

Thinking Space No.35

Structure of NEETs in Poland

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The development of opportunities for young people and their integration into the labour market is fundamental for a thriving society in current times. Young people who are neither in employment, education or training (NEETs) have a high cost for any economy and in Poland, the economic loss due to the disengagement of young people is estimated to be above 2% (Mascherini et al. 2012).

Poland has impressively transformed itself over the last 3 decades – managing to achieve high economic growth and a constant reduction in unemployment simultaneously. It has overhauled its education sector and consistently achieves PISA results above the OECD average. At the same time, Poland faces very specific challenges: many people have left the country, there is a lack of low-skilled jobs and a labour shortage.

In addition, Poland suffers from comparatively low productivity levels. As the OECD (2018b) outlines there is an abundance of relatively unproductive microenterprises operating in mature sectors which employ a large share of the workforce. These need to modernise and improve their efficiency.

Poland spends only 0.01% of GDP on training programs within active labour market programs, whereas countries such as Austria, Finland and Denmark spend more than 0.45% on those programs (OECD 2018a). This might contribute to a lack of digital skills.

Participation in adult learning as part of life-long learning efforts also remains very low. Only 5.3% of persons aged 25 to 64 participate in education or training compared to 9.1% across the European Union (Kryk 2016). This might be driven by the dominance of small enterprises which have no overall strategy to expand the skills of its workers. Vocational training remains an issue as well.

Poland has some excellent educational statistics. The number of citizens with below upper secondary education is at 5%, only higher than in Korea with 2%. Almost 60% of 25 and 34-year-old Polish people have finished upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education. Graduation from tertiary education is below OECD and EU 23 average.

	Poland		OECD average		EU 23 average	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women
Below upper secondary	7%	4%	17%	14%	16%	12%
Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	59%	42%	46%	37%	48%	39%
Tertiary	34%	54%	38%	50%	36%	49%

Table 1: Educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds by gender

Source: OECD (2018a)

Poland has also very good education performance statistics and Polish pupils outperform their peers in other OECD countries in mathematics, reading and science as shown below.

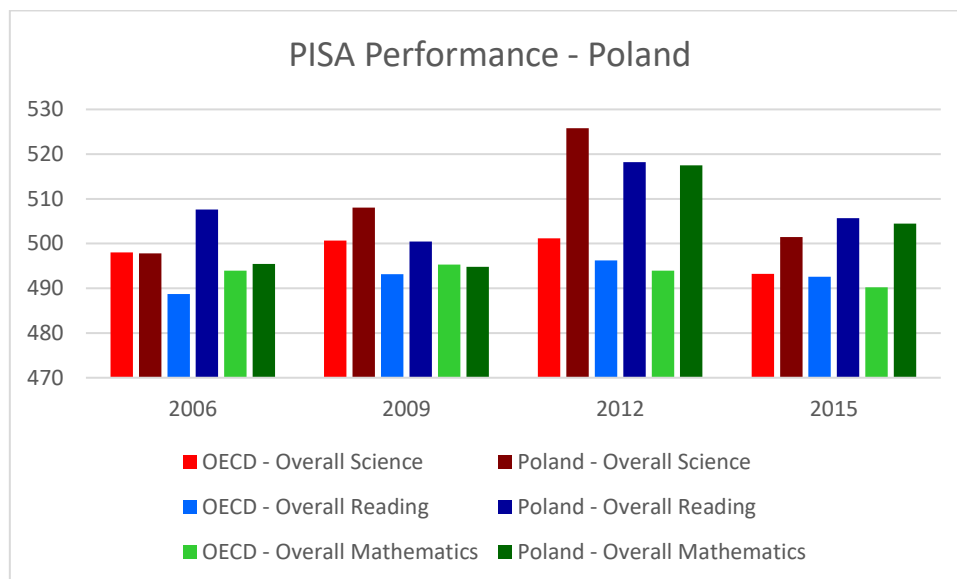


Figure 1: PISA results for Poland (2006, 2009, 2012, 2015)

Source: OECD (2019)

However, adult skills tested by the OECD show that young adults lack experience in solving problems in technology-rich environments. Poles underperform the OECD average significantly: improving skills in this field is a core policy recommendation for the Polish government.

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Overall, the picture of structure of NEETs in Poland is incomplete due to the fact that only Eurostat is providing reliable and representative data. Some research papers use rather small samples making it difficult to generalise (e.g. Kumpikaite–Valiūniene, Rollnik-Sadowska, and Glińska (2016). In addition, 60% of NEETs do not contact their local employment services (Saczyńska-Sokół 2018). Mascherini et al. (2012) define Poland as part of a cluster together with Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Poland. They share a higher proportion of inactive NEETs, but aside from this they do not share many other characteristics.

The number of young NEETs in Poland is below the European average and this has remained consistently below this average from 2008 to 2017 as shown in the figure below. ¹ There is a gender gap between the female and the male NEET rate, with the NEET rate among the female population higher than among the male population.

¹ The Polish average was above the European average from 2000 to 2007.

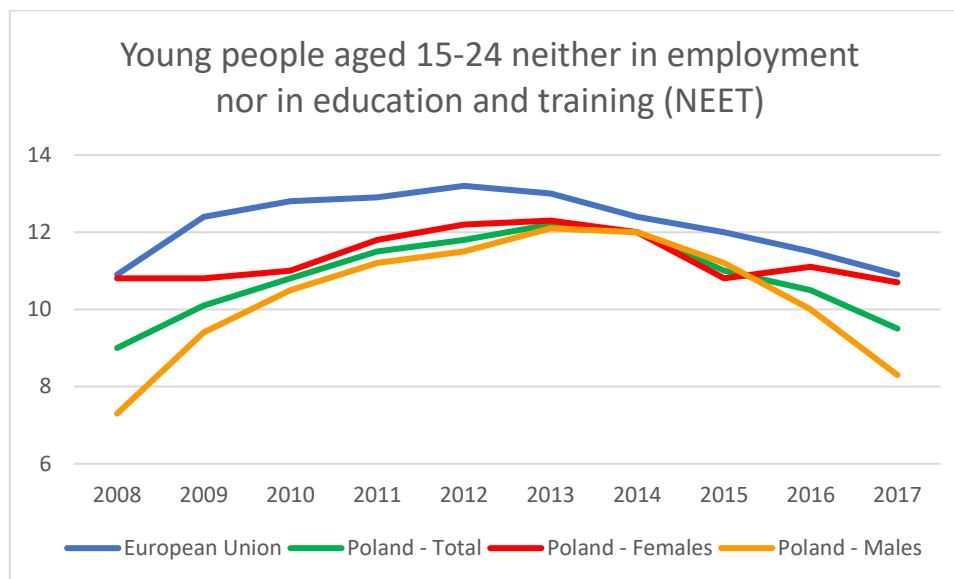


Figure 2: Young people aged 15-25 neither in employment nor in education and training

Source: Eurostat (2019)

The next table shows the NEET rate over different age groups. Given that there is mandatory schooling up to 18, the first age bracket should not be taken into consideration.

Poland has a NEET rate which is roughly in line with the European average.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Poland Total 15-17	0,7	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,5	0,5	:
European Union Total 15-17	3,3	3,2	3,0	3,1	3,0	2,7	2,7	2,8	2,7	2,9
Poland Total 18-24	12,3	13,8	14,5	15,4	15,9	16,4	16,0	14,7	14,1	12,8
European Union Total 18-24	14,0	16,1	16,6	16,8	17,2	17,1	16,4	15,8	15,2	14,3
Poland Total 25-29	19,3	20,5	21,6	21,4	22,1	22,7	21,2	20,5	18,9	18,0
European Union Total 25-29	17,0	18,9	19,7	19,9	20,7	21,0	20,4	19,7	18,8	17,7
Poland Total 30-34	18,6	18,3	19,2	19,7	20,1	20,5	19,7	18,4	18,2	17,6
European Union Total 30-34	17,3	18,9	19,6	19,8	20,3	20,5	19,8	19,4	19,1	18,1

Table 2: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and labour status (NEET rates) [edat_lfse_20]

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

The table below shows the NEET rate by educational attainment level.² In general, young people with high educational attainment are protected against unemployment. Poland seems to be a statistical outlier because those with low educational attainment levels are still protected from unemployment, even despite the loss of many jobs that require little-to-no qualifications.

² ISCED is the abbreviation for International Standard Classification of Education; The categories are ISCED 0–2 = pre-primary to lower secondary; ISCED 3–4 = upper secondary to post-secondary; ISCED 5–6 = tertiary.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
European Union - 28 countries - 0-2	15,6	15,1	15,4	16,9	17,5	18,5	18,8	18,7	17,3	16,7	16,3	15,7
Poland - 0-2	10,2	8,7	7,8	8,2	9,3	9,3	9,3	9,9	9,8	9,8	9,4	8,5
European Union - 28 countries - 3-4	13,9	12,9	12,5	14,4	14,9	15,1	15,7	15,9	15,4	14,9	14,2	13,3
Poland - 3-4	21,0	18,6	16,2	18,2	19,0	20,1	20,7	21,3	20,7	19,2	18,0	16,9
European Union - 28 countries 5-8	9,7	9,1	8,7	10,5	11,0	11,2	11,8	11,9	11,6	11,1	10,4	9,6
Poland -5-8	13,8	11,7	11,2	11,7	12,3	12,4	13,3	13,6	12,1	11,2	10,2	9,5

Table 3: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and educational attainment level (NEET rates) [yth_empl_160]

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

In general, it can be said that every country has its own legacies and challenges which need to be considered before planning interventions and policies.

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