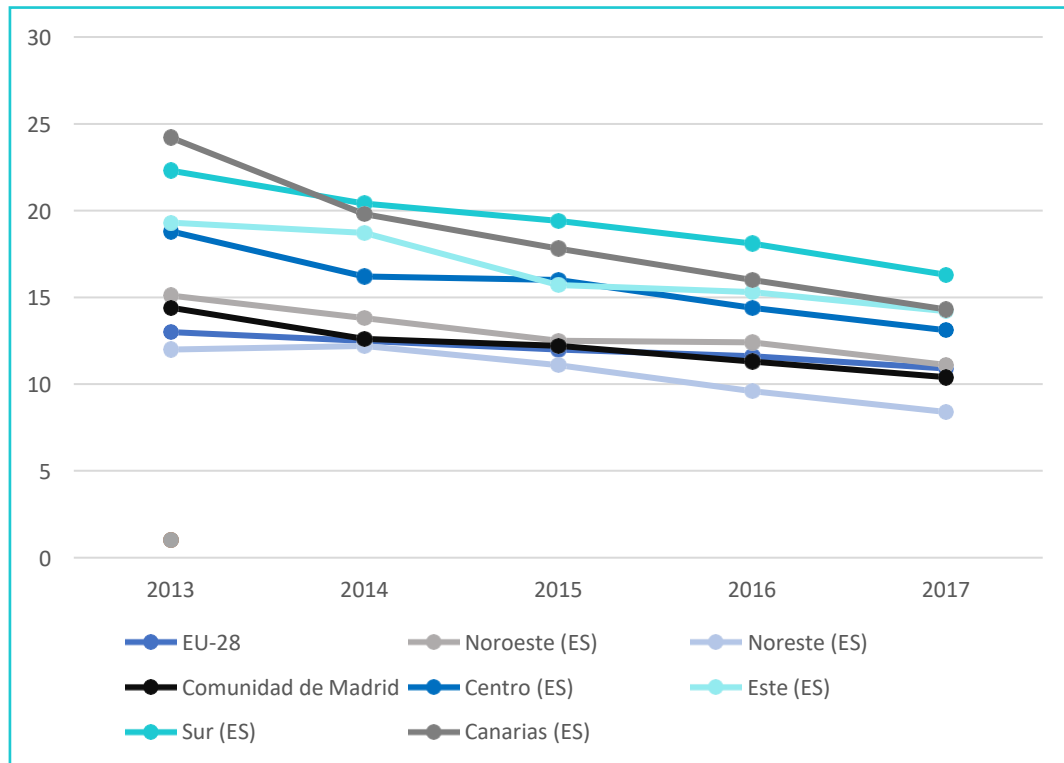


Source: Eurofound, 2016.

### 3.4 Regional distribution

NEET rates in Spain also show a distinct geographical pattern. According to OECD (2016) for the entire age group 15-29 there are much higher rates in the South (30% in 2015) and relatively low rates in the North-East (15%). Moreover, as the following figure 3.9 indicates, this pattern is confirmed even when the lowest age group within NEETs (15-24) is considered. It should be noted that this subgroup has been since the beginning at the core of planned interventions, as was the case for instance for the implementation plans of the youth guarantee initiative.

Figure 3.9. NEET rates by macro-regions Spain and EU-28, people aged 15-24 (2017)



Source: Eurostat

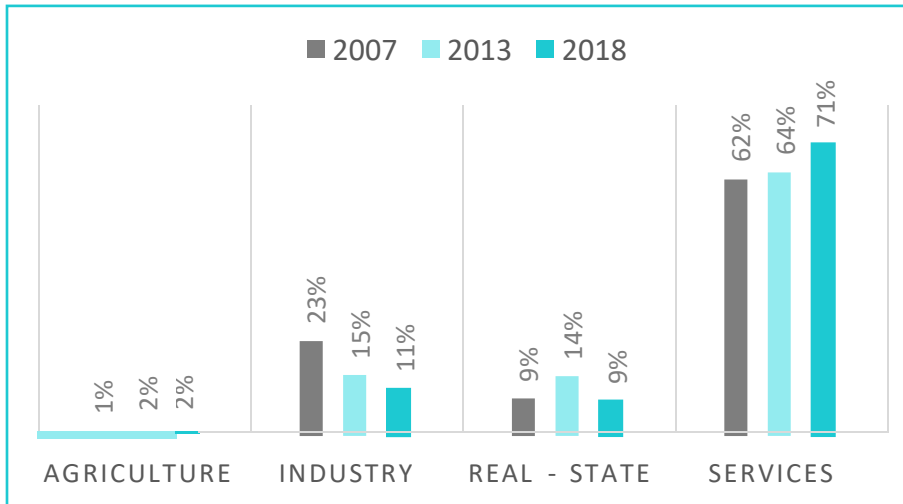
The quite diverse distribution of NEETs in Spanish macro regions reflects another dimension of the different context and consequently challenges the country’s NEETs may face. To understand better the situation in Catalonia, which is the primary focus area of the Spanish partner of this project, the following section will depict briefly how the region presents itself in the discussion held till now in this report.

### 3.5 Catalonia

With 7.6 million inhabitants, Catalonia is a diverse territory with a wide range of activities and business opportunities. In 2018, the Catalan economy grew 2.8%, opening itself up to the world year after year, representing more than 25% of the total export in Spain. The region’s economy is led by the service sector where in 2018 seven out of ten people were employed. It should be noted that the sector kept its shares in employment even during the crises, as the relevant figures for 2007 and 2013 indicate (62% and 64% of total

employment in the region. Employment in industry, on the other hand, has dropped significantly since 2007 and from a level of 23% stands in 2018 at a mere 11%.

Figure 3.10: Changes in sectoral composition of employment in CT 2007 - 2018



The current status of Catalonia's economy is reflected in the unemployment rates which are standing below the overall Spanish ones. Moreover, the differences in unemployment rates between men and female population is less pronounced than the national averages.

Table 3.1 Unemployment rates in Catalonia by sex (Q4 2018)

GENDER	TOTAL	WOMEN	MEN
	11,64%	12,21%	11,12%

[http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/en/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica\\_C&cid=1254736176918&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976595#](http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/en/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176918&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976595#)

Lower are also the Catalonian unemployment rates in different age groups. However, the youth (<25 yrs) in Catalonia are still facing considerable difficulties in finding employment.



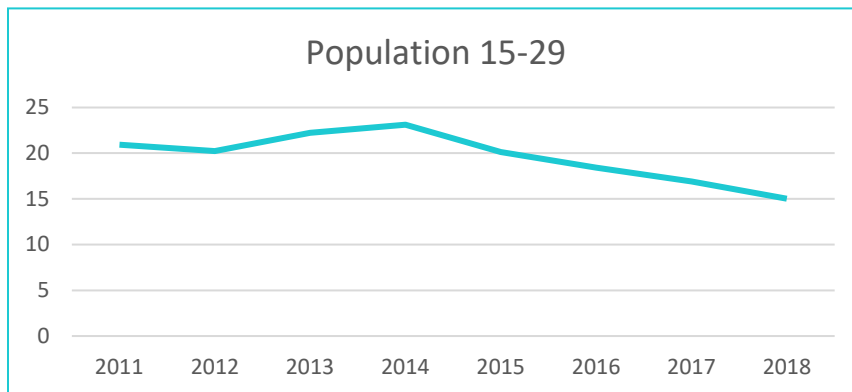
Table 3.2 Unemployment rates in Catalonia by age

AGE	<25 YO	25 TO 54	>55
	27,64%	10,31%	10,62

<https://www.idescat.cat/indicadors/?id=conj&n=10218&tema=treba>

When one focuses on NEETs, it may be seen that since 2014 when the relevant rate hit its highest value, there seems to be considerable improvement as in four years the rate has decreased by some 9 points, standing in 2018 at the level of 15%.

Figure 3.11: NEET rate, 15-29 years, Catalonia 2011- 2018



<https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=indbps&n=9429>

Despite the improved picture depicted for Catalonia when compared with the national one, some more detailed data indicate that the recession has impacted also in the region's economy, resulting to less stable employment, coupled with decreased wages. More specifically, a report of the City of Barcelona (2016) indicated that in the period 2008-2015 indefinite employment contracts have dropped from 16.3% to 13.3% of total contracts. On the other hand, an increase has been observed in the numbers of new temporary, which in addition refer to a shorter duration of employment offers. Thus, in 2015, the majority of contracts in Barcelona (56.5%) referred to employment duration of less than 6 months, while four out of ten contracts were for employment offers of less than one month. Thus the legacy of the crisis is reflected to a high number of less stable, temporary in nature jobs, with shorter employment offers and usually underpaid.

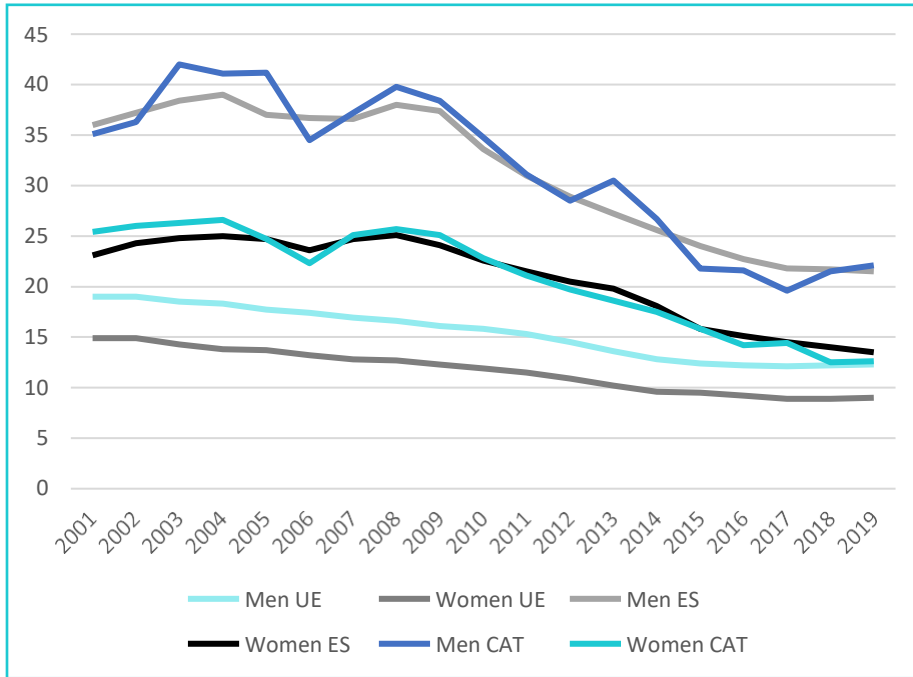
The abovementioned situation may be related to the skills gap that was discussed in previous sections of this report, as the following table which presents the educational attainment of the Catalonian population suggests. In fact, if compared with national averages, Catalonia presents in both males and females, higher shares of population with lower educational levels, and lower shares of people with tertiary education.

*Table 3.3: Population by educational attainment level and sex, %, 2018*

	<i>ISCED 0-2</i>	<i>ISCED 3-4</i>	<i>ISCED 5-8</i>
<i>EU-28 (males)</i>	26.6	47.5	25.9
<i>EU-28 (females)</i>	25.4	44.6	30.0
<i>Spain (males)</i>	44.7	24.6	30.6
<i>Spain (females)</i>	39.0	25.2	35.8
<i>Catalonia 2015 (males)</i>	47,06	23,15	29,79
<i>Catalonia 2015 (females)</i>	44,27	22,21	33,52

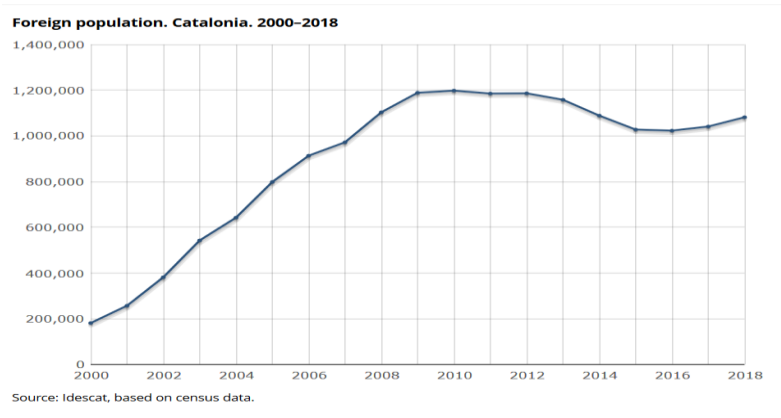
This quite alarming picture, should be read in parallel with the following figure 3.12 which presents the evolution of the rates of early leavers from education and training since 2001, that is, a period covering the boom in Spanish economy as well as the crisis and the recent years that marked efforts toward economic recovery. While the rates in Catalonia move along the national averages in the entire period for both male and female early leavers, the emerging picture confirms the findings presented earlier in this report. The drop-out rates were standing at high levels when the economy was expanding and offered well paid employment opportunities even to low skilled and less qualified individuals, but when the crisis phased in, the early leavers rate started dropping and improved by some 20 percentage points for male and some 10 points for females in 2019.

Figure 3.12: Early leavers from education and training by sex, SP vs CT vs EU-28, 2001-2019



To complete the analogy with the situation presented at the national level, these last figures focus on migration and its share in Catalonia's society. As figure 3.13 presents, the foreign population in the region increased by some 1,000,000 people between 2000 and 2009, reaching a total number of 1.2 million migrants residing in Catalonia. During recession this number dropped slightly, still with a lag, while in recent years and especially since 2016 there is a new upward trend.

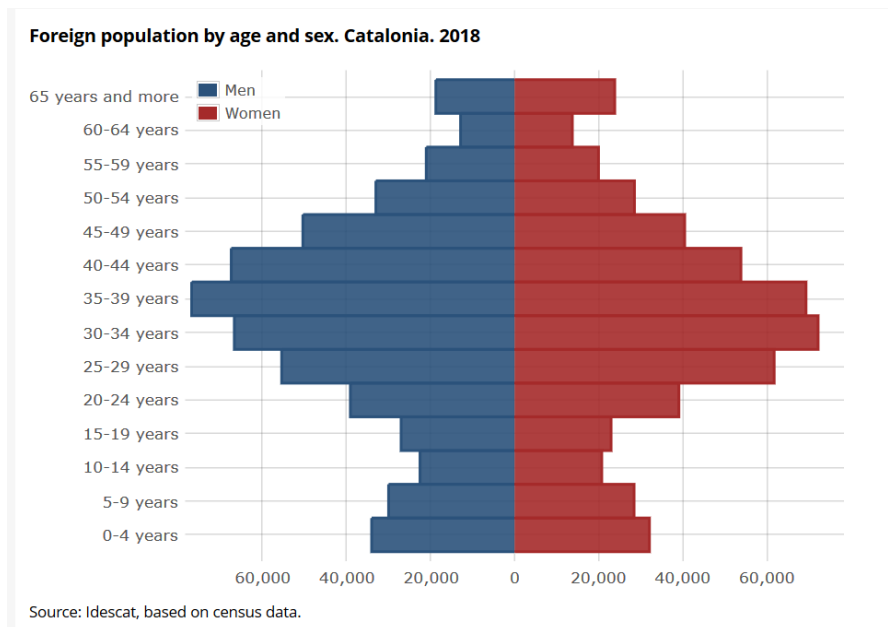
Figure 3.13: Foreign Population, Catalonia, 2000-2018



Source: <https://www.idescat.cat/poblacioestrangera/?b=0&lang=en>

Moreover, the age pyramid presented in figure 3.14 indicates that in 2018 the vast majority of population with a migrant background, is between 25 and 49 years old, i.e. in the most productive age groups.

Figure 3.14: Foreign Population by sex and age, Catalonia, 2018



Source: <https://www.idescat.cat/poblacioestrangera/?geo=cat&nac=a&b=1&lang=en>

Still, more detailed data on the background and composition of this population would have been useful, in order to better inform the challenges this significant part of the Catalonian society face, and to prepare better and tailored integration itineraries.

# 4 Selected local interventions targeting NEETs in Catalonia

## 4 Selected local interventions targeting NEETs in Catalonia

While this section could have focused on many different programmes that seek to help entrepreneurs or job seekers (discount on the social security quotas, full range of training programmes, innovation awards, digital transformation grants, mentoring programmes ...), the fact that none of those has been assessed so far with reference to their outreach and results, directed us to refer to the following three initiatives which are considered as interesting for NEETs, and even inspiring for interventions willing to address NEETs as a specific target group.

### 4.1 “Singulars” call 2018

The main objective of the Singular Project is to reinforce the employability of young people (aged 16-29 years old) who are not employed nor studying. They achieve this by:

- Providing guidance that includes individual counselling, professional and entrepreneurial guidance, job information and accompaniment in the search for employment.
- Providing professional training adapted to the needs of the participants.

And that can be complemented with the following optional actions:

- Internships for qualified young people without professional experience.
- Dual FP, this action is based on a contract.
- Professional experience.
- International mobility.
- Labour prospecting.

One of the examples of the multiple programmes that Singulars offer is *Tour is me*.

*Tour is Me* is a programme targeting unemployed youngsters from 16-29 years old, that promotes their socio-labour opportunities, taking advantage from the good economic perspectives of tourism and leisure sector that Catalonia has nowadays. This project will be implemented in the three provinces on which tourism has the most impact: Barcelona, Tarragona and Girona. The main requisite that we ask of the participants is they have an interest in tourism, leisure and, especially, its management and customer service.

The project offers these young people some individual and group orientation activities, tailor-made management training in the customer relationship, tourism and leisure sector, business prospecting activities and a specialized guidance in case they want to set up a new business.

The customer relationship management programme has tailored its content based on the needs of the labour market. The selected topics are customer service, relational marketing, applied technologies in customer service, dealing with issues from the basic office management to client base management through a CRM and one module designed to improve their English skills.

To improve their occupational insertion, the project is supported by big companies such as the tourism offices of each province, the aquarium of Barcelona, AirBnB, AENA, the hotel chain Hesperia Resorts and many others.

#### 4.2. Subvenció de Garantia Juvenil per autoocupar-se amb un import de €9900

The 2014-2020 Youth Employment Operational Program is being developed within the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF) in order to fight unemployment among young people.

The Youth Guarantee Grant is an economic aid for young people who have signed up for social security as a freelancer, in order to provide financial assistance during the first year. Considering the current social and economic context, many of these young people can find self-employment as an alternative to work for others. In this sense, the grant can create an opportunity to start a professional project which allows them to develop their abilities and start their working life.

According to the last survey of the active population, there were 143,600 unemployed people aged 16 to 29 in Catalonia, which corresponds with a 24% unemployment rate. This situation affects more men and people who have a lower level of education. These percentages indicate that it has become very difficult to find a first job, especially among young people without qualifications.

The beneficiaries of these grants are young people who, before registering as a freelancer, are enrolled in the Youth Guarantee programme and are between 18 and 29 years old. Young people must have a tax address and, if applicable, a work space in Catalonia.

The amount of the subsidy will be €9,900 and it is intended to finance:

- Social security quotas for the first year.
- Investment



- Recruitment
- Promotion and visibility of the business.

### 4.3 Programa Joven Empleo de La Caixa

The high level of youth unemployment observed in recent years, both at European and national level, show the seriousness of the socio-economic situation of the group of young European people. Both public administrations and society are taking the appropriate measures to successfully face this challenge.

Based on the multi-year financial framework of the 8th of February 2013, the European Council decided to create the Youth Employment Initiative. With a budget of 6,000 million euros for the period 2014-2020, they aim to support the measures established in the Youth Work Package. This initiative was created with the purpose of financing the youth work measures of the European regions with youth unemployment rates exceeding 25%.

Within the framework of the Youth Employment Initiative and the Operational Program for Youth Employment (POEJ), La Caixa Bank Foundation, a private intermediate institution, took as its main objective to reduce the youth unemployment in Spain. They considered it opportune to establish incentives to generate stable and quality young employment, while also stimulating business activity and, ultimately, economic growth.

At the beginning of the call, a total budget of €9,008,445 was raised, of which €8,278,035 came from the European Social Fund and €730,410 was co-financed by La Caixa Bank Foundation.

The objective of this program is the sustainable integration of young people in the labour market, especially those who not employed, nor participating in any education or training activities, as well as people at risk of exclusion.

# 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Spain is struggling to find its way toward sustainable growth and decent employment opportunities for its population. While recent years have shown a positive sign in reversing the devastating results of a severe crisis, the Spanish economy still needs to take decisive steps in order to address efficiently inherent challenges, which refer to both the institutional/policy setting as well as the structural rigidities in its labour market.

When it comes to youth unemployment and NEETs in particular, one could definitely refer to the lack of appropriate and consistent, or at least not conflicting, official data, which would allow researchers to build their cases and build evidence based interventions to meet NEETs needs. In that direction, a better coordination of local/regional and national policies, and even employment services offered seems to be pivotal.

An interesting development in recent years has been the commitment of public interventions to balance their mix of policies and invest more in active labour market policies. This is also pronounced under the reformed implementation plan of the Youth guarantee initiative. Still, in order to be effective, this requires a better coordination with organisations active in the field with close links to the target groups and with innovative ideas on how barriers could be tackled.

Moreover, when one focuses on the situation of NEETs, upskilling seems to be a promising priority in scheduled interventions. This could focus on both hard and soft skills in order to tackle deficiencies related to the future of work as well as to practical needs of youth willing to invest in improving and adding value in local activities.

An interesting window of opportunity seems to be opening in both Spain and Catalonia in strengthening the entrepreneurial spirit among NEETs youth. This should not be regarded as a monotonous effort to channel NEETs to create their own employment; although this is a promising direction, especially when it builds on the competitive advantages of well-educated youth. Upskilling and development of soft skills, which although they are closely related to entrepreneurship, will also prove beneficial for job-seekers as well, as they will improve their abilities to master the future employment requirements and challenges.

Finally special attention should be placed on initiatives, and thus interventions, focusing on migrants and, on a next step, on refugees. While information and data are scarce, their future role passes through their successful integration into the European labour market.

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