NEETs in Luxembourg

Describing and understanding the issue for an improved response

Contents

Foreword

One of the tasks assigned to Luxembourg's National Youth Service (SNJ) is to support young people who have left the school system and are unable to join the labour market. In order to make SNJ's actions more effective for these young people (referred to as NEETs - Not in Education, Employment or Training) and propose measures compatible with their situation, we must understand them better. This is why, in 2013, SNJ, in collaboration with the Labour and Employment Unit of Luxembourg's Inspectorate General of Social Security (IGSS) and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), initiated a project, co-financed by the European Social Fund, with the aim of describing and understanding the "NEET" phenomenon.

Ultimately, due to the project's size and originality, it exceeds SNJ's needs. The approach is both holistic and cross-cutting. It is holistic because the aim was to understand the situation with which young people are faced in its entirety. It is cross-cutting because it leads to reflection in terms of measures to be taken to support young people, which will involve numerous areas of public intervention.

This publication presents the main results of the NEET project and comprises two sections. The first section summarises key results from several studies conducted as part of this project by the Labour and Employment Unit of IGSS and LISER[1]. The overall aim of these studies is threefold: firstly to describe the characteristics of young NEETs, secondly to evaluate the heterogeneity of their situation and thirdly to understand the causes of their difficulties.

The second section presents various proposals on developing public policies that may provide support to young NEETs. It aims to propose recommendations structured around major themes, addressing the diversity of young people facing difficulties and examining the issue from various angles. As such, the measures proposed are not limited to the findings from the studies cited above. They also include proposals elicited from regular consultations with the many Luxembourg stakeholders who help provide support to young people throughout Luxembourg. Said consultations, which were conducted at various stages in the project, strengthened the desire to both compare the results with the situation on the ground and formulate concrete, useful recommendations. The proposals also examine the analyses and debates from Luxembourg and abroad that address the issue of young people in difficulty. Some proposed measures may already be in place, at least partially. Nevertheless, we felt it important to acknowledge them so we could underline their importance in the fight against the NEET phenomenon.

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[1] Zanardelli, M. (2015) "Les NEETs dans une perspective dynamique - Analyse à partir des données administratives", Cahier statistique, IGSS, 24 pages.
Hauret, L. (2017) (1) "Les NEETs au Luxembourg : une population hétérogène", LISER, Report on behalf of SNJ, 39 pages.
Hauret, L. (2017) (2) "Lien entre décrochage scolaire et statut de NEET", LISER, Report on behalf of SNJ, 29 pages.

Section 1. NEETs in Luxembourg : analysing the diversity of situations and understanding root causes

NEETs in Luxembourg

Mireille Zanardelli (IGSS Labour and Employment Unit)

1. Study objective : to better understand young people in difficulty to take better action

The studies presented[2] in this first document were conducted as part of a project initiated by the National Youth Service (SNJ) and in collaboration with the Labour and Employment Unit (CET) of the Inspectorate General of Social Security (IGSS) and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER). This work, co-financed by the European Social Fund and conducted from 2013 to 2017, aims to better understand young people in difficulty, by understanding the vast array of situations and by identifying the root causes of their difficulties. This diverse public policy enables measures to be proposed, which will be adapted to the problems that young people encounter.

2. Young people in difficulty dealing with the NEET concept

As our objective is to better understand young people in difficulty, we must first agree on a way to identify them, but there is no operational definition of a young person in difficulty. Consequently, the approach adopted in this study is as follows :

- First, we identified all young people who, at a given point, were not working or in training (initial or continuing) ; these young people match the NEET concept[3].

- Given that the NEET concept includes a vast array of situations in terms of vulnerability and precariousness, we then sought to identify the diversity of situations to which the concept may refer in order to improve the definition of cases in which public support is required.

3. Measuring the gravity of NEETs' circumstances : the need for a holistic approach...

To measure the gravity of NEETs' circumstances, one must simultaneously consider all elements that can contribute to the situation. If only a partial view of their situation is available, as is the case with most studies on NEETs[4] , there may be certain vulnerable situations that are either not analysed at all or are underestimated. We proposed a holistic approach in order to avoid this problem. The full details of all the study considerations are presented below. Meanwhile, we will focus on those taken into account in the study and which are seen as significant advances in comparison to other studies :

- **the persistence and recurrence of NEET status** : being NEET at one given point is not necessarily a problem ; what is a problem, however, is either **recurrence** of the situation in the trajectory of young people, or the status' **persistence** in the medium/long term. However, almost all work related to NEETs has a static dimension and does not take into account the recurrence and persistence of the issue, which is essential if the objective is to measure the gravity of the situation ;

- the level of **marginalisation** of young people due, on the one hand, to their **alienation from the labour market** and public institutions involved in caring for young people in difficulty and, on the other, due to the existence of **a drug or alcohol addiction** and deviant behaviour. This point is essential ; the challenge is to convince young people in difficulty to go to institutions that can help them, which is necessary for implementing public policies ;

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[2] See footer on page 1.
[3] For a detailed definition of the NEET concept and its interpretation, see Zanardelli (2015).
[4] For a literature review, see Hauret Laetitia (2017) (1).

- measuring the **cognitive skills** of young people in difficulty ; the objective here is to distinguish, among NEETs, those for which it is reasonable to envisage integration into the primary market and those whose skills might be insufficient.

To our knowledge, there are no studies that analyse the phenomenon of NEETs by adopting an approach that is as comprehensive as that which we propose.

4. ... implemented using administrative data complemented by an ad hoc survey

The scope of the project required an original approach, which firstly involved using as much administrative data as possible and, secondly, supplementing them with an ad hoc survey gathering information missing from administrative files.

4.1. Using administrative data to develop trajectories of young people

From a number of administrative sources that we combined, we created a file called the "Young Persons" file, which contains data on all young people aged 16 to 24 residing in Luxembourg (and registered with the Luxembourg social security system) and whose situation we can track from month to month (employed, in training - initial or continuous - or NEET). From these monthly situations, we were able to develop the trajectories of young people and thus measure the persistence and recurrence of NEET status.

This measurement instrument is all the more interesting in that it guarantees the comprehensiveness of the phenomenon[5], which is not the case for other administrative data related to young people in difficulty, in particular the Agency for the Development of Employment (ADEM) and the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (MENJE). Indeed, the ADEM files only include job seekers who have registered with them. Similarly, the Ministry of Education's files containing information on early school leavers – one can easily envisage the links between this and becoming NEET soon after – only include school leavers from the past. However, the notions of early school leavers, job seekers and NEETs do not completely overlap and there are no explicit links between them. Therefore, neither the files from ADEM nor those from MENJE would provide a satisfactory understanding of the NEET phenomenon.

The "Young Persons" file, constituted as part of our project, can be updated on a regular and recurring basis. **The study thus enabled the creation of a permanent tool** to monitor changes to the situation of young people in Luxembourg and could be used to guide public policies in their favour.

4.2. Using survey data to gather more qualitative information and supplement administrative data

While administrative data is advantageous in terms of comprehensiveness, it is often very poor in terms of the information available. However, as already demonstrated, support for young people in difficulty requires a multitude of dimensions to be addressed, which most often are missing from administrative files (cognitive skills, addictions, living conditions, family environment, etc.). It is for this reason that administrative data was also used, along with a survey of NEETs and non-NEETs[6].

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[5] There are, however, some limitations to this comprehensiveness. See Zanardelli (2015).
[6] For more details on this survey, see Hauret (2017) (1).

5. Results : what trajectories, vulnerabilities and characteristics do young NEETs face ?

5.1. Persistence and recurrence of NEET status

Within the cohort studied, which consisted of young people who became NEETs between September 2011 and March 2012, it is noted that :

- 64 % emerge from NEET status within two years. Of these, 50 % go into employment (two thirds within the first six months) and 14 % into education or training (two-thirds within the first six months). It should also be noted that among those NEETs who emerge from NEET status, over two-thirds do not experience recurrence within the next 18 months, which is the case for the remaining third[7] ;

- 16 % of NEETs evaluated were in the same situation two years later ;

- Finally, 20 % of the NEETs were thought to have left the country between March 2012 and March 2014[8].

Persistence and recurrence of NEET status

Persistence in NEET status for at least 24 months	16 %
Leave Luxembourg	20 %
Emerging to employment, education or training, with no recurrence	44 %
Emerging to employment, education or training, with recurrence	20 %

Sources : IGSS-ADEM-MENJE-CEDIES, 2012-2014

Overall, persistence and recurrence in NEET status affects about one in three young people. Therefore, the results proposed seem to render it possible to put the magnitude of the NEET phenomenon into perspective. When the persistence and recurrence of the phenomenon is not considered, its gravity is probably overestimated. It is not possible to distinguish between temporary situations that will most often be resolved without public intervention and situations of greater concern, which will continue and reduce chances for those young people to integrate. Producing dynamic indicators (which would allow for this to be taken into account) is complex. However, the figures presented here clearly illustrate the difference in perspective that static and dynamic indicators can provide and encourage reflection on how to take a dynamic approach into account for the NEET issue.

It is important to note that, by using data that only covers a two-year period, as done here, it is not possible to observe the likely links between recurrence and persistence. However, it would also be interesting, where appropriate, to assess how persistence and recurrence are formulated in the same trajectory, by prolonging the observation period. Several situations can be considered. One can indeed imagine certain events in which persistence as a NEET may occur. For example, following several non-virtuous recurrences ; instead of the young person now following a positive path of gradually accumulating skills and experience, they are placed on the opposite path to a dynamic of exclusion which, ultimately, causes them to give up. In reality, persistence and recurrence may also correspond to different situations in which the two phenomena are not necessarily juxtaposed. Persistence as a NEET may actually be a voluntary choice on the part of some young people who decide to travel, for example, or young mothers raising their child(ren) and for whom the voluntary dimension of their situation is undoubtedly less systematic.

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[7] The recurrence frequency after 18 months estimated here corresponds to a minimum value insofar as not all young people are observed over an identical range of time.

[8] Leaving the social security system is deemed to constitute leaving the country. Of those who leave the social security system, 80 % are foreign nationals and a large majority do not appear to return to Luxembourg over the period studied.

5.2. Array of differences in young people in difficulty: very different levels of vulnerability associated with diverse situations

The evaluations conducted based on the survey were aimed at identifying groups of NEETs with common characteristics. The elements on which this classification was based include:

- employability of young people, prevented by their cognitive skills and level of education,

- alienation of young people from the labour market and training systems (initial or continuing), measured by the existence of active steps to emerge from inactivity or find employment,

- level of support from those around them,

- the existence of deviant behaviours,

- the level of financial and material precariousness,

- health status,

- existence of family pressures.

The table below provides a short description of the seven groups identified in our evaluations.

	Cognitive skills	Level of education	Existence of active steps to emerge from inactivity or find employment	Support from family and friends	Financial hardship	Deviant behaviour	Health	Family pressures	Frequency of persistence /recurrence	Share of group in all NEETs
G1[9]. NEETs in transition	green	green	green	green	green	green	green	green	20 %	15 %
G2. NEETs with health problems	green	red	green	green	green	green	red	green	41 %	7 %
G3. NEETs actively searching for a job, but finding it difficult to integrate	green	red	green	red	red	green	green	green	81 %	5 %
G4. NEETs by choice	red	green	red	green	green	green	green	green	53 %	6 %
G5. NEETs with deviant behaviour	green	red	red	green	green	red	green	green	59 %	10 %
G6. Young NEET mothers, low human capital	red	red	red	red	green	green	green	red	73 %	5 %
G7. Demotivated NEETs finding it difficult to integrate	red	red	red	red	red	green	green	green	64 %	9 %

NB: green boxes indicate that the group's situation is positive, while red boxes indicate that it is negative.

Groups of NEETs can be structured into three broad categories of young people, defined by shared characteristics.

The first category, which combines the first three groups (G1, G2 and G3), is characterised by the intensity of active steps being taken to enter the labour market or resume studies. In other words, NEETs in this first category, notable for their low cognitive skills, remain close to the labour market or training system and show a willingness to emerge from NEET status, which seems to be fundamental in terms of virtuous dynamics and chances of integration. The first group (G1 "NEETs in transition", 15 %) does not appear to be vulnerable; it does not experience any of the problems studied. Therefore, the status of NEET is like to be transitory since these young people in the integration phase have a chance of success considering their employability. The second group (G2 "NEETs with health problems", 7 %) includes young people who report having health problems, which has led them to fail at school and therefore acquire a low level of education, despite increased cognitive skills. The vulnerability of this group is more worrying since their health problems seem to prevent their integration. The third group (G3 "NEETs intensively searching for a job, but finding it difficult to integrate", 5 %), despite their active efforts, is experiencing great difficulty when it comes to integration, as evidenced by the frequency of NEET status recurrence. This group is characterised by a cycle of activity and inactivity or unemployment. Their situation is aggravated by a form of social isolation and a certain level of financial precariousness. However, the intensity

9   The numbering varies from the one used in the Hauret report, 2016 (1)

of the search for a solution to emerge from inactivity or unemployment means that they are on the "radar" of those institutions in charge of young people in difficulty, which, while insufficient, is a prerequisite for public support and thus a greater chance of success.

This first category comprises 27 % of NEETS, 15 % of whom seem to be capable of integrating relatively easily.

The second category of young people, in groups G4 and G5, is characterised by the practical absence of active steps to emerge from NEET status, but by the existence of employability. Young people in this category have been alienated from the labour market or training system, but seem to be able to integrate thanks to their level of employability. For group G4 ("NEETs by choice", 6 %), the NEET status seems to be a choice ; young people in this group seem to accept their inactivity. On the other hand, group G5 (NEETs with deviant behaviour, 10 %) includes young people who display deviant behaviours. Helping them integrate into society is therefore a specialist care matter, the implementation of which depends on the possibility and difficulty of contacting these young people. These young people displaying deviant behaviour are those who frequently experience persistence in NEET status.

This second category of young people considered employable but taking few steps to emerge from their inactivity represents 16 % of NEETs, 10 % of whom display deviant behaviour.

The third category of NEETs, groups G6 and G7, includes young people who say that they are taking few steps to emerge from inactivity or unemployment ; their low level of qualification and low cognitive skills make it difficult to acquire training that is compatible with integration into the primary market. The first group (G6, "Young NEET mothers, low human capital", 5 %) includes women who are believed to have left the private sphere and education sector to have children, since this group is composed mainly of women with children. The second group (G7, "Demotivated NEETs finding it difficult to integrate", 9 %) finds itself in a situation of withdrawal from the labour market. In this group, two-thirds of young people are confronted with the persistence or recurrence of NEET status. Young people in this group have many problems : a certain level of alienation from the labour market, coupled with a lack of motivation, a form of social isolation, a certain financial precariousness and, above all, low employability. The level of vulnerability of this group is very high, since it includes young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have a trajectory that is already marked by failure and exclusion ; many are early school leavers.

This third category of young people, extremely alienated from the labour market and training system, with poor integration, account for 14 % of NEETs.

The seven groups described above account for 57 % of NEETs. In other words, 57 % of NEETs could be classified into groups whose characteristics are sufficiently polarised to provide a fairly precise overview of their situation. However, for the remaining 43 %, none of the analyses conducted highlight a specific profile that differs from other situations. Indeed, from the point of view of employability, the remaining NEETs have average profiles ; from a social point of view, they are not marginalised and do not bear any of the major difficulties identified in previous groups (no deviant behaviours, health problems, family pressures, not totally abandoned by the labour market, even if their active approaches remain moderate). Further studies need to be conducted so we can better understand this residual group. In particular, the analysis of post-survey trajectories will help remove some of these issues.
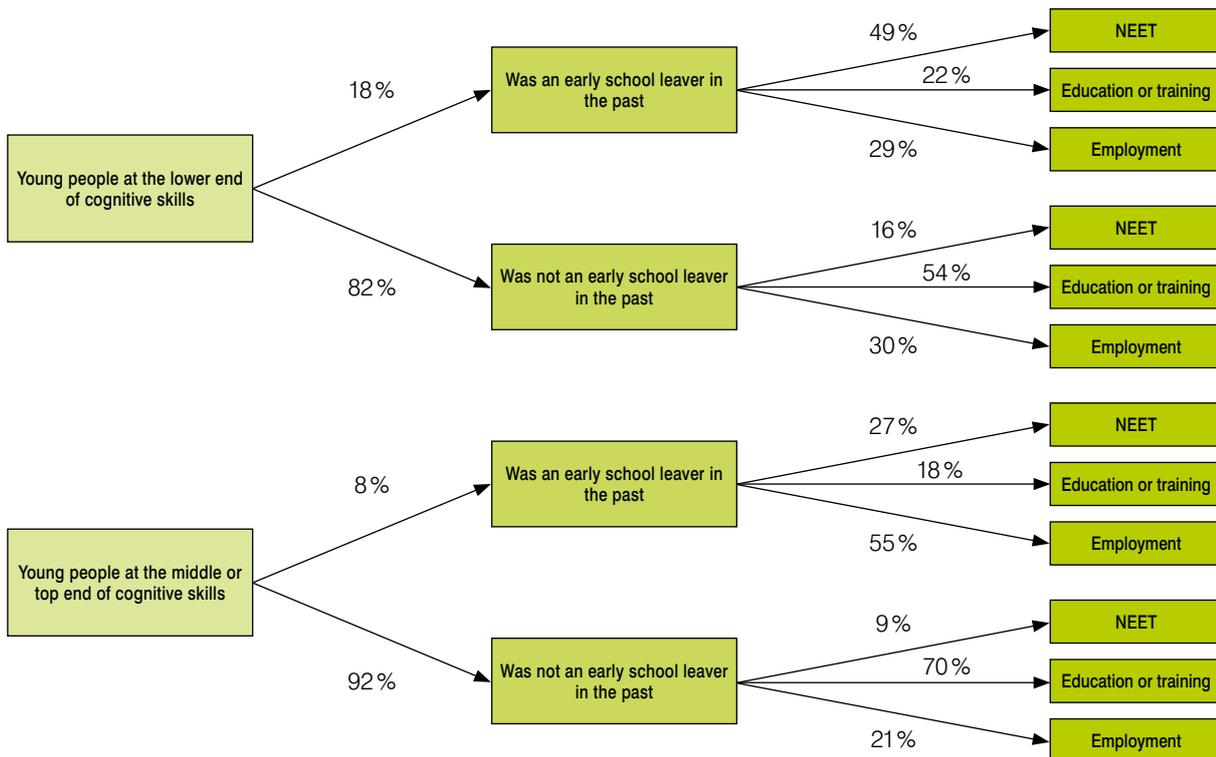
5.3. Determinants that lead to NEET : do cognitive skills and dropping out of school play a role ?

The survey of NEETs made a link between early school leavers and NEET status. This link is obviously not unequivocal :

1. early school leavers are at increased risk of becoming NEET (37 % of early school leavers become NEETs compared to 11 % of non-early school leavers),

2. but not all early school leavers become NEETs (this is the case for 63 % of early school leavers) and

3. not all NEETs are early school leavers (this is the case for 70 % of NEETs).

The following diagram shows the different trajectories that link school dropout and NEET status. These trajectories were distinguished according to the young persons' cognitive skills, which are considered as a determining element of their trajectory.

Based on this diagram, we are firstly interested in the link between dropping out of school and NEET since, as we will see, dealing with the former helps in the fight against the latter. We will then evaluate cases where dropping out of school does not correspond with NEET in order to identify, if necessary, elements that allow some early school leavers to avoid NEET status. Finally, we will analyse the opposite cases, i.e. non-early school leavers who become NEETs, in order to understand the causes of these situations.

Young people at the lower end of cognitive skills

- 18 % → Was an early school leaver in the past
  - 49 % → NEET
  - 22 % → Education or training
  - 29 % → Employment
- 82 % → Was not an early school leaver in the past
  - 16 % → NEET
  - 54 % → Education or training
  - 30 % → Employment

Young people at the middle or top end of cognitive skills

- 8 % → Was an early school leaver in the past
  - 27 % → NEET
  - 18 % → Education or training
  - 55 % → Employment
- 92 % → Was not an early school leaver in the past
  - 9 % → NEET
  - 70 % → Education or training
  - 21 % → Employment

5.3.1. Link between early school leavers and NEET : tackling the former to fight the latter

Regardless of the level of cognitive skills, the risk of becoming NEET is about 3 times greater for early school leavers than for non-early school leavers[10]. Among the early school leavers with medium or high cognitive skills, 27 % became NEET, which is the case for just 9 % of non-early school leavers with the same cognitive skills. For young people with lower abilities, the ratio between the two figures remains the same (about 3) but the levels are much higher ; they increase to 49 % and 16 %, which is explained by the fact that the risk of dropping out of school is even higher when cognitive skills are low. Young people with relatively low cognitive skills are twice as likely to drop out of school (18 % compared with 8 %).

It is interesting to note, however, that schooling seems to mitigate the impact of low cognitive skills on the trajectory of young people. Among non-early school leavers, 85 % of young people with relatively low cognitive skills are not NEET, which is similar to those with relatively higher cognitive skills (91 %). Likewise, higher cognitive skills reduce the incidence of dropping out of school : 27 % of early school leavers with medium or high cognitive skills become NEET, while 49 % of early school leavers have low abilities.

Dropping out of school not only increases the risk of becoming NEET, it also makes the situation worse ; NEETs who are early school leavers are faced with a more precarious situation than non-early school leaver NEETs, in particular with regard to the length of the NEET episode.

As a result, tackling the problem of early school leavers reduces the risk of becoming NEET. It is in this perspective that the study examined the determinants of dropping out of school[11]. Several factors explain the early school leaver rate and many studies have highlighted them : gender, social origin, first language, cognitive and non-cognitive skills, etc. However, all of these elements do not help explain the phenomenon to the same magnitude. This is why we have endeavoured not to list the determinants of dropping out of school, but prioritised them in order to identify those which have the most significant effect and which could therefore promote rethinking public policy. These risk factors are :

- The death of a parent or divorced parents are events that greatly increase the risk of dropping out of school. If this is known beforehand, the magnitude of its impact can be decreased : among students who experienced one of these events, the risk of dropping out of school, when everything else is equal, multiplied by almost 4 compared to the risk of not leaving school early.

- The number of the siblings also plays a decisive role, regardless of parents' income level. Students with three or more siblings are twice as likely to become early school leavers.

- With identical cognitive skills (which, as we have already seen, play an important role in becoming an early school leaver), repeating a school year also doubles the risk. It is difficult to know whether repeating a school year is the cause of dropping out of school or whether it is a red flag.

- Low morale in schools or taking non-chosen subjects also play a major role : all other things being equal, these two factors multiply the risk of dropping out of school by 1.5 and 2, respectively (compared to the risk of not dropping out of school).

- On the other hand, students' non-cognitive skills such as tenacity, openness to experience, conscientiousness, pleasantness, neuroticism, attitude towards risk and the future do not seem to be counterparts to a disadvantaged social background or weak cognitive skills. Of course, there are examples of students who owe their academic achievement to their exemplary tenacity, despite predispositions and an otherwise very unfavourable environment. However, these cases are not the norm and non-cognitive qualities are not often determinant in compensating for the existence of negative factors.

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[10] An early school leaver is defined as a young person interrupting his or her school education without finishing upper secondary education. As shown in the diagram, some early school leavers find employment, while others return to education or training and some become NEET.

[11] For a detailed presentation of the results, see Hauret Laetitia (2017) "Lien entre décrochage scolaire et statut de NEET", LISER, report on behalf of SNJ, 39 pages.

The main determinants of the above-presented early school leavers are certain avenues that can be exploited to prevent young people dropping out of school. They call for intensifying prevention measures, by setting up early warning systems that can detect young people at risk. We will come back to possible measures in the latter part of this document.

However, whatever efforts are made, it is clear that some young people will face the problem of dropping out of school. Not everyone can realistically avoid the problem, either due to lacking the means to access upper secondary school, or because, despite abilities that could prevent them from dropping out, some teenagers make bad choices that may be related to the fact that they seek to express malaise due to adolescence itself. Therefore, the question is a matter of outlooks and alternatives that can give early school leavers the chance to break the link – which is certainly not unique but relatively strong – between dropping out of school and becoming a NEET. Some trajectories will also be proposed in the latter part of this document.

5.3.2. When being an early school leaver is not associated with becoming NEET

As we have just seen, the risk of becoming NEET is greater for early school leavers, but the fact remains that not all early school leavers become NEET. Overall, 63 % of them return to study or find employment. This figure is 51 % for early school leavers with low cognitive skills and 73 % for those with medium or high abilities. This fact helps us understand the mechanisms that lead a young early school leaver to find their way back to school or enter the labour market. It is in this perspective that we have evaluated the characteristics of young people who, despite dropping out of school, benefited from a virtuous trajectory leading them back to school or professional integration. The idea underlying this analysis is to identify, where possible, the elements that can break the link between dropping out of school and becoming a NEET.

Some results suggest that young people who break out from the "early school leaver-NEET" system are those who are most "gifted" among the less "gifted" : for example, young early school leavers who find their way back to school or who integrate into the labour market are more frequently those who have higher cognitive skills than those early school leavers who become NEET, when health problems are not a factor. They are also more likely to have parents who completed upper secondary school (52 % compared with 40 %). Therefore, the importance placed on education by the parents of young early school leavers who were able to emerge from NEET status is also significant : only 10 % of the latter report having had to carry out domestic tasks during childhood instead of homework compared with 16 % for early school leavers remaining in NEET status.

However, one element seems perhaps less common : the value young people place on the concept of work. Therefore, 52 % of early school leavers who emerged from NEET status think that being employed is necessary to fully develop capabilities compared with 40 % of early school leavers who remain in NEET status ; 42 % also think receiving money without having to work is embarrassing compared with 33 % ; finally, 54 % believe that work is a duty towards society compared with 39 %. The value placed on work seems to be a driving force, regardless of other characteristics, which encourages young people to make every effort to emerge from NEET status. In this context, conducting programmes that strengthen certain values could be promising.

As mentioned in 5.3.1., the link between students' non-cognitive skills (tenacity, openness to experience, conscientiousness, etc.) and the risk of dropping out of school has not been established. However, it appears that they may prove to be a slight advantage in placing the early school leaver on a virtuous path. They help encourage a return to education or integration into the labour market. This means that if programmes that help develop non-cognitive skills are proposed, young early school leavers could be helped to emerge from NEET status. Such programmes are implemented in some countries, for example the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme, introduced in some schools in the United Kingdom, which aims to develop the social and emotional skills of children and adolescents.

5.3.3. When non-early school leavers become NEETs

Evidently, staying in school does not always protect young people from the risk of becoming NEET. Indeed, 11% of young people who finish school become NEET, of which a third are classed as vulnerable NEETs.

Similarly to the findings of early school leavers not becoming NEETs, some results suggest that young people who complete school and become NEETs are those who are the least "gifted" among the more "gifted". In part, this group of young people therefore have the same risk factors as early school leavers who become NEETs; they are more likely to have lived in a poorly-equipped family environment in terms of culture, have experienced financial difficulties and had limited homework time. They are also proportionally more likely to report suffering from health problems that limit their activity, or have family burdens. On average they have lower cognitive skills. However, we noted a characteristic of NEETs who completed their school education: they are more likely to be born in a foreign country (61% compared with 48% of NEETs who did not drop out of school). This element is most likely explained by the fact that some of these young people certainly have a higher level of secondary education[12], which was probably acquired in their country of origin and therefore may be less valuable in Luxembourg.

This proximity between the group of NEET early school leavers and NEETs who completed their school education is evidence of the fact that there is a halo around upper secondary studies, in which those who graduated from upper secondary schools are not clearly distinguishable from those who did not. This means that this level of education is not always enough to escape NEET status. This observation raises questions about the relevance of indicators such as those developed on a European level: does reducing the proportion of young people with at least upper secondary education to less than 10% make sense if we have not checked that this level confers a sufficient level of employability for the labour market?

However, one may be more surprised to find that some young people who do not drop out of school with medium or high cognitive skills become NEETs. They represent 9% of the latter. We find that they have the same risk factors as those presented previously (family pressures, health problems, families less culturally adapted, less time devoted to education in the family, work ethics, etc.). For some, a high standard of living can be a disincentive to young people wanting to integrate because their needs are covered by their parents. However, these young people are in NEET status for less time than their counterparts with lower cognitive skills (7 months compared to 10 months).

The link between dropping out of school and becoming NEET highlights, on the one hand, the complexity of such a link, which is not unique, between the two phenomena and, on the other hand, the existence of elements which may occur at various levels, or place the young person in a downward trajectory, leading to dropping out of school and NEET status, or on the contrary to break this link and enter it on an upward trajectory. Complementary analyses mean that the results can be further refined. They will include an analysis of the trajectories over a longer term, which will help us better understand the phenomena of persistence and recurrence of NEET status depending on whether or not the young person dropped out of school.

[12] the level below that is considered early school leavers.

Section 2.
What public policy measures can support NEETs?

What public policy measures can

Written by : SNJ, in cooperation with the IGSS Labour and Employment Unit and LISER

Evaluations presented here highlight the diversity of causes that can lead to NEET status. Specifically, they show that the causes are manifold and can occur at different times in the life cycle. Indeed, as we have shown, becoming NEET may be related to a lack of cognitive skills, to academic failure despite abilities that would have been enough to achieve a certain level of education, to the fact that young people's skills do not match business needs despite a certain level of qualification.

Those that are specifically related to academic achievement can also collide, at different times in the life cycle, with either health-related or family events that may alter the trajectory of the child, adolescent or young adult.

Given this, we questioned the relevance of a comprehensive framework in which it would be possible to coordinate all measures that can define the lives of young people and to ultimately give them the best chance of integrating society and the labour market.

The objective could be to have various measures, throughout the life cycle, that slot together so as to provide a new perspective for those who emerge from the previous step without success. Many elements of this already exist. However, it is clear that they seem to be more or less disconnected from each other ; they do not fall within an overall framework, **the centre of which is first the child, then the student and finally the young adult.**

Discussions held as part of this project have highlighted some of the blocks that prevent such an "integrated" approach from being implemented. Firstly, the **lack of cross-cutting**, sometimes due to the rigidity of legal frameworks, under which the missions of various partners working with young people in difficulty fall and, secondly, the **fragmentation of information** on young people collected by various stakeholders, which is legitimised by the issue of personal data confidentiality and protection.

In this second section, we aim to contribute to the discussion on a comprehensive approach by presenting proposals based on different periods of children's, students' and young people's life cycles.

As stated in the foreword, this second part presents measures based on the findings that led us to the analyses in this project, but also measures found through regular consultations with many Luxembourg stakeholders who contribute to the support of young people in Luxembourg[1], and finally the measures mentioned in current discussions ongoing in Luxembourg and elsewhere, or recently-published documents on the issue of young people in difficulty[2]. These consultations identified proposals that are not limited to one field of action in a single department, but seek a holistic and cross-cutting approach to the NEET phenomenon. This is another way in which the project is unique. As such, we would like to thank all of those who in one way or another contributed to the debate and to the achievement of this summary document with a mission to fuel the political debate on young people in difficulty.

Some measures that we describe have already been implemented, either in part or in full. We decided nonetheless to present them all, so as to be as exhaustive as possible and to strengthen the political debate on the issue of young people in difficulty.

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[1] List of partners involved in consultations : ADEM, MTEESS, CEDIES, IGSS, LISER, INFPC, IUIL, UNI.lu, STATEC, Ministère de la famille (SNAS and Division Solidarité), various services of the MENJE (ALJ, CPOS, Maison de l'orientation, SCRIPT, analysis and statistics service, youth service, SNJ).

[2] See the bibliography in Hauret (2017) (1).

Preventing and taking action in the early years : measures to prevent school failure in children and school dropout in adolescents

Below we present a list of measures, some of which have already been implemented, which form part of a logic to prevent dropping out of school. They are presented chronologically based on young people's trajectory.

Improve cognitive skills in early childhood :

- Improve the quality of education at the level of education and care services,

- Facilitate access to education and care services, including for children from disadvantaged backgrounds so they have a better chance of success,

- Support language learning.

Reduce school failure in childhood :

- Develop appropriately-sized classes for young people with learning difficulties (in particular due to language),

- Develop selective academic support,

- Develop "learning to learn" education, which would help young people to train at any age,

- Develop cognitive and non-cognitive skills (although, for the latter, effects do not seem to be very significant) – programmes that can develop the social and emotional skills of children and adolescents,

- Improve cooperation between schools and the Education and Care Services (cooperation between formal and non-formal education).

Reduce the number of early school leavers in adolescence :

- Make young people in school aware of the reality of the job market and their own abilities (some actors in the field indicate that young people sometimes overestimate the chances of finding a job without qualifications, this ignorance may not curb their desire to drop out of school),

- Develop a coherent and preventive approach to dropping out of school (based on this study, but also from all other studies in Luxembourg) ; detect, as systematically as possible, the main factors that increase the risk of dropping out of school, in order to highlight this to children facing any of these risks : occurrence of a death, divorce, illness, many siblings, etc. In particular, this approach requires parents to be aware of the need to inform the school should there be any serious family events that may have a major impact on the risk of dropping out of school. It also requires teachers to educate and organise interaction between teachers and school support services (socio-educational, psycho-social support services, etc.),

- Develop measures to improve, where necessary, the appropriate school climate within the institution,

- Develop reflection on orientation issues (to avoid imposing choices as much as possible, particularly with regard to vocational training).

Diversify school provision :

- Promote vocational training,

- Facilitate access to learning, especially for struggling students,

- Develop second chance facilities,

- Develop extracurricular training programmes. Some young people may be discouraged by both school and the labour market ; a comprehensive support programme on the social, behavioural and professional level should be undertaken. For these young people, extracurricular integration programmes should be proposed as well as those for school reintegration and programmes for training and work-life preparation.

Preventing and acting to reduce the consequences of extracurricular risk : with particular attention to certain risk groups

As the OECD report indicates[3], the success of programmes for young people in difficulty is directly related to the recognition of characteristics of certain groups. It is for this reason that we are taking stock of proposals concerning specific problems.

For young people who report having health problems, which caused their academic failure and thus a low level of education, despite high cognitive skills, preventive measures must be implemented to better deal with disability or illness in schools. There could be a number of dimensions to these policies :

- Strengthening detection measures for children suffering from illness,

- Making parents aware of the need to inform the school, and not only give information to the School Medical Service, but also teaching staff in order to create synergies and improve the child's care,

- Avoiding discontinuities in the care of children suffering from illnesses, particularly during transition from primary to secondary education, and also between school and youth extracurricular services,

- Improving learning about civic aspects of managing differences and developing peer support,

- Promoting the inclusion of children with illnesses,

- Developing educational concepts in order to make the school offer more flexible to meet specific needs and ensure individual support for the children in question,

- Allocating resources for the recruitment of staff dedicated to helping the children and young people in question to detect and develop their skills,

- Developing a career counselling service tailored to the target group,

- Insofar as the offer of protected workshops is insufficient and that some of the young people in difficulty can claim some expertise, one must reflect on increasing the supply of work for young people with disabilities and the appeal of work contracts for employers.

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[3] "The NEET challenge: What can be done for jobless and disengaged youth", OCDE, 2016, 67 pages.

It seems essential that governments take ownership of such policies, which is already underway in many cases, to avoid inflicting a double or even triple penalty on the young people in question : disability or sickness, plus school failure, plus exclusion from the labour market. The measures proposed here could help break this vicious circle and offer the young people in question the prospect of a virtuous circle that helps them integrate socially and professionally.

With regard to the marginalisation of some young people with an addiction problem or with deviant behaviour, the school's role can only complement the family's role. Measures should be developed based on the following topics :

- Strengthen cooperation with parents,

- Develop preventive public health and anti-addiction policies for adolescents to help these young people, who still have a relatively high degree of employability, emerge from NEET status,

- Educate teachers on this issue so they can identify and report students at risk. All teaching staff could take action, which would increase the chances of detection and care of pupils in the process of becoming marginalised.

Taking action after school to assist young people in difficulty : strengthening or creating employability

The issue of employability, which our analysis showed plays a major role in the risk of becoming NEET requires **the implementation of a number of measures that are coordinated as part of a global framework**, to take into account the varying situations of young people leaving the school system.

Efforts made as part of the Guarantee to young people to improve **coordination and cooperation between services** are a step in the right direction, but need to be extended and more in-depth :

- There is a wide range of measures/offers for young people in difficulty. These offers are supported by different ministries, which makes coordination difficult. A first step could be to develop an inventory of existing measures, stating their respective target audience.

- Other measures could also be implemented, such as the creation of a legal basis for internships. These would include young people from technical secondary education or secondary education who are not yet enrolled in higher education.

- As part of the Guarantee to young people, it would be interesting to go even further in the collaboration between various actors providing measures for young people.

- As part of this coordinated approach, it is important to involve businesses in raising awareness of the difficulties of the population, so that their available support can be advertised and encourage companies' social solidarity approach.

A life-long training policy also plays an important role in young people's employability. We must ensure that training is in line with the needs of young people.

Above all, detection programmes for young people struggling to get on the "radar" of competent actors

To act and support young people in difficulty, it is essential that they are on the "radar" of at least one of the actors that can provide support. Evaluation of the link between NEETs and job seekers highlights a significant gap between NEETs and ADEM. Indeed, only 42 % of the cohort of NEETs analysed in this study are registered with ADEM and among those who have been NEET for at least two years, 62 % are not known to ADEM throughout the period. But the prerequisite for intervening with NEETs in difficulty is that they must be registered with at least one public institution that provides support to young people. It is therefore essential to consider which measures should be implemented to ensure that NEETs in difficulty turn to public institutions responsible for providing support to young people. Different ways of encouraging young people in difficulty to approach institutional partners may be considered :

- Reconciling a number of services to provide greater visibility to existing offers and locating them in the same building. The establishment of the Maison de l'orientation is a step in the right direction,

- Increasing cooperation between institutional partners and social services, youth centres and services for young people.

- Advertising existing offers so as to reach both young people and their parents.

The existence of a financial incentive for young people to register with ADEM already exists but it seems that this is not well known or used. Young people under 21 who leave school and do not have enough contributions may benefit from unemployment benefits after 6 months of being registered with ADEM (corresponding to 70 % of Luxembourg's minimum wage for those with no qualifications). It would be interesting to count the NEETs not registered with ADEM who would qualify for this benefit in order to evaluate the proportion of young people who would return to the employment service if they were better informed about this service.

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