



INCLUSION OF YOUTH NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING (NEET YOUTH)

Chisinau 2017



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INCLUSION OF YOUTH NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING (NEET YOUTH)

Sociological study

Chisinau 2017

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UN Population Fund**

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INTRODUCTION

The access to education and employment for young people is a priority and, at the same time, one of the main concern of Moldova's authorities, given that there are still certain difficulties in integrating young people into the education system and labour market, which causes a low valorisation of youth potential.

Traditional indicators that describe the labour force and its participation in the labour market (activity and inactivity rate, employment, unemployment) do not provide complete and adequate data for assessing the situation of young people on the labour market. To better capture the situation of youth, especially their inactivity and vulnerability on the labour market, both international organizations and local institutional actors and researchers are increasingly using the concept of NEET youth. Although there are several definitions of the NEET youth concept, the most commonly used is the definition implemented by Eurostat – young people aged 15–24 (extended to age groups 15–29, 15–19, 20–24 and 25–29 years), who are not integrated into any form of employment, education or training.

The NEET youth rate is proposed as a specific target for youth within Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Target 8 “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” includes two objectives: (i) by 2030 to provide decent and productive jobs for all women and men, including for young people and people with disabilities, as well as equal pay for equal work for men and women and to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex or other criteria, (ii) by 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth who are not employed, educated or trained (NEET).

In the Republic of Moldova, the concern for NEET youth is relatively recent. The NEET youth rate indicator was for the first time introduced into the National Employment Strategy for 2017–2021, which represents an important step for monitoring this phenomenon.

Educational and occupational exclusion of youth is linked to a range of issues and risks, as well as some long-term negative consequences: cultural reproduction of poverty, deviant behaviour, health problems, social infantilism, etc. The actuality of the problem is also determined by the fact that disengagement from employment and education may exceed the period of youth and can be transferred to the middle age and even older ages. Therefore, being initially NEET youth, this category of population will persist further as a marginalized subgroup in the total of working-age population, and later in the socially vulnerable elderly population.

In addition to social consequences such as exclusion, discrimination, deprivation, emigration, NEET phenomenon among youth leads to significant economic costs. Thus, a loss of about 1.2% of GDP is estimated in the EU countries where the NEET rate does not exceed the average for the region (14.8%), and over 2% of GDP in the countries with a

NEET rate that exceeds 20%¹. In the Republic of Moldova where the share of NEET youth far exceeds the average of EU countries, and country's economy is in a deep crisis, the losses are substantial.

In this context, it is crucial to understand why some young people become NEET and what are the main factors that place them in this category or increase the risk of becoming NEET; the share of NEETs among young people and socio-demographic and economic characteristics of disadvantaged young people in terms of access to education, training and employment. NEET young people's experiences, motivations and aspirations are also of particular interest for this research.

The study "Inclusion of youth not in education, training and employment (NEET)" is carried out within the "Youth-centered Skills Observatory" – project implemented by the National Institute for Economic Research within the projects "Innovative businesses development for local sustainable economic growth" financed by the Catalytic Fund of the Istanbul Regional Hub and implemented by UNDP Moldova and "Strengthening the capacities of national institutions in data generation, utilization and dissemination for evidence-based policies development and implementation" project carried out by UNFPA, the UN Population Fund in partnership with the National Youth Council of Moldova with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation.

This report provides an analysis of data from a complex research approach that included documentary analysis, secondary analysis of quantitative data, interviews with representatives of relevant central and local institutions and individual interviews with young people not in education, employment or training systems (NEET). The analyses and conclusions are in line with the aim and objectives of the above-mentioned Project to improve the availability of information on labour market and to promote/facilitate the implementation of the objectives of national strategies and programs to reduce youth unemployment and increase youth insertion on labour market.

This is an informational and analytical report concerning the extent of NEET phenomenon and its determinant factors; it proposes public policy recommendations on improving youth situation on the labour market, with special focus on NEET youth.

1 Young people and 'NEETs'. Eurofound, 2015, 25 June. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/printpdf/young-people-and-neets-1>

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim is to evaluate the main factors and characteristics of the NEET youth categories and the risk groups, as well as to highlight the problems of young people's access to education, vocational training and employment and define efficient measures to facilitate the (re) integration of young people into education and the labor market.

Objectives:

- identify subjective factors (discouragement, passivity, unwillingness to study/work, etc.) and objective factors (lack of jobs, sickness/disability, family responsibilities, emigration etc.) that increase the probability of becoming NEET;
- define NEET sub-groups and their characteristics;
- highlight main problems that NEET young people face/experienced with social and occupational integration;
- estimate the length of being NEET and measure social risks/losses for individual and community;
- emphasize professional competencies of NEET young people and needed skills on labor market;
- understand young NEETs from the perspective of their life experience, perceptions and aspirations;
- identify efficient mechanism/system of social and occupational integration of NEET young people and those at risk of becoming NEET;
- provide with policy recommendations, required social/public services to prevent the NEET status among young people and ways to get out of it.

Problem-questions:

- ✓ Why do young people become NEET? Which events/situations put young people at risk of becoming NEET? What are the risk factors for becoming NEET?
- ✓ Who are the NEET youth? What common (homogeneous) and different (heterogeneous) features do they have?
- ✓ What is the influence of the community / family / standard of living / individual motivation in taking over the NEET behaviour?
- ✓ How active are the NEET youth in the desire to get out of this category? What issues/barriers are faced by the unemployed NEET youth and inactive NEET youth in this respect?
- ✓ What are the perceptions of the NEET youth about the relevance of schooling/education, as well as youth formation through work and their aspirations?
- ✓ What is the attitude of NEET youth towards work / work experience, professional training, but also satisfaction with life? What are the differences in values, concerns and fears they have?
- ✓ What do society/community/system offer for NEET youth?
- ✓ How does the system prevent the placement of young people in the NEET category?
- ✓ What are the effective prevention mechanisms?

RESEARCH STAGES

- (i) **Documentary analysis** of studies and relevant research/assessment reports on the situation of NEET youth, both at the country and regional levels. These sources of information have served as the basis for qualitative research design (sampling frame, selection of relevant topics for interviews with decision-makers and individual interviews with NEET youth).
- (ii) **Secondary analysis** of the available research data.
 Purpose: to obtain data on the statistical relationships between certain indicators and related variables. The secondary data analysis targeted young people aged 15–29 years, with a special focus on NEET youth aged 25–29 years.
 Available sources: the database of the “School-to-Work transition” research carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2014–2015 on a sample of 1189 respondents aged 15–29 years; the data of the Labour Force Survey carried out yearly by the NBS.
- (iii) **Individual in-depth interviews** with NEET youth (60 interviews).
 Subjects of the study were young people aged 15–29 years, with a focus on the NEET youth aged 25–29 years.
 Purpose: to collect and analyze qualitative information on the individual characteristics of the young people: experiences, problems, adaptability, motivational and attitudinal factors and other important topics.
 The localities where the interviews took place were selected on the basis of the regional criteria, the urban/rural, and size of the locality. In total, 12 localities were included in the sample (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of interviews with NEET youth

	Number of interviews
CENTRE	24
Chisinau Municipality	9
Nisporeni city	6
Micleuseni village (Straseni district)	4
Horesti village (Ialoveni district)	5
NORTH	19
Soroca Municipality	6
Oliscani village (Soldanesti district)	5
Corbu village (Donduseni village)	4
Fintinita village (Drochia district)	4
SOUTH	17
Comrat Municipality	6
Leova city	3
Cania village (Cantemir district)	4
Cioburciu village (Stefan-Voda district)	4
Total	60

Considering the fact that the NEET youth represent a very heterogeneous group with a complex structure, there were used *a purposive sampling* design established by the purpose and objectives of the study, research questions and specificity of the target group.

Considering the varied socio-demographic profile of the young people surveyed, several *recruiting techniques* were used in the targeted localities:

- the “snowball” technique, which involved contacting a person who pointed on a suitable persons for the study;
- contacting representatives of the Local Public Authorities (LPAs) who have named potential participants in the study;
- recruitment suitable persons within the Employment Agencies;
- contacting social workers, experts on youth issues within LPAs who have named potential participants in the study;
- calling for NGOs, local public associations, who have named potential participants for the study.

In the total, *60 individual semi-structured interviews* were conducted with young people in the NEET situation from 12 localities (Annex 1). Interviews were carried out by researchers of Demographic Research Centre between *July–August 2017*. The interview guide included open-ended questions: causes of the NEET status, impact of the NEET situation on youth – consequences, adaptability, support; education – participation, evaluation, obstacles; professional skills of NEET youth; youth access to the labour market – opportunities, difficulties and experiences; youth relations with organizations, public institutions, etc. aimed to help young people – access, evaluation, barriers; assessing the situation of young people on the labour market; intentions of emigration; values and aspirations of NEET youth.

Given the heterogeneity of the target group and the diversity of topics, moderators have asked additional questions for details and clarification during the interview. The average length of an interview is 40 minutes, the minimum length – 20 minutes and the maximum length – 90 minutes.

Most of interviews were conducted in the respondents’ home, therefore interviewers had the opportunity to take relevant notes on living conditions and the standards of living of NEET youth. Some young people requested for interviewing in public places.

Each participant signed a participation agreement, confirming that he/she has been informed in advance about the purpose and objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of answers and the audio recording of the interview. In addition, a questionnaire with socio-demographic data was fulfilled for each interviewee.

Analysis of qualitative data

For data analysis a “Structured logical framework matrix” has been used with following main elements:

- (i) creating a thematic framework used for classification, organization and synthesis of data from the interviews;
- (ii) insertion synthesized data in the form of a matrix.

The “Structured logical framework” has included the following stages:

- familiarization with interviews content;
- development of a thematic structure or “index”;
- application of thematic structures or “indexing”;
- compilation of thematic tables;
- development of synthesis tables;
- compilation of a summary table.

Issues related to conducting interviews with NEET youth

In urban areas, especially in small towns, was difficult to identify and recruit NEET youth. The research team members have made several visits in the localities to achieve the necessary number of interviews.

The young people with low levels of education have had difficulties in understanding the meaning of some questions or to express their opinion about some relevant issues.

- (iv) **Individual in-depth interviews** with decision-makers, social workers, National Employment Agency of Moldova staff and other regional and local experts (Table 2).

The experts have been selected based on their level of information and expertise in the study issues in surveyed localities.

Interviews were carried out using an interview guide with open-ended questions. It was conducted 20 interviews with key stakeholders (Annex 2).

Table 2. Distribution of interviews with experts

Institution	Number of interviews
Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection	1
Ministry of Youth and Sports	1
Ministry of Education, Science and Research	1
The National Youth Council of Moldova	1
The National Employment Agency and the territorial agencies	4
Local Public Authorities	4
Youth information and documentation centers	1
Social assistance services	4
Police department	2
Career Development Center, SYSLAB Center	1
Total	20

1. NEET YOUTH IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: DIMENSION AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

1.1. The NEET youth situation in the Republic of Moldova compared to EU countries

The first analysis and findings on NEET youth (originally called the “Zero Group”) are made by British scholars in the late 1980s². Subsequently, at the end of the 2000s, the NEET notion is taken over by international specialized bodies ILO, OECD, EU and others, thus being widely used. Measurement and interpretation of the NEET rate has picked up since it was adopted as an important indicator of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy 2020 and the “Youth on the Move” Program under this Strategy³. The NEET indicator is used to address vulnerability among young people, issues related to unemployment, early school leaving and discouragement on the labour market.

By its nature, the NEET indicator measures more appropriately the potential of young candidates for the labour market than the indicators: the unemployment rate and the youth inactivity rate. Expanding the emphasis from unemployment to the concept of NEET responds to the need to consider also young people who have left or do not want to enter the labour market. At the same time, the NEET rate is a measure of the level of marginalization and non-engagement, as well as an indicator showing the difficulties to provide youth with reliable jobs. These young people are at greater risk of social exclusion because they neither develop their skills through education nor accumulate experience by engaging in labour market.

In 2010 the Eurostat data bank adopted a standard in defining NEET for EU member states and developed the methodology for calculating the NEET rate. Usually NEET category is attributed to youth aged 15–24 who are unemployed or economically inactive and are not involved in any form of education or vocational training, and the NEET rate is calculated as the share of youth from NEET category in the total of the young population aged 15–24⁴. Currently, for a more detailed analysis, this indicator is calculated by gender,

2 Bridging the gap: New opportunities for 16–18 year olds not in education, employment or training. Report by the Social Exclusion Unit. July 1999. URL: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15119/2/bridging-the-gap.pdf>

3 Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. European Commission. Brussels, 2010; Youth on the move. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010.

4 Youth neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET). Presentation of data for the 27 Member States. European Commission, EMCO Contribution, 2011

age group (15–19 years / 20–24 years / 25–29 years, and 15–29 years⁵), level of education and status on the labour market (unemployed NEET and inactive NEET).

Although the NEET rate can be easily calculated based on empirical studies on education, training and employment / relationship with labour market, there are some statistical limits.

In the case of the Republic of Moldova and other non-EU countries that do not participate in the wide range of systematic sociological studies specific to EU countries, some data could be obtained from some annual surveys such as the Household Budget (HB) and Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted by NBS. However, detailed data on the various variables (level of education, involvement in education/training, relationship with the labour market, etc.) are partially available for a more complex analysis of this phenomenon.

It is to be noted that current official statistics⁶ on the number of population do not rely on the “regular residence” notion and include in the total of population migrants who are not present in the country for 12 months or more, which creates a significant distortion of economic, social and demographic indicators. Thus, calculated according to the official statistical data⁷, the NEET rate for 15–29 years old in the Republic of Moldova seems to be extremely high – more than 40% in 2016, which means that nearly every second young person in the country is not in employment, education or training. This overestimation arises on the account of the number of young people absent from the country but statistically accounted as being in the country. According to the estimates, over 16% of young people aged 15–29 years are labour migrants (in cities – about 11% and in villages – over 22%)⁸.

Nevertheless, even with the exception of those who are working abroad or are looking for a job abroad, the latest data show that the share of NEET youth among young people aged 15–29 years is high – 28.2% in the second quarter of 2017⁹.

Compared to other countries, the NEET rate among young people aged 15–29 years (about 27% in 2014/2015) is still very high in the Republic of Moldova, both in relation to the neighbouring countries (Romania – 20.9%, Ukraine – 18.7%) and with other countries in the region (Fig. 1). The share of NEET youth in our country exceeds the average of EU countries, which strengthens the increased degree of vulnerability and social exclusion of youth as a social group. Among the EU Member States, the highest NEET rates are recorded in Greece (24.1%) and Italy (25.7%), while the lowest – in Iceland (5.3%) and the Netherlands (6.7%).

5 Expanding the age groups needed to calculate NEET is determined by the increase in study period, as a result many young people complete their studies at the age of 24 and transition from studies to work takes place after this age.

6 Population situation analysis in the Republic of Moldova / Gagauz Olga (coord.), Stratan A., Buciuceanu-Vrabie M. [et al.], Chisinau: INCE, 2016. – 175 p

7 NBS data based on Labour Force Survey, 2014.

8 Buciuceanu-Vrabie M., Pahomii I. Situația tinerilor în Republica Moldova: de la deziderate la oportunități. Barometru Demografic. Chisinau, 2015.

9 National Bureau of Statistics. <http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=5735>

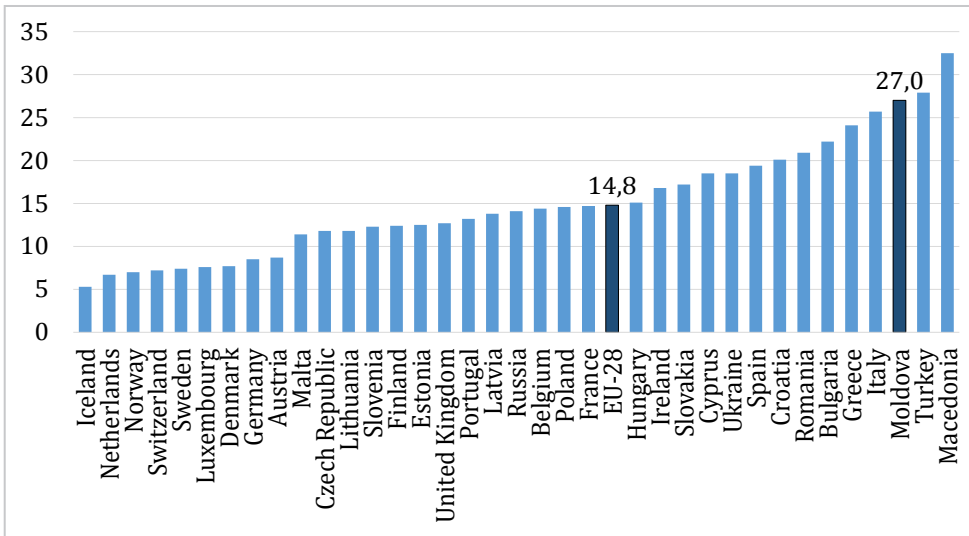


Fig. 1. Share of NEET youth in the total population aged 15–29 years, 2015, %

Source: Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

For the Republic of Moldova calculated based on the data from research School-to-Work transition, 2014/2015. NBS, except young people who are working abroad

The NEET rate tends to decline in the most EU countries after it culminated in 2013, following the economic downturn¹⁰. By 2015, the average NEET rate was 14.8% in EU countries, while in 2013 it was about 15.9%.

A specific picture for all countries is the vulnerability of women and youth from rural area to remain outside the labour market as well as the education system (Table 3). In the Republic of Moldova, the gender gap of the NEET indicator is more critical than in other countries in the region: about 31% for women and 23.2% for men.

Table 3. Share of NEET youth in the total population aged 15–29 years by gender and residence area, %

	Moldova	Romania	Bulgaria	Poland	EU-28
Total	27.0	20.9	22.2	14.6	14.8
Men	23.2	16.1	19.8	12.6	13.0
Women	30.9	26.1	24.7	16.7	16.7
Urban	25.3	14.1	11.8	10.1	13.7
Rural	27.8	24.6	37.5	17.6	16.3

Source: calculated based on the data from research School-to-Work transition, 2014/2015. NBS, Chisinau, 2015; Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

This gap highlights the lack of fair opportunities for women to integrate into the labour market even if they have higher level of education than men. This can be explained by several factors:

¹⁰ Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and labour status (NEET rates). Eurostat, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

- stereotypes and social pressure that put a greater emphasis on women's role in the family and men's role at work;
- career counselling and professional orientation of women towards a relatively limited areas of occupation;
- labour market issues such as: employers prefer to hire young men rather than young women;
- young women face integration difficulties when returning to work after child-care leave;
- young women are more likely to have poorly paid jobs;
- lack of conditions for the conciliation of family with working life.

In the case of the Republic of Moldova, the differences in the NEET rate by residence area are explained, in particular, by the acute shortage of jobs in rural areas, as well as by the labour migration of young people abroad.

1.2. Inactive and unemployed NEET youth

The NEET indicator oscillations are influenced by the dynamics of the two components: the unemployed NEET rate and the inactive NEET rate. The share of inactive youth in the NEET indicator is, as a rule, higher (about 77%) than the unemployed ones, regardless of gender and residence area. However, for women, the susceptibility of being inactive in relation to the labour market is higher (85.1% compared with 66.4% for men), while for men, they are more likely to belong to the category of unemployed (33.6% vs. 14.9% for women).

The inactive NEET rate is about 21%, while the unemployed NEET rate is 6.2% (Table 4). The gap between gender and area differs for these two indicators: the inactive NEET rate is higher among women (26.3%) and youth from rural areas (around 22%), while the unemployed NEET rate is higher among men (7.8%) and youth from urban area (6.9%).

Table 4. Structure of the NEET youth aged 15–29 years according to the status on the labour market, %

	Total	Men	Women	Urban	Rural
Unemployed NEET	6.2	7.8	4.6	6.9	5.9
Economically inactive NEET	20.8	15.4	26.3	18.4	21.9
Total NEET	27.0	23.2	30.9	25.3	27.8

Source: calculated based on the data from research School-to-Work transition, 2014/2015. NBS, Chisinau, 2015;

This could be explained by the fact that among young people aged 15–29 years, men and young people from cities in a larger number are more likely to officially register their status as unemployed. For comparison, in EU countries, the average rate of inactive NEET is about 8% and of the unemployed NEET is about 7%. An eminent difference of the

NEET indicator by gender is that among young men the unemployed NEET rate (7.7%) in the EU countries is higher than the inactive NEET rate (5.3%).

The NEET rate increases among young people with the age, a feature specific to all countries. For each age group, Moldova exceeds (practically twice) the EU average (Table 5). In the Republic of Moldova every second young person aged 25–29 years (about 45%) has the NEET status. This fact can be explained by the higher proportion of inactive youth from this age that work abroad or are involved in circular migration. At the same time, there is registered the highest NEET rate (53%) among women of this age category as a result of the large number of young women with inactive status, who devote themselves to family responsibilities, especially raising and caring for children, as well as due to gender inequality on the domestic labour market.

Table 5. Share of NEET youth in the total population aged 15–29 years, by age groups, %

	Moldova			EU-28		
	15–19 years	20–24 years	25–29 years	15–19 years	20–24 years	25–29 years
Total	10.2	28.2	44.7	6.3	17.3	19.7
Men	11.1	30.5	27.7	6.6	16.5	15.3
Women	9.2	26.4	55	6.0	18.2	24.3
Urban	2.8	13.1	37.7	–	–	–
Rural	13.6	42.6	52.8	–	–	–

Source: calculated based on the data from research School-to-Work transition, 2014/2015. NBS, Chisinau, 2015; Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

Among the EU countries, the highest NEET rates for young people aged 25–29 years are recorded in Greece (36.2%), Italy (33.5%), Bulgaria (26.5%), Spain (26%), Romania (25.3%), but also in countries with a more stable economy, such as France (20%) and Ireland (21.4%).

The Labor Force Survey data (LFS) for 2008–2016 have been used to analyse in dynamics the number and sub-categories of NEETs. Official statistics divide the NEET youth into the following sub-categories: unemployed, young people who do not want to work because they have family responsibilities (take care for family members), young people who do not want to work in the country because they already have a job abroad or intend to go abroad, people who have gone abroad and others (seasonal, disability, illness, etc.)

The data shows that the total number of young people placed in this group has increased during the period 2008–2016. The number of unemployed youth has increased in the period 2009–2011 and has been decreasing since 2012. At the same time, the number of young people looking to hire abroad has increased twice (Table 6).

Table 6. Information on NEET youth, thous. persons (20–29 years old)

Years	Total, thous. people	Of which:				Others (seasonal. disability, illness, etc.)
		Unemployed	Do not want to work as they have family responsibilities (take care of family members)	Do not want to work in the country because they already have a job abroad or plan to work abroad	People who have gone abroad	
2008	254.8	17	57.6	26.2	112	42
2009	273.2	25.1	64.2	31.2	106.2	46.5
2010	313	33.9	78.5	37.3	119.5	43.8
2011	317.5	29.9	80.6	43.7	119.9	43.4
2012	322.5	23.3	81.5	43.6	126.2	47.9
2013	316.2	20.2	86.1	44.1	124.9	40.9
2014	325.5	15.1	90.5	53.1	130.3	36.5
2015	321.3	23	86.3	53	124	35
2016	303.5	20.2	83.3	56.4	119.8	23.8

Source: Labour Force Survey, NBS.

The largest group is represented by young people who do not want to work because they have family responsibilities (take care for family members). The share of this group fluctuates between 38–46%. At the same time, during the 2008–2016 there is recorded an increase of the share of youth potential migrants with 12 p.p., which means maintaining a high rate of migration among the youth labour force. There is also registered a decrease of the share of seasonal NEET youth, those who have a disability pension, or who are in this situation due to illness or are voluntarily inactive (about 2 times). With some oscillations, the share of NEET unemployed youth has been around 11% in the recent years (Fig. 2).

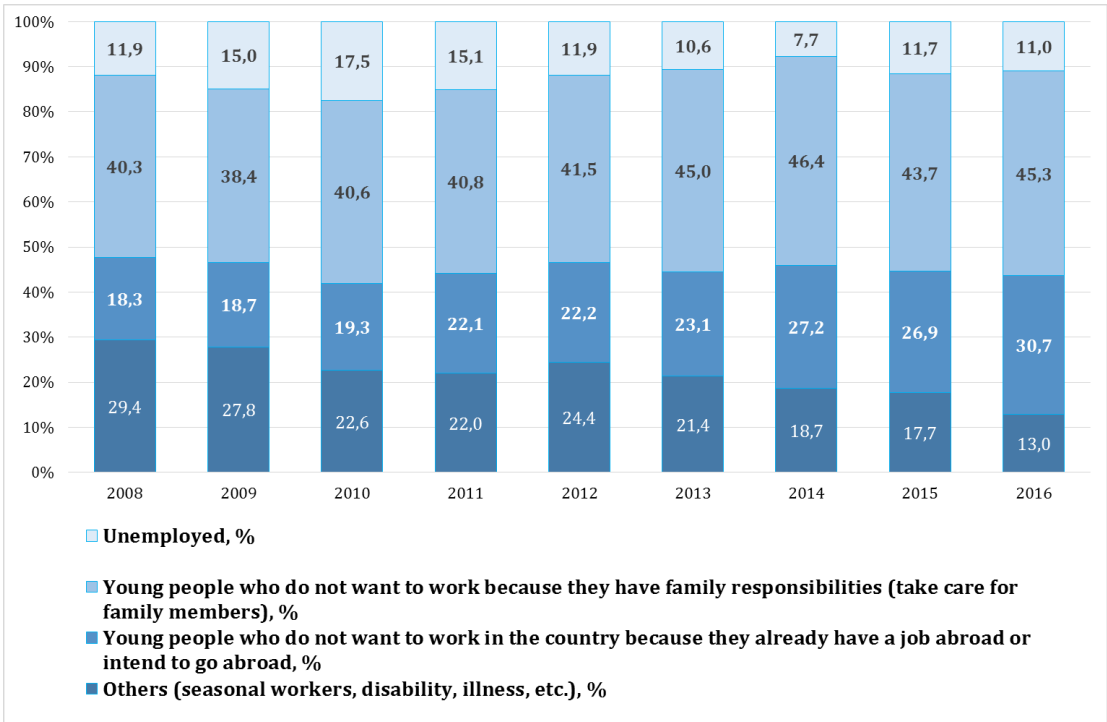


Fig. 2. Distribution of NEET youth (20–29 years) by subcategories, %

Source: authors calculations based on NBS data, Labour Force Survey

It is noteworthy that beginning with 2011, the number of young people aged 20–29 years is considerably reducing, given the fact that in this age are incoming less numerous generations born in the second half of the 1990s of the XX century. In addition, according to findings, youth migration has intensified starting with 2010¹¹. In order to reveal the real situation on the labour market, the number of persons working abroad has been excluded from the total number of young people not in education, training and employment.

Thus, despite the reducing the number of young people of this age group and exclusion the number of young people that are abroad, the share of NEET youth is still high and has increased from 22% in 2008 to around 30% in 2016 (Fig. 3).

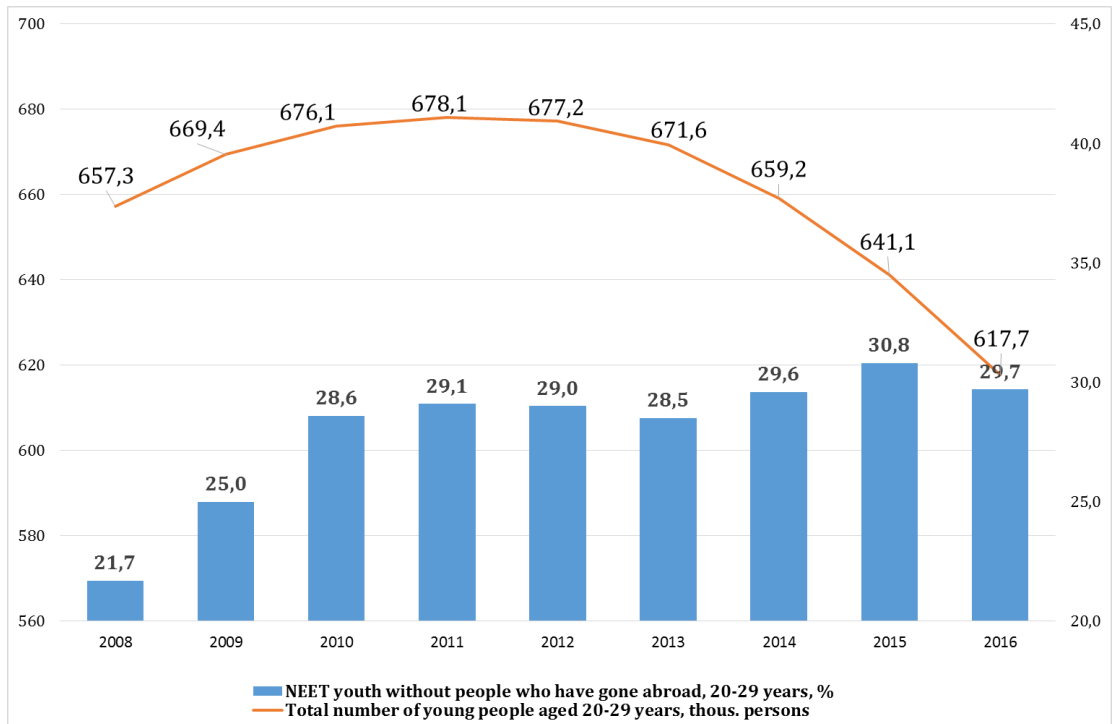


Fig. 3. Dynamics of the number youth aged 20–29 years and the share of NEET youth in their total, %

Source: authors calculations based on NBS data, Labour Force Survey

Note: without people working abroad

1.3. Structure of the NEET youth according to the education level and family status

A deeper analysis of the factors leading to such a high NEET rate in the Republic of Moldova highlights features slightly different from the general conclusions found in international studies that refer to early school leaving, in particular by girls¹². Such behaviour is still not specific, especially among young women in Moldova. Between 2004 and 2015, the early school leaving rate was approximately around 21.5%, even declining in recent years, registering a significant difference between men (25.2%) and women (16.3%)¹³.

A more particular feature is, however, the discouragement on the labour market as a result of the economic and social crisis in the recent years, low incomes that do not provide a decent living and inequality in the workplace, etc. Many young people being discouraged, or not seeing themselves on the domestic labour market, choose to work abroad or are looking for a job abroad.

¹² What does NEETs mean and why is the concept so easily misinterpreted? Work4Youth. ILO, January 2015.

¹³ Labour force in the Republic of Moldova. Employment and unemployment. NBS, 2014, pg. 187, <http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&id=4480&idc=168>

Young people who neither are involved in education nor in the workplace, as a rule, have a low degree of education. Thus, in the Republic of Moldova nearly every second NEET (or 45.8%) has gymnasium studies, and about 30% – lyceum or general secondary education. However, a significant proportion of NEET youth has higher education (more than 15%), which is explained by difficulties they face during the transition from school to work, thus society is losing skilled human capital that could not enter the domestic labour market due to the lack of safe and well-paid jobs.

Nearly every second NEET has a family and half of them have at least one child in their care. The share of married people among the NEET youth is significantly higher for women (68%, compared with 22.1% for men), this phenomenon being explained by the persistence of the cultural model of early family formation. Thus, a high proportion of women are in the NEET category due to performing family responsibilities. Among NEET women, the number of those with at least one child in care is higher – nearly 3/4 of them (compared to about 18% in the case of men). The presence of children is more specific for NEET youth from urban areas (62.1%, compared with 43.4% in rural areas). With age, NEET youth tend to change their status, getting married and with children (Table 7).

Table 7. Some features of the NEET youth, %

		Total	Men	Women	Urban	Rural	Age (years)		
							15–19	20–24	25–29
Family situation	Married	48	22.1	68.0	57.9	43.8	14.0	40.0	64.1
	Partnership	4	1.4	6.1	3.2	4.4	7.0	3.2	3.9
	Single	46.1	75.7	23.2	36.8	50.0	79.1	55.2	29.4
	Divorced/widow	1.8	0.7	2.8	2.1	1.8	–	1.6	2.6
Financial situation of households	Very good	13.4	11.4	14.9	7.4	15.9	9.3	19.2	9.8
	Good	5.9	6.4	5.5	5.3	6.2	–	5.6	7.8
	As average in the country	65.1	62.9	66.9	72.6	61.9	74.4	60.8	66.0
	Bad	14.3	17.1	12.2	13.7	14.6	14.0	14.4	14.4
	Very bad	1.2	2.1	0.6	1.1	1.3	2.3	–	2.0
Existence of children under the age of 18		48.9	17.9	72.9	62.1	43.4	18.6	38.4	66.0
Migration experience (one and more)		16.6	15.1	17.7	15.8	16.9	19.0	18.4	14.4

Source: calculated based on the data from research School-to-Work transition, 2014/2015. NBS, Chisinau, 2015;

The differences among the married/unmarried persons by area of residence, namely the higher proportion of married NEET in urban area is defined by the age structure of this category of young people, in particular by the higher proportion of young people aged 15–19 years in the total of NEET youth from villages (Table 5).

Over 15% of the NEET youth estimate a bad or very bad financial situation of their household, and about 2/3 (over 65%) declare that their situation is similar to the average per country. To be mentioned that during the years 2014–2015 the average monthly income per person was on average 1930 lei (130.4 USD) and the monthly average consumption expenditure was 1862 lei (135.2 USD)¹⁴. Thus, household incomes covered almost 96% of the necessary expenses.

The NEET men evaluate the financial situation more critically, over 19% indicating as bad or very bad, exceeding by 6 p.p. the position of NEET women on this subject. We can assume that traditional stereotypes of men's and women's roles influence to some extent gender discrepancies in the appreciation of the financial situation. About three of four NEET youth from cities consider that they have a financial situation around average per country, while in rural areas their share is lower (around 62%). Those who report a bad or very bad financial situation live mostly in rural areas (about 17% compared to 14.7% in the city).

About 17% of the NEET youth have migrant experience, i.e. at least once they emigrated abroad, mostly for work (Table 7). Among NEET women and youth from rural areas, the share of those with migrant experience is relatively higher (about 18% and 17% respectively).

1.4. Aspirations of NEET youth

The analysis of the values they aspire to highlights a youth-specific trend in general. The desire to have or form a happy family is the main goal in life for 2/3 of the NEET youth, with a higher intensity with age. Financial independence is also important, with over 29% mentioning earning a lot of money as a goal. For younger ages, there is a greater focus on financial satisfaction, or nearly every second NEET aged 15–19 years wants to earn a lot of money. At the same time, NEET youth have a sporadic interest in a successful career; only 6.2% have put this objective to the fore. The civic spirit through the aspiration to contribute to the prosperity of society appears to be very poorly developed among NEET youth, where only 1.6% mentioned it as a goal in life.

Significant discrepancies in the intensity of aspirations are registered between women and men. Over 80% of women are family-oriented, while men are more likely to earn much money (about 48%, compared with about 15% among women), but also to make a career (10.7% compared to 2.8% for women) (Table 8).

14 Aspects of the standard of living of population in 2014, 2015 (Results of the Household Budget Survey). BNS, Chisinau, 2016.

Table 8. Value orientation of the NEET youth, %

The main purpose in life	Total	men	women	urban	rural	15–19 years	20–24 years	25–29 years
to make a career	6.2%	10.7	2.8	5.3	6.6	2.3	10.4	3.9
to contribute to the prosperity of society	1.6%	1.4	1.7	2.1	1.3	2.3	1.6	1.3
to earn a lot of money	29.3%	47.9	14.9	25.3	31.0	46.5	25.6	27.5
to have a happy family life / to form a happy family	62.3%	39.3	80.1	67.4	60.2	48.8	61.6	66.7
others	0.6%	0.7	0.6		0.9		0.8	0.7

Source: calculated based on the data from research School-to-Work transition, 2014/2015. NBS, Chisinau, 2015;

Influenced by the situation on the labour market and the economic and political instability in the country, a large part of the NEET youth is sceptical about the possibility of (re) employment. Over 1/3 of them are discouraged and negatively estimate their future on the labour market in the country. Men (46.2%) and youth from rural areas (about 39%) are most sceptical regarding their employment possibilities.

Field studies ascertain that there is no long-term upward trend in the NEET rate increase among young people, at the same time during the economic recession the NEET indicator was not higher than the it was two decades ago. However, while some NEET components may decrease together with the economic recovery, various labour market integration strategies are still required, such as encouraging employment of long-term unemployed and enhance of participation of “hard-to-reach” inactive young people, including young people with disabilities¹⁵.

EU policy-makers currently note that an entire generation of young people could remain out of the labour force for the years to come because of the financial and economic crisis¹⁶. This has an impact at personal level, while youth is deprived of rights and becomes more susceptible to poverty and social exclusion. At the same time, there is an impact at the macroeconomic level, with significant loss in terms of unused production capacity and a considerable cost in terms of social payments.

15 Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015: Scaling up investments in decent jobs for youth. International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2015.

16 Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training

2. DETERMINANT FACTORS OF NEET STATUS AND PROBLEMS YOUNG PEOPLE FACE. EXPLORATION BASED ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

2.1. Education – participation, problems and opportunities

There is widely accepted the fact that the level of education plays an important role in protecting the individual from unemployment, and the higher the level of education is, the lower the risk of being unemployed is. However, recent statistics and realities in different countries indicate that these statements must be validated through both quantitative and qualitative studies. Therefore, in this study, a special interest was given to education issues – education level of NEET youth, appreciation of the quality of studies, problems faced during the study and relevant solutions from the perspective of this category of youth.

The issue of young people in the NEET situation from the point of view of their reporting to the formal education and training is a complex one and needs to be considered in the view of sub-categories of this target group, being a broad and heterogeneous range of components of the educational and training system that are influencing each other.

As mentioned above, youth from the Republic of Moldova who are neither in employment nor in education or training have a low level of education. The data of qualitative study carried out with NEET youth bring argued scientific explanations regarding the relations of this category of youth with the education system, their orientations and aspirations related to education.

Thus, although the level of education has not been a criterion in NEET youth selection for this qualitative study, the research has highlighted a low level of schooling among this category of young people. About one fifth of the study subjects did not complete gymnasium studies, i.e. – do not have a diploma / certificate of graduation of mandatory general education of 9-grade. Moreover, one fifth of NEET youth or one of five interviewed persons has only the certificate of completing gymnasium study, meaning that they have early left the education system.

At the same time, one quarter or one out of four young participants in the study has completed secondary vocational education, and one of ten have specialized secondary education (college). Equally important is the share of young people with higher education, which is about one fifth of all NEET youth concerned in the study.

The study shows that a significant proportion of the interviewed NEET youth either abandoned compulsory general education without obtaining a graduation certificate, or after finalizing the compulsory studies did not enrol in any educational scheme. When discussing the issue of early leaving the education system, most of the young people from this category (with gymnasium studies) reported on the precarious material situation of their families, i.e. the inability of families to help them financially to continue their studies. Despite the fact that the current education system tends to offer equal chances to education for children from families with a different material status, the financial resources of the family and its ability to invest in children's education continue largely determine their educational direction.

"... father died, material situation was bad, I did not have financial possibility to study ..." (IP18).

"... I did not continue my studies, there were heavy times, poverty ... Parents did not have money, and they did not even have money to buy clothes, so I did not finish the studies ..." (IP31).

"... I did not do further studies because it was hard, I did not have the opportunity and we were many children at our parents. And I got married ..." (IP34).

It is noteworthy that a great share of young people who have abandoned or early left the education system come mostly from poor families, low level of parental education, incomplete families, families that do not give importance to the child's educational path, and in some cases make abuse of alcohol.

In turn, financial problems in the family and desire to earn their own money have forced young people to early employment as unskilled workers, predominantly in the informal sector. To this is added the migration phenomenon, which is an alarming factor, especially in rural areas, where the living standards are extremely low and employment opportunities are virtually absent. Thus, some young people abandoned the school and left to work abroad, mainly in Russia.

"... after completing the 9th grade, I did not try to study further, because I went with my brother abroad, in Moscow ..." (IP18).

"... I have only graduated the 9th grade, but I do not have a 9-grade certificate, because I left everything and went to work abroad ..." (IP20)

Other reasons for early leaving the education system, though rarely encountered, are problems related to learning and health problems. Roma NEET youth represent a special case, as they abandon school, both because of the poor material condition of families and the ancestral traditions of this ethnicity, which does not give to education an important place in the hierarchy of values.

"... usually we, the Roma, do not go to school, we go with our parents to work abroad from early ages ..." (IP27)

"... I did not learn at school. The situation was in that way. At that time it was hard, my mother was sending us to school, but we were running away from there ..." (IP29).

Young people who have dropped out of gymnasium are in a difficult situation because they do not have a certificate of gymnasium graduation and as a result, they cannot access the next level of formal education. At the same time, these young people are rather accepting precarious jobs in the informal, poorly remunerated sphere.

The early leaving of the educational system according to the results of the qualitative study presents a risk factor for becoming NEET, which correlates with the results of the existing researches in the field¹⁷. At the same time, the early leaving of the educational system is also a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon that is a result of the impact of a range of factors: personal relationships, economic, social and educational context, family relationships. Among the main determinants of the early leaving the educational system are: residence in rural areas, poor (self-assessed) material situation of the household and low level of education of the parents. With the age, it becomes more likely that young persons would no longer continue their studies and would limit themselves to the low level of education¹⁸, which puts them in a socially vulnerable position throughout the life.

Another category of NEET youth represents those who have dropped out secondary or higher education, or do not have a professional qualification. Material constraints and the desire to earn money are among the main reasons for the abandon. In addition, there are cases when youth, being students, begin to work and then they can no longer continue their studies. At the same time, some of young people are realising that chosen specialization is not the one they want to achieve or are no longer motivated to obtain a higher education diploma, considering that education is no longer valuable and does not guarantee successful insertion on the labour market.

"... from a financial point of view, I was attending extramural studies on a contract basis, and I could not afford them. At the same time, I do not see any point in losing 5 years for studies because I know cases when young people with higher education go abroad. Today, studies do not give you any perspective in the future ..." (IP2).

"... at that time I had other goals, I wanted more money. I also had some financial problems, and others came along. I had to choose: either to study and borrow money or to start working and I have chosen the second option ..." (IP21).

In some cases, particularly among young women, giving up studies has been based on particular life situations, such as marriage or the appearance of a child.

"... I was pregnant and I wanted to work ..." (IP4).

17 Gagauz O., Bucuiceanu-Vrabie M., Pahomii I. Părăsirea timpurie a sistemului educațional: factori și grupuri de risc. În: Akademos, 2017, nr. 2(45), p. 98–105.

18 Ibidem.

Beyond the financial and attitudinal-motivational aspects related to the abandon / early leaving of the education system, the study highlighted some peculiarities and problems of the educational system in the Republic of Moldova, such as the marginalization of some categories of youth for financial reasons and corruption within the educational system.

"... only colleagues that had money were allowed to copy in exam. When they have collected money, they have not announced me, so I was not allowed to copy and I did not pass the examinations ..." (IP30).

"... I abandoned my studies because of the attitudes of some teachers, they are not honest ..." (IP10).

"... to be honest, when I was learning, maybe if there were other teachers, but they do not see anything besides money. If you have money, you are good, if not – they do not even look at you ..." (IP26).

The significant number of young people with low level of education in the NEET category reinforces the findings of previous researches that low education levels lead to limiting young people's access to the labour market. This category of NEET youth is at the highest risk of being long-term unemployed or being poorly paid during their lives, as well as at the risk of taking over deviant behaviours or addicts, or to face health problems.

The most important factor of the educational trajectory of young people is the financial situation of their families. Young people from families with a bad material situation are more at a risk of early leaving the education system than young people from families with a good material status. Material shortages in the family force young people into early employment in unskilled labour, often in the informal sector. Most of them are day labourers, which represent a vulnerability factor throughout life and contributes to the reproduction of poverty.

At the same time, not only limited financial resources, but also the level of parental education has a direct impact on the chances of school performances, which states about the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of social inequalities.

It is worth mentioning that some of these young people, especially those with no qualifications, are aware of the need to complete their studies, get a job, a speciality, as important factors in ensuring an adequate insertion into the labour market.

NEET youth perceptions on school

Despite a range of reforms implemented in recent years in the field of education in the Republic of Moldova, the current system faces a range of problems, which are reflected in pupils' school performances¹⁹, as well as in the quality of specialists prepared for the labour market.

19 Report "Republica Moldova și Programul pentru Evaluarea Internațională a Elevilor PISA 2015", Ministerul Educației al Republicii Moldova, Agenția Națională pentru Curriculum și Evaluare. Chișinău, 2016.

The carried out study has highlighted a general positive perception of the school among NEET youth. However, they are less satisfied when are asked promptly about different aspects of the formal education system in our country.

It is noteworthy that the perception of young people with gymnasium education, including those who do not have a gymnasium graduation certificate, on the quality of the obtained studies is quite positive, although some of them have testified that they have had learning difficulties. High level of satisfaction can be also a sign of low expectations that these young people have from the education system and implicitly from the educational capital accumulated during the school years.

Many of these young people have rather expressed the regret because they have not been able to continue their secondary education and obtain a diploma necessary for their integration into the labour market.

"... I often think of myself and I'm upset that I did not have enough wisdom at that time. I had to do my best to learn for a job in order to support myself ..." (IP25)

Obviously, it was difficult for these young people to decide on the usefulness of the knowledge gained in the school for the everyday life.

Most of the young people who graduated from a vocational-technical school gave a positive appreciation of the quality and usefulness of their studies. Moreover, the professional competences acquired in these schools have been useful for their employment abroad as skilled workers.

"... the studies I did at the vocational school have been useful to me because I worked in Russia, and the studies from the boarding school are useful to me all the time ..." (IP35)

"... I learned the painting-plasterer profession. Yes, my studies are useful ..." (IP36)

Still, there have been opinions among youth with vocational education who are not entirely satisfied with the studies they have obtained, justifying that many employers prefer to train employees at the workplace without taking into account the studies/qualifications of the recruited staff. In this case, young people are wondering about the justification of the lost time and financial investments related to training in certain vocational schools.

"... no, studies from the vocational school were not useful to me ... there were girls who have not studied and were working. It was possible to work several days and thus learn how to work on the sewing machine ..." (IP14)

Some of the interviewed young people have appreciated the theoretical and practical training in vocational schools as inadequate, considering that the vocational education system is not adapted to the requirements of the labour market.

"... not very useful. Many companies require the 1C program, but we did not learn it at school. We were taught Excel, Access, which are simpler. If we want, we were told that we can learn it further, but for a fee ..." (IP22)

The efficiency of vocational-technical schools is also affected by the negative social perception of the vocational system and low prestige of these schools. Often they are associated with school failure and low performance. Some young people have testified that they are often seen on the labour market as people with low professional training.

"... is not enough to have only professional studies, something more is required. They look at us as 'second-class' people ... All employers ask for higher education ..." (IP22)

The interviewed NEET youth who have a specialty and accomplished higher education studies are particularly concerned with the shortcomings and problems that formal education system is facing. Many young people are dissatisfied with the education system in our country and perceive a continuous decrease of the quality of education.

"... the quality of studies is rather poor, I would appreciate it with a 6. I do not know how much they helped me, but at least you know where to get the information, to know the direction. You still have to open the book and get it from scratch ..." (IP11)

"... my opinion is that there is no coherent teaching tactic in our educational institutions. I have not seen any perspective from the studies I have ..." (IP2)

The low level of equipment of many educational institutions and the way in which students are conducting field practice contribute to a large extent to the negative image of these institutions: these are considered incapable to ensure the correlation of the acquired theoretical knowledge with the practical part and to allow the young people to acquire the necessary skills for profession/occupation which they are prepared for.

Thus, the young people indicated on the lack of adequacy of the theoretical information to the pragmatism required by the labour market. Interviewees mentioned that they have very few practical skills specific to the professions/occupations concerned. The insufficiency, time and quality of effective internships carried out by pupils/students, according to their opinion, represent a vulnerable point of our education system.

"... from the theoretical point of view we are prepared very well, while practically – less, because we have not had classes when to go out and get experience, to meet with the specialists ..." (IP13)

"... just knowledge is not enough, because when you get employed, the new job teaches you again everything ... You know the theoretical part, but you start from scratch the practical one ..." (IP5)

"... the studies we are doing are ... very general, but employers ask for something more specific, more specialized. Research centres work with new databases, while at college we use the old ones ..." (IP12)

"... well, anyway, everything is taught at the university is not necessary at the work place. At the work place, there is already practice ..." (IP46)

In the same way, a deficiency of the formal education system reported by the young participants in the study is that of curricular areas that do not always take into account the real needs for acquiring professional skills and the overwhelming content of some taught subjects. Thus, the existing vocational training standards in the education system are “outdated” and are not updated according to the requirements of the labour market, both in the description of the profession/occupation and in the presentation of the competences that should be held at the end of the studies by the graduates.

“... the problem is that the studies that are being done are based on the old system, which was taught 20 years ago, I think we should be taught something new, innovative, it should have been done long ago ...” (IP10)

It is important to recall that major changes in the education system at the national level in the last two decades have had some negative consequences, especially with the ongoing devaluation of the education, as mentioned above. This fact was also confirmed in this study. Thus, taking into account the fact that many young people holding higher education diplomas have major difficulties in accessing the labour market and engaging in a field that has nothing to do with their profession/occupation, more young people raise the question about the reasons and necessity of obtaining such diplomas.

“... many people who have a specialty do not work according to it. They accept the jobs they find. Sometimes I think that there is no point in going to study ...” (IP15)

“... many young people do not study for acquiring knowledge, but to have a diploma, because even a simple salesperson must have higher education and experience in the field. That's why many young people get higher education just to have a diploma, but not for working later in the given field ...” (IP5)

An idea is rooted in our society according to which a part of youth enrolls in higher education institutions not in order to obtain some professional skills, but only to obtain a higher education diploma. This raises questions about the motivation of these young people.

“... not to get some professional skills, just to have a higher education document ...” (IP2)

“... there is another side of the problem, some are studying just to have a document, that is, they do not learn, but with the money of the parents from abroad they pay teachers, thus receiving graduation diploma with the help of corruption ...” (IP2)

This affects the image of educational institutions, and some young people are increasingly inclined to the fact that the level of education does not represent a decisive factor either for accession on the labour market or for ensuring success in life. However, NEET youth who do not have an occupation or profession are a little more confident that holding a qualification would facilitate their integration into the labour market.

Another problem raised by the NEET youth is the phenomenon of corruption within the education system in our country.

"... teachers are interested in money, they have the salary and also get money from exams. Exams bring them money, that's not a novelty. There were teachers where you were going to give the exam, you were writing it and you were told that you wrote on an 8, but you still have to give at least 300 lei if you do not want to get a 5. Automatically you have to give. I gave a lot, but only in the first and the second year, after that I did not want to give money ..." (IP13)

"... everything is paid with money now. In Moldova, studies are done with money ..." (IP19)

"... when I was studying on the contract basis, even the teachers told me that if I had any problems to address them, they would help me ..." (IP21)

In this context, a problem that needs to find viable solutions is how the education system is perceived or presented, with an emphasis on: low quality of curricula, lack of competitiveness, lack of correlation with the labour market, management that does not assume economic and social responsibilities, "flooding" the labour market with diplomas, especially of higher education, rather than skills, etc. Losses suffered by our country because of a strong post-graduate emigration may be added to the mentioned above.

Youth perceptions on the education-occupation relationship

Investment in the practical dimension of learning is indicated and very convincingly argued by the vast majority of NEET youth participating in the study.

"... there is necessary to rely more on practice, our State needs to invest in education. Schools are being closed, 70% of pupils graduating the 9th grade do not go further to study, parents are interested that their children continue studies, but politicians who implement different reforms and adopt laws that do not work well are to be blamed ..." (IP2)

"... I believe that during the studies there must be more practical hours, not just the theory ..." (IP5)

"... more practice. Regarding information, there is a lot of information, but little practice. Teachers talk about their experience in the field, but just the words do not really matter. I would like to see how things are done in practice ..." (IP12)

"... more practice. Because universities teach a lot of theory, there are even some courses that we do not need to learn ..." (IP32)

Another measure to improve the education system is the regulation by the state institutions of the specialties and the number of specialists trained within these institutions. Thus, in the opinion of the study subjects, graduates will be able to engage more easily on the labour market after completing the studies.

"... the education system needs to be changed. The state has to decide. I think the state considers the opinion of the person who decides to get a specialty ..." (IP4)

An option for improving youth employment would be, in the opinion of young people, the creation of a centre/organization that will provide services for the accession of young people on the labour market. Some think that it would be a good idea for educational institutions to provide jobs for the best students.

"... I think the Ministry concerned²⁰ should be an organization to deal with young people who have studies and offer them jobs. Perhaps even the same universities should provide jobs for the best students that would also be a benefit for them ..." (IP5)

Referring to the improvement of the situation in the education system, the young people mentioned the adjustment of the curriculum to the market requirements.

"... we should be taught everything that's new and not what it was in the past ..." (IP12)

Young people should be guided during the admission to studies and during their completion. Educational institutions should provide jobs for those who want and deserve them.

"... when you apply to university, its representatives must not only promise and say, but also keep their promises. For example, during admission, when you submit documents, they speak only about the privileges you have in obtaining the diploma. They have to work with the ministries concerned to offer job places (not to all students, because yes, indeed, not all of them have the capacities and not all of them want to employ) at least for those who want, to support them, or guide where to go ..." (IP19)

Considering the above mentioned, it is obvious that study programs need to be renewed and be more adapted to the new realities demanded by the labour market. According to the results of the study, the training of young people in the formal education system can only help them to a low degree in the employment and then, to face the existing challenges. One of the major problems faced by young people after completing their studies is the inconsistency between competences acquired through formal education and those required by employers. This is one of the factors that determine many employers to avoid hiring young people who just have completed a formal education cycle, being aware that they will have to invest in their professional training.

Accessibility of studies for youth

Ensuring equal opportunities through access to education represents an important step to guarantee young people the accumulation of basic skills for improving their perspectives, even for those who need a second chance education and additional training that would offer them a qualification outside the formal education system.

Although the educational offer in our country is considered quite generous and various measures have been taken to ensure equal opportunities for education at different levels, most of the research participants consider that inequalities in education is a reality for the Republic of Moldova.

20 Ministry of Culture, Education and Research.

Most of the NEET youth consider that young people from families with a good material condition are more likely to pursue desired education and to have access to quality education than those from poor families. Young people who have such an opinion come mostly from families with a low level of living and a low level of education, and some of them have early left the education system due to financial reasons.

"... no. Only those whose parents live well have access, they have money and can afford it ..." (IP1)

"... the one who has money has a better access to education. Everything is done with money. The poor people have no possibilities such as the rich ones ..." (IP17)

"... the one who has money and support has the opportunity to study. Who does not, has to work to get a piece of bread ..." (IP18)

"... because those who have money go and learn for money, but the poor do not have where to live, because the places in the students' dormitory are occupied by the rich ones. If the poor want to apply for studying, it is stonewalling this. They are not given a student dormitory, they have nothing ..." (IP20)

"... not all. Young people from poor families have little access to learning ..." (IP33).

Moreover, some young people consider that the best places to study are occupied not based on educational performance, but on parents' social status.

"... there are young people from rural areas who have a very good average of grades, but they cannot go to study on the budget basis, because the places are already occupied by the children of the ministers and someone's else ..." (IP16)

However, there were opinions that the situation regarding the access to education has improved in recent years due to the decrease of the young population, departure of a large number of young people either to study or to work abroad, and in this context, many educational offers remain uncovered. Another important aspect highlighted by youth is the motivation of young people to study.

"... in the past few years the situation has changed for the better and many young people have already access to education. I think because the number of young people has decreased, the educational institutions do not have enough young people to study, they do not apply ..." (IP3)

"... education is accessible for all, the main issue is the desire ..." (IP46).

The results of our research show that access to studies is perceived by many young people as being limited to a large proportion of the population facing economic problems. For a large part of the youth, this may lead to the loss of motivation and the impetus to continue studies.

Comparative researches of the situation in several European states show that pupils' positive educational trajectories (school attendance till a high level and positive

educational performance) – specific to some European states (Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands) is mainly due to reducing social inequalities or by a better social security for the poorest in these countries rather than by reforming the education system²¹.

2.2. Skills of the NEET youth

Held skills

Education and vocational training of young people have as their main purpose the development of skills, which is a multifunctional and transferable set of knowledge, habits and attitudes, both necessary for employment and participation in the functioning and development of a sustainable economy, as well as for the personal fulfilment and growth, social integration and active participation in society.

Given the low educational level of the target group, when about half of the interviewed young people have only gymnasium studies or general secondary education, it is obvious that these young people have no qualifications. Nearly every second person participating in this study has not attended a professional qualification course so far.

However, even if they have not attended a qualification course, many of them have gained themselves certain skills/competencies in the work processes. Most of them have acquired experiences and skills in construction as unskilled workers. These skills are useful and is a source of income. This can be an opportunity to unleash the potential of these young people by offering qualification courses in the future. However, the local market needs to be investigated in terms of supply and potential demand.

"... to lay terracotta, stick wallpaper and so on. I can actually do everything in construction ..." (IP7).

"... in construction, I can do all the work ..." (IP13)

"... I am doing more plastering work. You know there is a phrase: Moscow has taught everything and fed us, probably is still feeding, but I cannot go anymore. I am the only one who knows how I have worked in Moscow. Somewhere I was lied, somewhere I was paid better, there was nothing I can do ..." (IP34)

Acquiring work experience abroad by young people through temporary/circle migration can be capitalized by obtaining certain qualifications. Formalizing the gained work experience can increase the chance to have a formal source of income in the future, and can implicitly lead to solving the problem of lack of health insurance among the people living from informal sources of income.

Another range of skills acquired in the work process is in the field of services, such as sales, car repair.

21 Shavit, Y., Blossfeld, H. P. (1993). Persistent Inequality. Westview Press, Boulder, Co. <https://poli.hevra.haifa.ac.il/~yaish/papers/ShavitYaishBarHaim.pdf>.

"... I know about technique, I can handle, I repair cars if necessary. In sale I know to negotiate and I can, if necessary, to influence the buyer ..." (IP6)

"... I know how to sell a product or service that I know well ..." (IP45)

Qualifications acquired by NEET youth who have graduated from a vocational school are mainly related to occupations such as welder, woodcarver, carpenter, tailor, crane operator, mason and cook.

Most of NEET youth with higher education have a specialization in social sciences: law, social assistance, pedagogy. Fewer young people hold higher education degrees in the fields of economics and business management.

The vast majority of interviewed youth have computer skills, although most use the computer to access social media sites for communication. Only young people with a higher level of education have mentioned that they use the computer to access websites that provide information about available jobs, or study information for personal development.

The study has highlighted that only a small part of these young people, mostly those with higher education, knows how to write a resume or a letter of motivation. Most of them have been trained how to write/adjust their resume / motivation or intention letter within educational institutions. At the same time, a small number of young people have affirmed that they sent the CV to some economic agents.

Some of young people emphasised that during the work they have acquired transferable skills that are important for professional development such as adaptability, creativity and readiness to integrate into the workplace.

"... I have the ability to work in a team, the ability to lead. In the bank I was promoted to the head of department, I was leading the cash department, managing 12 people. There is involvement in work, diligence and work for results ..." (IP43).

Moreover, some young people who received professional guidance within a project (SYSLAB)²² reported that it has contributed to a better motivation for professional advancement, personal development, increase of self-confidence, as well as to learn how to find jobs, presentation in front of the employer, etc.

"... after the courses, the emotional state became better. I have gained confidence and they helped me to understand all my resources and disadvantages and how to work on them. There is a psychologist there. The level is high and I am very glad that I got there. I had some stagnation (in life) ..." (IP43)

Willingness to get qualifications

A good part of the NEET youth who do not have a profession/qualification and have not attended a qualification course so far note the willingness to pursue some vocational training/education. It is very likely that these are just statements, much more optimistic than reality, given that the words "maybe in the future", "at least a profession" can take

²² For additional information: <http://www.syslab.md/>

different forms among the youth, and concrete conditions are only partially defined. Thus, most of young people concerned could not name the specific specializations they would be interested in.

"... yes, at least a profession, something ..." (IP18)

"... at least a kindergarten teacher ..." (IP20)

"... yes, sure, we always have to learn something new, but I do not know what profession ..."

At the same time, some young people who have self-acquired skills in the field of construction have stated that they would like to deepen their knowledge in this field and even obtain a proficiency document/certificate.

"... I would like to study in the field of construction to get a document, because it is easier to be hired in a construction company if you have a document in your hand ..." (IP16)

Those who do not want to follow any courses consider they are disadvantaged by age to enrol in education. Other possible impediments are financial one, the need to take care of their own household, the care for their children, and receive the consent from family members.

"... no, I think it's too late, but I'm afraid I would not succeed ..." (IP34)

"... I want, but I do not have financial possibilities ..." (IP37)

"... it's not about the age, if something new appears, I could learn ..." (IP7)

Matching skills and labour market needs

Matching skills with labour market needs is the most important result of the educational process carried out within the vocational, secondary and tertiary education institutions. For better matching with labour market requirements, there are required effective tools for the anticipation of skill needs, mechanism for monitoring the employability of graduates, application of vocational qualifications standards, permanent review of curricula and teaching materials. The study conducted in NEET youth has highlighted a number of problematic issues related to the matching skills with the labour market requirements in our country.

An important aspect would be the extent of the overlap between needed qualifications on the labour market and the young people qualifications. Another aspect is the quality of vocational qualifications, if these match the requirements of the labour market.

The vast majority of interviewed young people consider that in our country, there is no match between demand and supply on the labour market. Most young people think that the labour market has a surplus of specialists, especially with higher education in the fields of law, economics, etc. Some educational institutions, in the opinion of young people, have turned into "profitable businesses" from taxes paid by students, but they do not produce graduates that could be competitive on the labour market.

a. Inconsistency from the quantitative point of view

"... I think not. If the country's economy is sub-optimal, what job places are we talking about? Many study law, economics, and universities accept everyone, because they need students to pay the contract, but they do not care that these young people have no place to work! Where will they go after this? It's a kind of business and that's not good ... we have an surplus of some specialists ..." (IP3)

"... not really. Basically, speaking of Comrat, a lot of lawyers and economists apply for jobs that saturate the labour market. Just very full ..." (IP45)

Another aspect mentioned by young people refers to the quality of studies, which does not correspond to the labour market requirements.

b. Inconsistency from the qualitative point of view

"... no, because nothing is new, everything is too old. We are lagging behind ..." (IP10)

"... no, we are prepared with more theory, but when you go to work, employers ask for more extensive, more detailed and more specific information in the field. But we learn in general and we do not focus on a particular segment ..." (IP12)

At the same time, young people wonder about the motivation to obtain higher or specialty studies when the vast majority of holders of such diplomas do not work on specialization, but they have to accept jobs with narrower specializations, which in many cases do not have tangency with their professional training. This fact has been mentioned many times during the interviews.

c. Do not work according to specialization

"... speaking about what we study, today is very hard to find a job, because most of the young graduates from faculties, do a master, and by the end they work in a different field: in a market or in stores as sales consultants. And they do not work according to the completed studies. Expectations are high, but the consequences are totally different ..." (IP19)

To be noted that even if young people do not have a profession, they are talking about cases where the higher education diploma does not guarantee employment in the specialty. This is also a demotivating factor for some young people to continue their studies.

"... no, it is very hard to find a job according to qualifications. Someone I know finished the college here, then learned in Balti, after she was looking for work, but she could not find it. Now she's got the diploma in her hand and she cannot get employed anywhere. She recently found a job as a salesperson ..." (IP25)

Another important aspect concerns the economic underdevelopment of our country. Many young people consider that no new jobs are created in the country, especially

jobs that offer decent remuneration. Most young people after graduation could not find a job. And in this case, either they have to accept jobs below their expectations, or go abroad.

"... I think not, because they all learn and then go abroad ..." (IP16)

"... no. Because young people study, but the state does not offer them jobs ..." (IP33)

"... there are too many people who after graduation do not find work, it means there is something wrong, I do not know ..." (IP33)

Continuous development of professional skills is extremely important for economic development and growth, for productivity and job creation, for the adaptability to changes, for equity and social cohesion. At the same time, education and training systems must offer a diversity of skills, including key digital and transversal skills, which would ensure a rapid and successful transition to employment.

In our country, the absence or skill mismatch is not the only reason that make youth employment problematic, it has to be added the persistent economic crisis over the past decades, lack of investment in the important sectors of country's economy, low-paid jobs, corruption, promotion on the "kinship" basis and not on professional performance criteria, etc.

At the same time, the transition from school to active life and the integration of young people into employment is an essential issue with a strong economic and social impact, while being an important benchmark for the external efficiency of the education system.

2.3. Labour market – experiences, obstacles, opportunities

The labour market is influenced by environmental, economic and social systems as well as by political one, besides, the extent and quality of employment are essential for any society. At the same time, labour is the main engine of the development of any modern economy.

Statistical analysis²³ along with the results of many studies²⁴ indicate on a series of systemic problems faced by the labour market of our country. The most important ones have been recorded many times in this report: lack of jobs, low pay, rural/urban disparities, etc. The concern for youth exclusion is largely determined by the awareness of the problems and risks, as well as the long-term negative consequences: cultural reproduction of poverty, deviant behaviour, health problems, social infantilism, etc.

23 National Bureau of Statistics databank, http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/AFM_2016_rom.pdf

24 Buciuceanu-Vrabie Mariana, Gagauz Olga. Tinerii pe piața muncii din Republica Moldova: competențe și aspirații INCE. 2017.

At the same time, there are a number of arguments showing that youth unemployment is more serious than among adults²⁵:

- The country's success or failure to make full use of the economic potential generated by young talents can make a difference in the long-term sustainable development.
- Unemployment among young people directly affects the level of fluctuation of temporary staff on the labour market.
- The accumulation of experience is reflected both at individual level and at national level as development of labour market.
- Unemployment among young people contributes to increased poverty and low living standards – of cognitive, medical, nutritional and psychological nature.
- As young people get older and form families, their failure to accumulate both economic and social capital can be projected on children.
- Young people who fail to find a job after completing a form of education will not be able to earn an income; they will have to be financially assisted by their families. At the same time, society loses its investment in education.

At the same time, studies in the field demonstrate that youth occupational exclusion is associated with two major risks – the incomplete transition from school to work and informal employment²⁶, also confirmed by the results of this qualitative study.

Work experience of the NEET youth

Given the specificity of the target group, no interviewed person was employed, involved in education or vocational training at the time of the study.

The absolute majority of these young people said they once had a paid job, except young graduates (few in our sample). Most of the NEET youth indicated that they had worked in the informal sphere, largely due to the low level of schooling and the lack of qualifications, as well as to the lack of jobs in the formal sphere. These young people worked in the field of construction, sales, agriculture or unskilled workers in any other field (processing industry, etc.). The other occupations mentioned by the subjects appear at an insignificant frequency, but share a low level of qualification and a low financial reward.

Several young people indicated that during the last year they had more jobs, mostly in the informal sphere. The number of jobs suggests that many job changes mean their vulnerability to the labour market, the need to accept any offer that would provide them with a minimum income.

"... I have worked in different areas, it was important for me to earn money, anything else does not matter ..." (IP2)

25 Situația forței de muncă în Regiunea Centru și nevoile de dezvoltare ale sistemului de formare profesională, 2016. Agenția pentru Dezvoltare Regională Centru. http://www.adrcentru.ro/Document_Files/ADStudiiRegionale/00002181/rmvmv_Studiu%20forta%20de%20munca%20si%20pregatirea%20profesionala.pdf.

26 Gagauz O., Buciuceanu-Vrabie M., Pahomii I. Factorii determinanți ai excluziunii ocupaționale a tinerilor. În: Revista de Filosofie, Sociologie și Științe Politice, 2017, nr. 2 p. 137–147.

"... I have never worked officially, just occasionally ..." (IP31)

Related to young people who had a job, but who worked with a workbook, most of them worked for a period of more than 6 months based on specialized diplomas: the banking sphere, the education system, but also as qualified workers (in construction).

The young people who have a specialization, despite the form of education, but have not worked according to their studies, indicate as main causes the large number of specialists on the labour market, i.e. the lack of available jobs, as well as the inaccessibility of jobs for the young specialists, corruption among administrations at all levels.

"... no, because there are specialists who know better than me the job ..." (IP1)

"... no, until something changes in the country, I will not try. Corruption is very high, wherever you go to get employed, you are asked for money ..." (IP11)

Being asked about the transition from school to work, most young people appreciated it as a very difficult time, they have faced multiple obstacles and stressful moments. The vast majority of young people noted that after graduation they have not benefited from career counselling or career guidance and placement.

"... so ... an emptiness. We learned at school, I was learning, but when it comes to work, it's harder ..." (IP22)

"... it was hard. I am quite weak, and in construction it is required to have power. I was still a child, it was hard for me to adapt. And I did not know the job, I learned it ..." (IP7)

"... after graduating from higher education it was very difficult, stressful ... you do not know where to go ..." (IP3)

It is noteworthy that those who have worked during their studies appreciate the transition from school to work as easier than those who did not have any work experience.

"... there was nothing complicated, because I worked from being small and during my studies I worked ..." (IP2)

"... it was not hard, because I did not have the patience to get employed faster and work ..." (IP10)

The lack of jobs with adequate remuneration is one of the biggest problems that young people in our country are currently facing. The data collected in this compartment come to complete these conclusions.

Thus, the vast majority of young people who had a job, either in the formal or informal sector, had to give up their jobs because of the inadequate remuneration and low wages. Moreover, young people have pointed out on the inconsistency between the work done and the remuneration offered. It is also noted that the unfair payment policy is one of the main reasons for renouncing to get employed, as well as the emigration of the young population abroad.

"... because I did not receive payment for my work, even if it was official ..." (IP1)

"... because it was too hard, tiring and I received a low wage ... you get sick and then you spend more money on health ..." (IP3)

"... low salary and hard work. 1800 lei. Previously I had a higher salary, but the object was finished. For being a guardian, I was paid with 1200 lei, it was not enough for expenses ..." (IP7)

"... because I did not like the salary – 1800 lei! I was working over a day, it was tiring and the low salary ..." (IP18)

Another reason for dropping out of work is the inappropriate attitude of employers towards employees, especially towards young people. The young people also pointed out on the reason of the illegal practices of some economic agents to pay "wages in the envelope".

"... because of the salary, they began to lie to us about money, they said we were young and still learn to work. We signed the contract for 20,000 lei, but they gave us 3,500 lei, obviously it is not profitable. We were auxiliary workers, the first year we were paid unofficially 'in the envelope' and also officially ..." (IP11)

"... I have had a rich experience, but unfortunately I had to give up this job because of the salary. For the expenses you have in Chisinau the salary is very low, I had to pay for accommodation and there were other needs ..." (IP31)

"... we were given ten thousand, but officially a thousand. I worked for about two years, but I did not like the boss' attitude regarding the subordinates, he was too proud. Friends, relatives were ideal, but the rest ... I had to work for them too ..." (IP21)

"... but the employer's attitude towards the workers is very bad, too. – The emphasis is made on the quality and to produce as much as possible, and if you mess up something, he offends you – that 'you're not good at anything', 'go out and go away.' There are many people from villages who come and get employed, because they have no place to go, and have to accept the existing conditions ..." (IP14)

Other reasons for giving up work are related to some particular situations: maternity leave, childbirth, etc.

NEET youth who had a job have also reported a number of issues they faced during their employment. Other issues related to youth employment are:

"... they invest in expanding business, but not in staff ..." (IP3)

"... for example, from a material point of view, I am not satisfied with life. Even if requirements at the moment in Moldova are high, the remuneration is zero. We work a lot and we are paid a little. Abroad you are paid for the work you've done. I was shocked by the employer's attitude, he did not draw attention to studies ..." (IP10)

"... It's all about the behaviour with employees. In informal work, I was always looking at the boss, if I like him or dislike. The leader helps but not shouts at you when you do not know something. They're zero. They have no idea of anything. Especially those who know they have the job in their hands. If you do not have acquaintances where you are hired, then you're humiliated. But when you have acquaintances, you're always protected ..." (IP11)

The study has highlighted that a considerable proportion of young people were employed in the informal sphere, largely due to the low level of schooling and the lack of qualifications. Although, as indicated above, because of the lack of offers according to qualifications, young people are disposed to accept any job that would provide them with an income.

Most of the interviewed young persons believe that currently most of opportunities for youth employment in our country are in the informal sphere. Many of them do not perceive informal employment as an illegal/negative phenomenon through which economic agents damage the country's budget by failing to pay taxes and violating employees' rights. Many young people think they have the opportunity to earn more and can give up their job at any time.

"... because those who hire do not want to pay taxes to the state, and they are good with this, and we are good as well. Because employers better pay a higher salary than pass money through accounting. And we, as workers, earn more money ..." (IP1)

"... very few employ officially, those who are employed informally have a much higher income than those who are officially employed. – Yes, on the one hand, but it is not profitable – taxes, length of work, but when the salary is fine and what I do is also fine – it is profitable ..." (IP12)

Given the age of the study participants and realities of life in our country, when most of citizens receive extremely low pensions, greatest part of the young people do not worry about the retirement.

"... employers save money, do not pay taxes. They do not think about the employees. But in many cases employees also have no attitude. It's convenient, they do not think about pensions, sickness. They think they have time till retirement ..." (IP3)

"... the pension I will receive is zero. Nobody gives you anything today, they fire you when they want, and they write it as it was my own desire. When I was employed at ... and signed the employment contract, I have also signed the resignation letter. They just indicated the date. They want us to work unofficially ... and most of the youth do not want to work officially. They proposed them to work officially, but they refused ..." (IP11)

"... unofficially, practically we are all working like this. You know, as it's said, supplement your account, and you will have funds when you'll retire, that's what it is said ..." (IP34)

Another important aspect is the perception of jobs in the informal sphere, which represents the only chance of survival mostly for people with low schooling.

"... only those who have worked before are working officially. Unofficial work is done by all those who do not have studies, but have families and need to support them. Each of us is happy to work at least somewhere and to have some income ..." (IP25)

The current economic context and the situation on the labour market make some youth to accept the existing conditions even if they do not meet their conditions and expectations. At the same time, the NEET youth who have been employed in the field both in the formal and the informal sectors, have reported a series of problems: low remuneration, lack of performance and competence criteria, failure to take into account the completed studies and irrelevance of acquired knowledge, unpaid overtime, lack of correlation between salary and the volume of work, failure to comply with labour protection conditions, etc. All of this in the end leads to resigning from the workplace and many young people see leaving for work abroad as an alternative.

Looking for a job

Just over half of the interviewed NEET youth mentioned they were in search for a job. The main way young people are looking for a job is to ask for help for relatives, friends or acquaintances. Fewer are looking for work places on sites that provide information on available jobs (www.999.md, www.makler.md, www.rabota.md), but they also send CVs directly to employers. Although many young people know about the National Employment Agency (known as the Labour Exchange), only a few of them have registered at this organization and benefited from its services (training courses, information about the labour market, etc.).

Those who know about the NEAM but have not addressed to it, mentioned that they have no confidence in the work of this organization or have little expectations that the agency will find a job. Most of these young people have reported about the experience of some acquaintances that this organization has not helped, proposing them only low-paid jobs.

"... yes, I have heard, but I have not appealed. Only low-paid jobs like street sweepers are proposed ..." (IP16)

"... I heard, but I did not appeal. My husband has registered at this agency, but they did not help him. They told him he had jobs in the village and he have to work there. They offered him a salary of 1000 lei and with three children it was hard for him to support them ..."

There is also some positive appreciations of the young people who have benefited from the services of the employment agencies and are pleased.

"... I think the agency gets involved and works very well, they called me and asked if my baby is in kindergarten as they find a job for me, to work as a nurse there ..." (IP39)

An increasing number of young people are not actively looking for a job, which can leave them without structural support in terms of labour market insertion. For this reason, it was important to find out the sub-categories of these youth and their motivation.

Many inactive young people come from families where parents do not work and are not actively looking for a job. Thus, the family environment represents a factor that fosters attitudinal vulnerability, such as lack of culture to work, unrealistic expectations, lack of communication skills and teamwork, inadequacy, inconsistency and instability.

Another category of inactive NEET youth are from rural areas and small towns with poorly developed economic activity that have problems related to access to employment. Most of young people who reported that they are not looking for work motivate their inactivity by lacking viable economic agents that would offer jobs in their locality.

"... If you work with the day, then you can find a job, but officially it can be at some store or watch store, but that's not for youth, more for an elderly man ..." (IP21)

"... there is no work in the village, neither acquaintances to find a job, because I just finished my studies. I am a simple person without experience ..." (IP18)

There is also a category of NEET youth who are not looking for a job because they are engaged in seasonal activities, mostly for days and provide some services when asked to do so.

"... I'm not looking, just when someone calls me I'm going to work with the day ..." (IP23)

Some young people choose to stay at home doing their household work rather than being employed for an inadequate remuneration that does not provide them with the minimum necessary. At present, the problem of low pay is one of the reasons for the low economic activity of the population. Research in this field shows that in 2016, about 10% of the employees and about 25% of the employees from the budgetary sector had wages lower than the minimum of subsistence for the working age population²⁷. Thus, the financial motivation would be a necessary condition to be taken into account in the implementation of measures to activate the youth on the labour market.

"... they give 2000 lei, which is not enough even for the food, what could you do with this money with two children? Rather than working for nothing there, I would better do something at home. Yes, it's hard, because there are not so many jobs ..." (IP31)

There is a significant number of young women, especially from rural areas, who are out of the labour market, as well as the education and training system. The vast majority of them are involved in domestic and/or childcare activities. Besides the limited number of jobs, a difficulty faced by young women in their intention to (re) enter the workforce

27 SAVELIEVA G. Subutilizarea forței de muncă ca problemă social-economică în Republica Moldova. In: Creșterea Economică în Condițiile Globalizării, Sesiunea științifică: Dinamica populației și calitatea potențialului uman: Conferința Internațională Științifico-Practică, 12–13 octombrie 2017, Chișinău. Ediția a XII-a. Institutul Național de Cercetări Economice. Ch.: INCE, 2017, 42–54.

is the lack of nursery / pre-school education institutions where they could leave their children during the day.

"... because the child is too small. Now in the kindergarten, children born in 2014 and some from 2015 are accepted and there were no places for us. If it is not possible at this kindergarten, I will have to look elsewhere, because I have no other way out of the situation, what can I do? Should I pay a babysitter? What I am left with?..." (IP49)

"... I did not go to work because I did not have someone to leave my baby with. My mother is working, I do not want a babysitter, it is better if I stay at home with my baby ..." (IP42)

It is important to note that many of these young women have not been officially employed until maternity leave, thus they are benefiting from a minimum childcare allowance during only 1.5 years. In these cases, there is attested an extremely bad material situation. At the same time, their integration into the labour market is more difficult either due to lack of experience or due to the long pause after the completion of the studies. The number of uninsured women in the total of childcare allowance beneficiaries is over 45%.²⁸

"... I received a minimum for a year and a half, nothing more – I received 540 lei. I asked for social help, but I was denied. I was told that I was in Moscow, and I can go there again. But where do I have to leave my two-years-old boy!? I needed help, because here there are no jobs, where do I get money from?..." (IP34)

In the category of young people who are not looking for work on the local labour market are those who are waiting for offers to working abroad. Also in this category, we include young people, especially women, who are not looking for a job because they live on remittances sent by husband or other relatives from abroad.

At least in the statements, NEET youth show a high availability of to engage in work. The conditions for young people to accept a job are not exaggerated and correspond to generally accepted requirements: decent and timely salary, normal working conditions, favourable climate in the team, respected working schedule, employers' positive attitude. Most likely, their expectations have changed as a result of interaction with a job and have changed adapting to what the labour market can actually offer.

"... to get my salary paid in time. To have the salary I was originally proposed. It is not that he will begin to have objections and not to keep his word ..." (IP4)

"... a not too high salary, I do not have big expectations, for starting – 4000 lei ..." (IP5)

"... a favourable climate, a better one. Not to go to work and be stressed, expecting something bad ..." (IP14)

"... normal working conditions and everything to be official, so I can also have a medical insurance, because there is a problem. And there is a problem with the payment, too.

²⁸ Raportul social anual 2015. MMPSF. Chişinău, 2016, p. 104.

Sometimes they promise you something, but you get quite another thing, or they promise you something for a period, but they give you the money when it suits them ...” (IP21)

It is very likely that in reality the availability level is actually lower. In conclusion, the majority of NEET youth, especially from rural areas, are willing to accept working conditions that are even disadvantageous for them.

Entrepreneurial orientations

Taking into account the low level of education and qualification, as well as the precarious material situation of the NEET youth involved in this study, it is not surprising that most of them have no entrepreneurial intentions, i.e. they do not intend to start a business in the near future or an economic activity on their own.

The young people mentioned a number of obstacles they encounter in developing their own economic activities. Most of young people have indicated that a certain amount of money is needed to start a business, which many of them do not have. Another aspect is the high risk of bankruptcy, both because of the high competition and the lack of the market, the low purchasing power of the majority of the population.

“... many lose their investment. It's not real, competition is high, but the population in the country is poor and has no purchase power ...” (IP2)

“... no, even for the one who opens a business, ends up in bankruptcy. Yes, they opened places where kebab and food is made; in our city people are not acquitted with such dishes, it has been opened only for a month and something and then it was closed, because it was useless, he only paid the rent ...” (IP28)

“... yes, I thought, but it takes a lot of money, and the competition is great ...” (IP3)

“... I would like, but I have no possibility, no money. I have nothing to begin with ...”

Moreover, the young people mentioned that state authorities not only do not support the development of entrepreneurship, but also put some obstacles in front. There is a lot of bureaucracy, corruption among authorities and frequent checks.

“... not really. First of all, in the European countries young people are supported by the state. That is, if they want to open a business, they are supported by the state, they are given a sum of money and during three years they are helped. If they fail to keep up with what they have started, they are helped and supported. They give them money, they are looking for investors, sponsors to support them. Here, if you want to do something, there is always someone tells you or prevents you from opening a business ...” (IP19)

“... if you want to open a business, you'll be hindered. Many of my friends have tried, but the money went in vain; 'controls' have been started, verifications one after the other, they were told directly to pay a certain amount and for a year they can work quietly, corruption is very high here. Even if you infringe something, you are asked 'So how will we deal?' They

always find that something is wrong, and you have to pay them to leave you alone ...”
(IP21)

It is noteworthy that the vast majority of young people only know “business failure” stories in business development and nobody has told them about some “successful stories”, which may be a demotivating factor for young potential entrepreneurs.

Problems in hiring

The lack of work experience represents the biggest obstacle that NEET youth encounter in their attempts to engage in work. This impediment is true both for graduates of educational institutions at all levels and for young people who have been employed without a workbook and can not validate their work experience. This first obstacle has been reported by young people from the urban area, especially in large cities, where there is a viable job market, because, as indicated above, there are virtually no hiring offers in rural areas.

“... it is about work experience, but this is not right, because you can learn from practice ...” (IP2)

“... work experience is required. The graduate is asked for experience in the field! Employers do not want youth that just has graduated and has no practice. They do not really like them, as they have to teach them, to start from the scratch ...” (IP4)

“... they all want experience in the field, but you have no way to come up with experience after finishing studies ...” (IP12)

In the same context, we talk about the exaggerated demands of employers, especially in relation to payroll.

“... employers ask for foreign languages, but they pay a not so high salary. If you know a foreign language, you go abroad to work and you have a much higher salary than the one in the country. They ask for higher education if the field of activity is not so demanding ...” (IP2)

Another impediment is the lack of jobs according to the hold specialization and competencies. This is due both to a non-functional economy, incapable of job creation and the poor professional training of young people whose qualifications are not in line with employers’ ones.

“... no, many who studied find hard to find a job by specialty. I know that there are many youth with higher education and there are just few jobs. It is difficult, because all the good places are occupied by the elderly ...” (IP7)

The phenomenon rooted in our society – “nepotism” should also not to be neglected, when the advantageous jobs are offered on the basis of kinship relations etc. and not on meritocracy.

"... everything is done through acquaintances. If you want something good, you have to know someone with an influence ..." (IP7)

There were also opinions of young people who focused on the existence/lack of transferable skills.

"... I think they are looking for communicable, tough but also shy persons ..." (IP5)

Some young people have mentioned that employers test skills directly at work, which is true for skilled jobs.

"... it depends, if they give you a probation week and they see how you can handle and if you have capabilities, then they'll take you, if not – they hire someone who manages. It depends on the skills you have ..." (IP18)

The relationship between young people and state institutions is often characterized by uncertainty about the decisions and measures proposed by these institutions, as well as a sense of mistrust. Though distrustful in the central and local administrative capacity to act on solving their problem, youth have expectations about possible measures that authorities, especially at the local level, could take to solve problems related to the insertion of young people into the labour market.

"... the state, the mayoralty are the ones who decide in the country ..." (IP31)

"... the mayoralty must support the youth ..." (IP16)

Both central and local authorities are responsible for finding and implementing solutions in regard to legislative changes: reforming of the wage policy, linking educational curricula to labour market requirements, economic development actions, providing facilities to economic agents for creation of new jobs for young people.

Access to public services

The study conducted with young NEETs has highlighted a low level of knowledge and access to available public services. Moreover, the vast majority of young people facing social, educational and professional integration problems, other problems, are unaware of the existence of services that would help them get out of this situation.

Although a number of Youth Centres have been created and operate in our country that aim at providing various services for target groups, the vast majority of young participants in this study reported that they did not know anything about the activity of such centres and, obviously, nor benefited from their services.

"... I do not know about any centres. But do not think that there are such centres ..." (IP25)

These data are also confirmed by the survey results conducted among youth at the national level. According to this source, only 1/4 of the interviewed youth know about the existence of such centres, and only 16.3% of the respondents who know, have benefited from the services they provide. In the urban area, the share of those who benefited from

the services of the respective Centres is almost double in relation to the share of beneficiaries from the services of the centres from rural areas²⁹.

It is noted that the level of knowledge about the existence of youth centres is directly correlated with the socio-economic and education level and, respectively, those with low level are less informed, while those with higher levels are better informed.

At the same time, the qualitative research carried out among NEET youth has highlighted the fact that a small number of these young people interrelate with local or regional public institutions. In particular, young people's demands are reduced to requesting documents from the mayoralty or accessing social welfare services.

"... we did not address ... We have asked once for some social help, because we have two children and we do not have a home ... we have nothing. And the husband was supposed to be registered at the public employment agency. Because he was abroad, he did not register, and so we could not get any help. Now we are surviving from the boy's allowance and what my husband earns abroad ..." (IP15)

The vast majority of interviewed young people said they did not address to the LPA with any problem, question or initiative. The reasons put forward by young people are multiple, largely due to distrust in the institutions, in the staff of these institutions, they indicated certain bureaucratic barriers. Young people, as a rule, try to solve problems by themselves, ask for help especially from family members, friends, etc. It is reiterated that young people are unaware of the available spectrum of services in the community, in the proximate urban environment, etc., and there is a low level of civic activism among this category of people.

"... no, I do not get into this stuff with Mayoralty, because it's not worthy ..." (IP21)

"... they (LPA) have theirs people to help, but I have not addressed and I am not interested ..." (IP23)

The study has emphasised the lack of vocational guidance services in schools. These are available exclusively in the urban area (within the public employment agency, specialized NGOs, etc.), although, according to research data, the services are accessed by a small number of young people. Under these circumstances, professional guidance is mostly done by family members, friends, etc., who often lack relevant information about the professions required on the labour market.

An alarming problem in this plan is school abandonment and early leaving of the education system. The young people who drop out of the school are the most vulnerable group, as these people usually do not benefit from specialized guidance and mediation services on the labour market, they do not relate to public institutions (Mayoralty, school) and the professional future of these young is uncertain.

29 Centrul de Investigații Sociologice și Marketing "CBS AXA". Cercetarea opiniei privind problemele, valorile și aspirațiile tinerilor din Republica Moldova. Chișinău 2016.

Although a large proportion of young people know about the Public Employment Agencies, only a small percentage of them access their services related to vocational guidance and training, mediation on the labour market, etc. The reasons put forward by young people are mistrust that they will be offered jobs in line with expectations and the lack of confidence that getting some qualifications/skills within the vocational courses will facilitate their integration into the labour market.

At the same time, the study highlighted a category of young people who register at these agencies only because they want to receive social assistance, and registration in these cases is mandatory.

Access of population to medical services represents a priority and a major problem for our country. According to various studies, the relationship of young people with medical institutions is reduced. This is largely due to the relatively good health status of the 15–29 years age group. The positive perception of the health of the population decreases with aging, due in particular to the prevalence of certain diseases characteristic for specific age groups. This study has confirmed a generally positive perception of health among the young population. Only a few young people mentioned health problems (information from the socio-demographic questionnaire).

At the same time, the reduced addressability to medical institutions among young people is explained also by the lack of financial means. The results of the national survey among young people highlighted the fact that the main impediment to receive medical assistance in case of necessity, mentioned by 56.2% is the “lack of money”, about 1/3 mentioned the “need to receive a directing document from the family doctor”, 29.2% – “lack of time”, about 28% of respondents noted the lack of medical insurance policy or distrust in the medical staff³⁰.

Another nationwide study³¹ has highlighted the fact that every fourth person without medical insurance does not have a medical insurance policy given its cost. Thus, the benefit of medical services is largely determined by the welfare level of the population.

“... because of the lack of money I do not cure myself. Even today I have been to the doctor and found high blood sugar. They have prescribed medication but I have no money to buy them ...” (IP29)

In the case of young people outside of education, employment or training systems, when the vast majority has no stable sources of income, with a precarious material condition, the situation may be alarming in case of illness. This alarming situation is valid for all categories of population that are not covered by the health insurance system.

30 Ibidem.

31 Accesul populației la serviciile de sănătate. BNS, 2017. http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/acces_servicii_sanatate/Acces_servicii_sanatate_2016.pdf

2.4. The impact of NEET situation on youth

Impact on material situation

Given the fact that the subjects of the study are young people who currently do not have a paid job, their main sources of income are: financial aid from parents, husband's/wife's wage, savings from previous job, including day labourer or other occasional work. Noteworthy, some of these sources are sent from abroad, where the parents or spouse is working. Only a few young people indicated they were receiving social assistance, unemployment benefits and child allowances.

In line with the national assessments among the adult population³², most of the NEET youth have a strong dissatisfaction with their personal living standards. The fact that these young people are not included on the labour market and do not have their own sources of income, accentuates this problem.

"... it's only enough for the strict necessity, but it's hard ..." (IP3)

"... I do not have a job and we do not have enough money ..." (IP7)

The vast majority of young families who have children have reported that their income is only for the strict necessity, especially to cover childcare expenses and support.

"... it's hard to live, everything is expensive, money are enough only for children: to dress them and for medicine. It's not enough for doing something in the house ..." (IP33)

"... while I was working with the day, there were enough people and they did not need other people. They refused me, and in that day I stayed at home. That's why I did not have the money to buy for kids to eat ..." (IP20)

"... because now all the services (communal, transport, going to hospital) are for money ..." (IP13)

"... when the husband gets the salary, we pay the communal services, the kindergarten, and the rest we tighten the strap and spend only for food. It's always not enough, lucky for having parents that help us as much as they can ..." (IP25)

Many young people have reported that they survive only because they are financially supported by their close relatives – husband, parents.

"... the situation is bad, we have nothing, only the mother helps us, just at the kindergarten we pay 600 lei a month ..." (IP26)

In order to deal with material problems, families, especially with young children, are addressing for social assistance to local public authorities, social assistance.

"... we are hardly living, we have addressed for social assistance ..." (IP29).

32 Institute of Public Policies. Public Opinion Barometer. <http://bop.ipp.md/ro>

A slightly better material situation is attested when one of the family members is employed or in the case of young people living with their parents.

"... well, because I live with my parents and they take care of everything ..." (IP2)

"... material position in on average, because only husband is working ..." (IP46)

Being asked about material changes over the last few months, most of the young people indicated that it has worsened considerably, the main cause being the lack of stable sources of income, the worsening of economic situation in the country, etc.

"... it was much easier, it's harder now. Now you can not leave for more than 3 months in Russia and you have to come back in the country ..." (IP27)

"... if there is no money, what changes can be made ..." (IP31)

"... before, to tell you right, it was easier, but now it's harder, because you do not have much work ..." (IP34)

By developing this topic, the vast majority indicated that they have to limit themselves in some areas.

"... I do not allow myself things that others allow. And that affects me as a personality ..." (IP12)

As mentioned above, the worst case is among the families that have children under maintenance. Parents worry about securing them now and in the future.

"... the children have to be dressed; before, when I did not have children, I allowed myself a little, but now I totally limit myself, all is for them, as they have to be like the other children ..." (IP26)

"... I have 2 children at school, soon it's September and I have also a small one, everyone needs money ..." (IP27)

Impact on the emotional state of youth

There are numerous researches³³ aimed at estimating the impact of NEET situation on the physical and mental health of young people. The main findings of these studies are:

- the time spent in the NEET situation has a detrimental impact on the physical and mental health of the individual. This impact is stronger when the individual is in this situation at a younger age or over a longer period of time;
- the link between the time spent in the NEET situation and poor health is largely due to the increased probability of unemployment, low pay or an unsatisfactory/harmful job later in life. Being in the situation of NEET can also have an impact

33 Public Health England. UCL Institute of Health Equity. Local action on health inequalities: Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), 2014.

on young people's behaviours, namely to take over unhealthy and delinquent behaviours;

- negative effects on health do not occur equally among the population, because the chance to be NEET is conditioned by socio-economic environment, social status, family environment (such as employment, parental education or attitude), conditions for personal development and school performance;
- as the chances of becoming NEET follow a social gradient, reducing the proportion of NEETs could help reduce the health inequalities.

The study carried out among NEET youth comes to complete these efforts and bring new analyses in this field. Most of the NEET youth talked about the impact on their mental health. Thus, the vast majority of interviewed young people have testified that they are experiencing negative emotions at this stage of their life.

- Feelings of loneliness, isolation, loss of meaning of life and the feeling that you can not influence things.

"... I feel alone. When you spend the day with some people, when you do some activities, that day makes sense, but otherwise you lose your orientation in time and space. You do not know what day is today ... Even at the end of the day I have headache ..." (IP3)

- Depression.

"... I've been in depression for a long time ..." (IP4)

- Persistent thoughts of surviving in these conditions, how to overcome this situation.

"... sure I do not like it. Yes, I always think I need money to eat and dress. These thoughts are not good for health ..." (IP7)

"... I think too much where to go and what to do ..." (IP18)

- Stress due to family quarrels.

"... it's hard. I sometimes quarrel with my wife, but we have nothing to do with it. She sends me to work, but where do I go if I do not have where ..." (IP29)

- Lack of communication.

"... I do not communicate with people, I'm more at home with my baby and that destroys me ..." (IP4)

Some young people have expressed regret for some past situations/mistakes that, in their view, have somewhat influenced the current situation they have reached.

"... I do not know anything yet, but if I turned back time, I would have changed something. I would have gone abroad, maybe I would not get to the police for theft ..." (IP6)

"... I would still try from the faculty's banks to be more active and to find my job, at least so, part time ..." (IP12)

"... I often think of myself and I'm upset that I did not have enough mind at my time. I had to do my best to get a job so I can feed myself at the moment ..." (IP25)

In turn, some young people have confessed that they feel marginalized, they are compared with the peers who have managed to integrate professionally and are aware that the studies they have obtained are not enough for a successful insertion into the labour market, thus feeling disappointed.

"... I was disappointed that nobody wanted to employ me ..." (IP43)

"... some colleagues from my group are already working after the end of the license and I am not too comfortable. Being hired, they have some stories, but I ... realize that the studies I have done are not so useful for ... finding a job ..." (IP12)

"... and you feel somewhat aside from society. Look, I've graduated and I can not integrate into society because the employer asks you for some requirements that you do not have yet. When you graduate, you do not have them – especially the experience ..." (IP13)

"... yes, the expectations during the study years have not been justified ..." (IP19)

Some young people have stated that they are disturbed by their financial dependence on parents, other family members.

"... bad. I have to live with my parents' money. You feel awkward, not feeling comfortable ..." (IP22)

"... I find it difficult when your mother supports you financially, I find it difficult. The sister is self-sustaining, but I'm not, I'm not comfortable with my mother's support, I do not have to stay at home, I have to do something, but I cannot ..." (IP30)

There are also young people who admit that the lack of occupation causes alcohol abuse.

"... I started to drink wine more than the norm. I have many friends who want 'the best' for me. If I get out of their circle, I'll stay alone ..." (IP7)

The vast majority of young people have indicated that family, friends are the only ones who help them in overcoming crisis situations.

"... they know me and consider that I'm in a crisis, but they are convinced that I'm going to get out of this ..." (IP1)

Only the young people who benefited from support from SYSLAB have indicated that, besides family help, they have been guided by the specialists: psychologist, professional integration consultant, etc.

"... after the courses the emotional state became better. I gained confidence and they helped me understand all my resources and minuses and I am working on them ..." (IP43)

The situation of young people outside the education, employment or training systems has a significant impact at the individual level, among the most mentioned consequences being states of depression, stress, loss of self-confidence, lack of communication, frustration, apathy and blame for failure.

The study shows that relations with family and close relatives and friends represent the main support in problematic situations, but also the social framework that define identity formation, and the reference value system of the investigated young people. NEET youth from problematic families, incomplete families, are more at risk to face difficulties in overcoming this status.

2.5. Problems, concerns and aspirations of youth

Official statistics and various studies attest that the problems of young people in the Republic of Moldova have maintained and even increased over the past few years³⁴. In summary, young people's problems are related to: lack of jobs, poverty, mass exodus abroad, low social and civic participation, deviant behaviours and addicts, etc. Moreover, disparities between urban and rural areas, large cities and small towns, between different social groups persist or are even more accentuated. At the same time, the fact that the target group of the study are young people who are currently not in the labour market and who do not attend any form of education or training, increased the importance and emphasized the seriousness of certain problems related to social and economic situation of young people.

Thus, the absolute majority of NEET youth who participated in the qualitative study appreciated that general situation of young people in the country is a particularly serious one. It is noted that the severity of socio-economic problems is felt more acutely with the age of NEET youth.

According to the study participants, the most pressing problem the young population is facing is the lack of jobs. In their opinion, today there are practically no employment opportunities for young people, the situation being much more alarming in rural areas and small towns in the country. A particular concern for young people is inadequate remuneration for work by offering too low wages by employers, which, in their view, cannot provide the necessary minimum. Under these circumstances, a large proportion of young people are looking for a job abroad.

"... most of young people after graduation leave the country as they cannot get hired here because of the low wages, which are not enough for a decent living standards or at least to survive. That is why they are choosing other professions or going abroad to work, and thus very few young people remain in the Republic of Moldova, that leaves mainly adults and elderly people. That's why we do not have a labour force in the country ..."
(young, 22 years old, superior, urban).

34 Centrul de Investigații Sociologice și Marketing "CBS AXA". Cercetarea opiniei privind problemele, valorile și aspirațiile tinerilor din Republica Moldova. Chișinău 2016.

"... most of them leave the country. They go freely abroad because there are no conditions for them here. There are laughingstock wages. On the other hand, the state lost once it invested in a young man who after studies has left the country. The state loses again. It loses the workforce ..." (IP19).

"... due to the lack of jobs young people have no place to work, they are more likely to go abroad. There, wages are higher, regardless of the work they have to do; they go abroad and work there. Everybody runs out of the country ..." (IP23)

It is noteworthy that the majority of interviewed youth are aware of the social and economic consequences of youth migration, such as the loss of human capital, the waste of state investments in young people's education, the depopulation and the aging of localities.

"... the country are going to lose, because all the young people leave and only the elders remain. Thus, the country is in a very bad situation. Only those who can not go abroad are left ..." (IP20)

In small towns, the situation of young people is appreciated as more alarming, the explanation being related to the different level of economic development of these localities and implicitly to the different opportunities that young people have.

"... even in our town, in Leova, there are no occupations for youth, even to go somewhere, there are no places, the city has died, practically everyone has gone ... absolutely nothing, not even a disco for young people, 2-3 places and that's all, there are only third age people, all young people are leaving ..." (IP50).

"... young people face difficulties on our labour market, and even if they find a job, the salary is very low. They accept it only to survive, to have at least some monthly income. All young people in our city are going abroad. I can not say that everyone, but almost all of them ..." (IP12)

For the most part, interviewed NEET youth believe that the "state" is responsible for this situation because it does not create/offer jobs and does not have a fair and motivating payment policy for all citizens, especially for young people. Only some young people attribute also to young people the failure to enter the local labour market.

"... the state does not offer an adequate salary to young people, but also the 'enthusiasm' of young people to engage in work. The majority of young people who want to get employed are somewhat disappointed by both the employer and the services they provide, or their salary, or their attitude towards the employees, and therefore, they rather choose to work abroad even they do not work according to their qualification, but they are well paid and are respected, even if they are foreigners. However, the state is to blame, because everyone is leaving the country ..." (IP13)

"... if you want, you can find a job. The local mentality plays a role: they think it's better to leave than to stay here for 2000 lei, it's better that I earn money there, I will provide the family, etc. It was important for me, given that I had an official experience (almost three years) and I decided why I should leave if I can work officially here, near my family ..." (IP43)

The impact of migration on the young population is not only quantifiable by decreasing their number but also qualitatively, by leaving of a large segment of active young people, mostly with medium and high level of education. Moreover, the phenomenon of population migration abroad has produced a new social category of children and young people, which is mostly perceived negatively in our society.

Thus, some of the interviewed young people have been quite critical to some of the young people who, in their opinion, are uninterested in finding a job, have no purpose in life and do not want to change this situation, involve deviant and addictive behaviours.

Moreover, they are sceptical that these categories of young people could be helped because this is their own choice, and the state, which apparently has to take measures to solve the problems of these young people, does nothing.

"... those from vulnerable families, they usually choose to drink, they choose to have fun on the money they have earned by working with the day. Most people live today and do not think about tomorrow. There is a need for a psychologist to work with them, otherwise they would continue to do nothing and drink alcohol. Some intentionally do not work, and they expect the state to pay them unemployment allowance, with this money they have fun, or they get employed and after the second working day they do different certificates that allow them not to work ..." (IP21).

"... there are many young people who do nothing all day, sit and smoke, drink wine, and do not even think about tomorrow ... They cannot do anything. This is the way of life for young people. The state does nothing; it only deals with the writing of laws ..." (IP1).

"... they are lost. A generation, as they say, of kids with money. Once the parents have always given them what they wanted, they live with the present ..." (IP7).

"... in the villages are especially young people who do nothing, do not have studies and do not want to have, do not want to work. They are lazy ..." (IP10).

The lack of jobs to ensure a stable source of income influences not only the present situation, but also influences the adapting of the inhabitants to the existing local resources and the possible development opportunities that could be capitalized in their localities.

Youth's concerns

Taking into account the current situation of NEET youth, it is not surprising that their worries concern lack of jobs, low wages, poverty. Young people's concerns are a cumulating of the problems they are facing now.

"... I'm thinking about how I could officially hire myself to earn something ..." (IP17)

"... that there is no money and I have to feed the children ..." (IP26)

"... we have no money, we do not have what to live with ..." (IP31)

Given that some young people are supported by parents, some of them have been alarmed about their financial dependence on them for an indefinite period.

"... not to be dependent of my parents, so that they will have to support me. That, I think, would be the biggest minus. Because I will put them at the expense, that is to work for me, when I, in my turn, should already be working ..." (IP12)

Some young people are worried that they can not achieve their proposed goals in life.

"... there are many goals and I can not reach them. Basically, because I do not have a permanent job, earnings ..." (IP46)

Many young people have been worried about the social-economic and political situation in the country, the pessimist perspectives regarding the direction of country's development, lack of the future for children.

"... what perspectives do I have here if politicians do their best to fool the people and do not invest in education ... but I do not see another way to develop myself. There is no support from the state, you can find more support abroad ..." (IP2)

"... for the country it was a bad year in all respects. Changes in power, manipulations, all of this dazzles you, and you do not know what to believe and whom to believe. Everybody does what he wants ..." (IP3)

"... I worried about the situation un the country, socio-political situation. I think what is happening now is very serious ..." (IP2)

"... instead of striving for more, developing, we, on the contrary, degrade and somehow endanger ourselves and our children. We do not have a future here in the country, and we have to do something, to change something, we, the young people. That old people like it as it is, while we want a better future for both us and our children ..." (IP13)

Some of the young people have been alarmed by the high level of corruption in our country, which indicates that a part of them had faced this problem.

"... everywhere is corruption – in health, education, justice, it degrades everything ..." (IP3)

"... probably somewhere do not take bribe, but I do not know ... anywhere you are going for a document, they let you know you have to give something ..." (IP34)

Other young people are worried about the moral degradation of our society.

"... the world is getting worse. There is much envy in our country. There is less humanity ..." (IP1)

"... the world has changed, I have even noticed while I was going to Moscow when I was younger, and the world seemed to be not that bad, now it's nasty, it's envious, it's never enough for them ..." (IP34)

To a large extent, the concerns of young people are related to personal economic problems such as poverty, access to employment, and something less to social, economic and political issues at the country level. Against the backdrop of a society that is in a apparently endless transition, the issue of survival and material issues are the most stringent for young people.

2.6. Emigration intentions of NEET youth

About half of the NEET youth who participated in this study said they were abroad for working. The vast majority of them were working in Russia and only a small number in European countries. Most of them worked in the field of construction, fewer in the field of agriculture, service sphere. It is noted that the deepening of the economic crisis in Russia, as well as some restrictions on the period of stay, have conditioned the considerable reduction of the number of workers in this country. Many NEET youth have attested that this has greatly affected them because they lack an important source of income.

More than half of the interviewed NEET youth said they would eventually want to go abroad, although the conditions and the period are not yet clearly defined for most of them. Only one in ten young people has clearly defined goals and said he/she will go abroad to work in the next few months. Most go to European countries for a fixed period of time and aim to accumulate financial resources and return to the country. The money earned is generally invested in house building, current repairs, purchases of cars and other household goods. Most migrants work for themselves, but not to start a business, etc.

Another category of potential young migrants showed their willingness to leave, but under certain conditions or circumstances. Some of these young people, usually young people with secondary and higher education, are currently in active search for jobs, and if they fail to get involved, they seemed to be forced to leave abroad.

"... if I will not find a job here in Moldova I think I will go ..." (IP32, higher education)

"... I will leave if I do not go to masters and I will not find a job ..." (IP19)

The third category is the young people with experience working abroad, inactive on the local labour market, who would like to leave if concrete proposals from some acquaintances, relatives would appear. Emigration for most of these young people is spontaneous.

Young people who have declared they do not want to go abroad are usually with a low level of education and in most cases do not have the necessary monetary amount to go. Some of these young people often mention "patriotism" feelings, emphasize the value of "family", etc.

"... here is my homeland, here I was born and I would not go to another country to live ..." (IP18)

The main causes determining to leave abroad to work are of economic nature. As mentioned above, the incomes obtained in the country are extremely low, which does not ensure a decent living for a family, especially a young family.

"... we need a job so we can start a family. Plus to this we want kids ..." (IP18)

"... here I do not like my salary. Abroad the salary is motivational ..." (IP35)

"... here you do not earn money, a little is paid. There you are better paid and is more comfortable ..." (IP37)

Another factor that is somewhat derived from the economic factor and which creates a propensity for migration is the appropriate financial reward in the European states and the relatively good working conditions.

"... because there I'm going to get paid for the work I'm going to do. Here you can work and they will lie to you and you will remain with nothing ..." (IP4)

None of the NEET youth plans to emigrate for better education, probably because they imagine they could not afford but worry about the future of their children, including their education here in the country.

"... yes, I would like, I do not see any good future here in the country, especially for children ..." (IP36)

The desire to emigrate has been present for a long time in our country among the general population, and these data show that the young generation is even more eager to migrate than the older generation. We note that economic reasons for migrating, especially the migration of young people who lack opportunities in Moldova, is important and most of these young people will implement their intentions.

Thus, the intention of emigration comprises two major components. The first component is the lack of economic opportunities, employment difficulties and low salaries. Young people from rural areas and small towns are much more tempted by the idea to leave the country and work abroad. They want to find a job abroad because it is difficult to find a job in the country and most likely because in some localities where they come from, the already existing migration networks can facilitate the process (relatives, friends from localities). The desire to emigrate for getting a better living standard increases with age, demonstrating that young people, in the transition from school to active participation on the labour market, are becoming more disappointed with the opportunities that are available to them in the country.

The second component of the desire for migration is an aspirational one, related to plans and desires to live in another society and to gain access to a better education for their children.

2.7. Determinants of the NEET status and NEET youth typology

Establishment, size and structure of the NEET youth category is generated by a series of social, economic, personal and family factors that are in a complex interaction. The data provided by qualitative research and extensive analysis of vulnerabilities among NEET youth have highlighted a number of determinant factors specific to our country that increase the chance of young people to enter the NEET category. These were grouped into four categories: individual factors, factors related to educational system, socioeconomic factors and institutional factors (Fig. 4).

Individual factors. The NEET category includes young people regardless of their level of education. However, the analysis of the schooling level of young people reveals that persons with low level of education represent the highest share in the NEET population (about half in our study). Thus, the low level of education and, implicitly, the lack of professional qualifications/competencies is a risk factor that increase the chances to be placed in the NEET category.

There is a close correlation between the level of education of NEET youth and the parents' background. The family environment is a strong predictor of risk to become and remain NEET youth for a longer period. This factor has to be seen in the light of several aspects. On the one hand, we refer to parents' experience and belonging to vulnerable groups, including the unemployed/inactive groups, parents with deviant behaviours and vicious lifestyles, single parent families, low level of parents' education. On the other hand, poverty, low living standards of families, is a determinant factor of low participation in education and training and low level of qualification. All these factors come to confirm the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of social inequalities, which remains a reality for our society.

Another range of individual factors is the inactivity of young people due to family responsibilities (especially among women), but also to the poor health situation of some young people (disability, invalidity, etc.). A specific factor for our country is the vicious lifestyle (abusive alcohol consumption, etc.) that places young people in this category or increases the risk of becoming NEET.

Attitudinal and motivational factors are also likely to be found in the NEET category: lack of motivation and aspirations to learn/work, low level of civic participation, lack of information about educational opportunities and employment.

Factors related to education system. The study has highlighted a number of systemic problems faced by country's education system that contribute to limiting young people's access to education and labour market. We refer to the high rate of school abandon, the early leaving of education system, the low graduation rate of the baccaalaureate exam. The early school leaving has a dramatic impact on the social and economic risks that young people suffer and placement in the NEET category for a long period.

The lack of career guidance in schools is also a significant issue of our educational system. Pupils do not benefit from career guidance, which determine them to choose a profession/occupation based on “trend” or according to parents’ wishes, etc. As a result, a surplus of specialists at some specialties is attested, such as law, economics, etc., which impedes the professional insertion of these young people.

Another important aspect confirmed by the results of our study is the poor correlation in some cases of the education and training system with labour market needs and with the real demand for skills, few practical skills specific to the professions/occupations. Thus, some employers avoid hiring young people for reasons of poor vocational training, lack of practical skills, lack of experience, etc.

Socio-economic environment. The young people’s place of residence definitely influences their possibilities and educational and professional pathways. The degree of urbanization and economic development of the youth’s place of residence has a significant impact on the chances of being in education, training or employment. Thus, in localities where there is a lack or insufficient number of economic agents, or localities are located away from areas with intensive economic activity, the probability of the residents of these communities being NEET is extremely high. Another important factor is the lack of job offers with a decent remuneration, as expected by young people. This determines the involvement/orientation of young people towards employment abroad.

Therefore, we are talking about the regional, rural and urban disparities, different economic opportunities, being exacerbated by gender disparities, young women in rural areas having the lowest chance of professional insertion. At the same time, a more serious situation is witnessed in small towns where, in most cases, there are no employment opportunities even in agriculture that absorb some of the local labour force.

Another important factor limiting the access of young people to the labour market is the poor infrastructure (lack of public transport throughout the day, etc.) and the reduced mobility of some categories of young people.

Institutional factors. Solving complex problems depends on the relevant public institutions and the key actors, which have contributed greatly to the emergence and growth of this target group in our country. The study has highlighted a number of factors that delay solving the problems of young people in general and NEET youth in particular. Firstly, there is no systemic and coherent approach to youth issues; the existing strategies, country documents have not produced the expected outcome. The available services for young people are precarious and not targeting inactive young people, the most vulnerable groups of youth. At the same time, there is an insufficient relationship between young people and relevant public institutions.

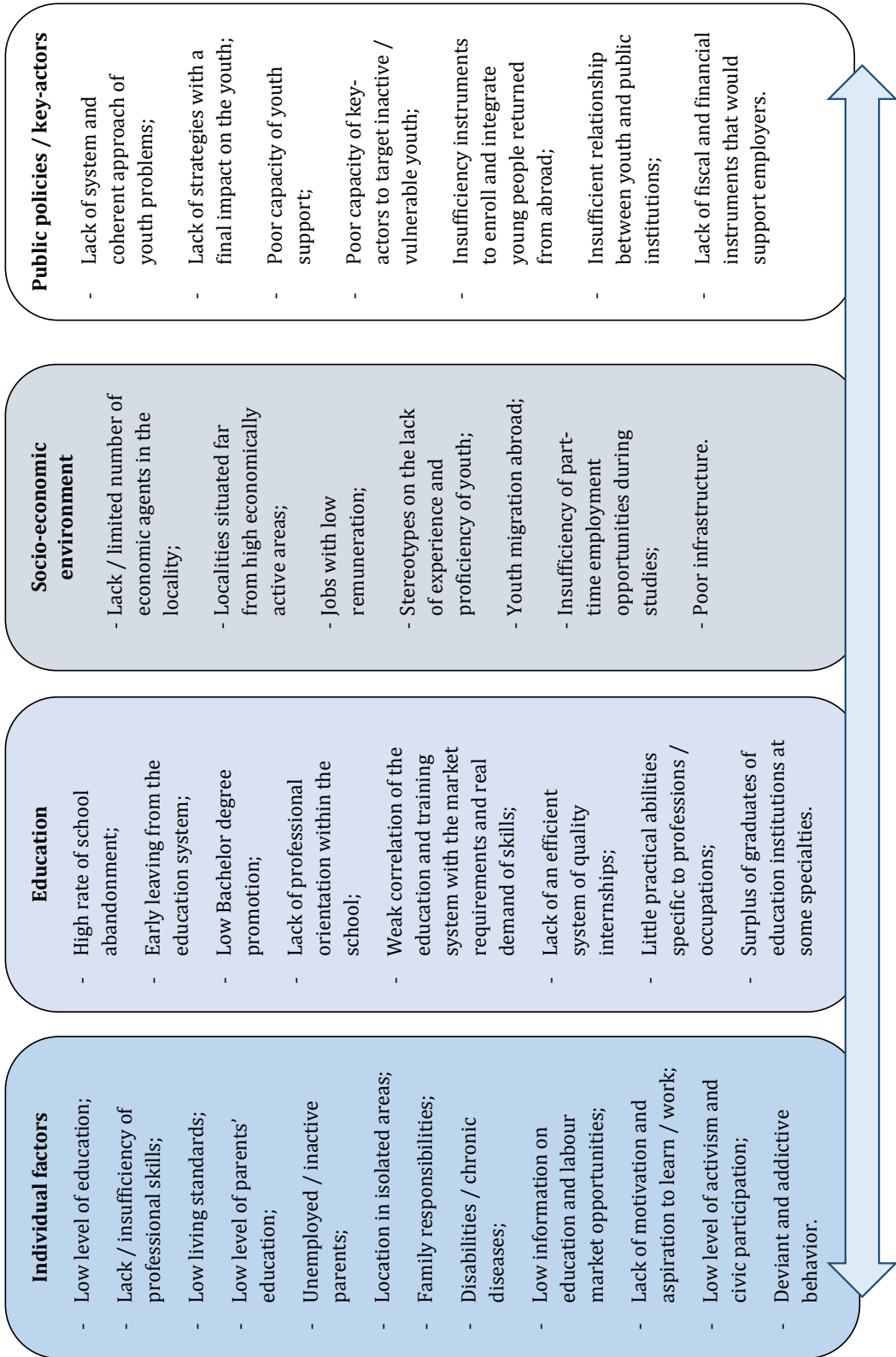


Fig. 4. Determining factors in inclusion of youth in the NEET category

NEET youth typology

Different social groups with attitudes, potential, motivation, and incentives to look for a job or to continue studying/professionalizing are forming the NEET youth. At the same time, social, economic and family environment have a significant influence on the formation of these NEET youth groups.

Within these groups there are young people who do not have control over the situation they are in: vulnerable, marginalized, sick or disabled young people and young carers of family members. Other subcategories of young people have full control over the situation: those who are not looking for a job, are inactive or do not continue their studies, not being constrained to be in this situation of other obligations or incapacity.

Based on the data from the socio-demographic questionnaires that were filled in for each participant of the study, as well as from the information obtained during the individual interviews with the young people and key actors, it was possible to highlight the sub-categories of the NEET youth group, which will allow a better targeting of the necessary measures.

The following variables were taken into account when developing the profile of the NEET youth sub-categories:

- family of origin;
- family status;
- material situation;
- place of residence;
- education level;
- skills/qualifications;
- period they are unemployed/inactive;
- work experience;
- integration on the labour market;
- mobility;
- share in the total NEET youth;
- obstacles in the labour market;
- impact.

The carried out evaluation will allow to highlight the causes that led to the placement in this NEET youth sub-category, as well as the characteristic of this segment based on the above-mentioned variables. At the same time, there are highlighted the characteristics of young people who are “far away” from the labour market and need additional support in order to be integrated into the labour market, to get a qualification or to start a business and the young people who are more ready for the labour market, have a medium/high level of qualification, have skills for work and professional aspirations.

Thus, based on the synthesized and analyzed information, four sub-categories of NEET youth with distinct characteristics and needs are highlighted:

1st type. “Unskilled” NEET youth;

2nd type. “Low/medium” qualified NEET youth;

3rd type. “Highly qualified” NEET youth;

4th type. “Volunteers/opportunists” NEET youth.

1st type. "Unskilled" NEET youth	
Family of origin	Low education level of parents Incomplete families Unemployed parents Parents employed in the informal sphere Families with low living standards
Family status	Early marriages, especially among young women Unemployed partner
Material situation	Income – occasional earnings, day-labourers Engaged in agricultural work within the family Very low standard of living Money are not enough even for bare necessities
Place of residence	Predominance in rural areas
Education level	School abandonment / incomplete gymnasium studies Gymnasium studies Learning problems Limited availability to continue their studies
Skills/qualifications	Lack of qualifications/skills Skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning Limited practical skills
Period they are unemployed/ inactive	More than one year
Work experience	Lack of work experience in the formal sphere Employed in informal sector (occasional activities, day-labourer)
Integration on the labour market	Not looking for a job Lack of interest in employment Hard to get employed
Mobility	Low internal and external mobility due to lack of financial means and limited practical skills
Share in the total NEET youth	About 40 percent of the total NEET youth
Obstacles in the labour market	Lack of employment opportunities / inappropriate remuneration Lack of family support Do not address to employment institutions, other public institutions Limited access to information Community's negative perceptions about them
Impact	Do not accumulate economic, social and human capital Long-term/forever unemployed Predominantly informal employment Low paid jobs Poverty reproduction Worsening of physical and mental health Deviant and addictive behaviours Social exclusion

2nd type. "Low/medium" qualified NEET youth	
Family of origin	Low/medium education level of parents Families with low living standards Parents employed predominantly in low paid jobs
Family status	Equally unmarried and married Partner mainly engaged in low paid jobs Employed partner, including abroad
Material situation	Income – occasional earnings Children allowances Help from relatives/partner Poor financial condition – money are sufficient only for the bare necessities
Place of residence	Rural/urban
Education level	Vocational studies Specialized secondary education Desire to obtain additional qualifications/competencies
Skills/qualifications	Qualifications acquired during vocational/specialized studies Informally acquired qualifications Inadequacy/insufficiency of acquired skills
Period they are unemployed/inactive	Up to one year for men More than one year for women
Work experience	Work experience in informal sphere Work experience in the formal sphere, poorly remunerated Work experience abroad, especially in Russia
Integration on the labour market	Rural area – do not actively look for getting employed Discouraged Medium to get employed
Mobility	High internal and external mobility among men Low internal and external mobility among women, due in particular to the need for taking care of a child
Share in the total NEET youth	About 30 percent of the total NEET youth
Obstacles in the labour market	Limited number of offers on the labour market / poor remuneration Do not accept job offers because of low salary Hiring problems due to the lack of work experience Mothers taking care for children/housewives Are affected by the crisis from Russia Desire to work abroad Limited access of public employment services, other public institutions
Impact	Do not accumulate economic, social and human capital Worsening of the living standards Worsening of physical and mental health (loss of self-confidence, depression, demotivation, etc.) Poverty reproduction Deviant and addictive behaviours Social exclusion

3rd type. "Highly qualified" NEET youth	
Family of origin	Medium/high education level of parents Families with low living standards At least one parent is employed, including abroad
Family status	Equally unmarried and married Employed partner, including abroad
Material situation	Savings from previous jobs Income – help from relatives/partner Average material situation, enough for a decent living but can not afford expensive goods
Place of residence	Predominance in urban areas
Education level	High level of education
Period they are unemployed/inactive	Up to one year
Skills/qualifications	Qualifications acquired during tertiary studies Inadequacy/insufficiency of competences acquired during the studies
Work experience	Lack of work experience Work experience in the formal sphere
Integration on the labour market	Actively searching for work Desire to employ according to graduated specialities High professional aspirations Highly to get employed
Mobility	High internal and external mobility
Share in the total NEET youth	About 20 percent in the total NEET youth
Obstacles in the labour market	Limited number of offers on the labour market / poor remuneration Do not accept job offers because of low salary Do not accept jobs due to the incoherence with the graduated speciality Hiring problems due to the lack of work experience Desire to work abroad
Social impact	Worsening of the living standards Worsening of physical and mental health (loss of self-confidence, depression, demotivation, etc.) Do not accumulate economic, social and human capital

4th type. "Volunteers/opportunists" NEET youth	
Family of origin	Medium/high education level of parents Families with medium/high living standards At least one parent is employed, including abroad
Family status	Equally unmarried and married
Material situation	Income – help from parents/partner, mostly from abroad Good material status
Place of residence	Predominance in urban areas
Education level	Medium/high level of education
Period they are unemployed/ inactive	More than one year
Skills/qualifications	Qualifications acquired during in specialized/tertiary studies
Work experience	Lack of work experience
Integration on the labour market	Do not look for a job Lack of interest in getting employed Weak to get employed
Mobility	High internal and external mobility
Share in the total NEET youth	About 10 percent in the total NEET youth
Other indicators	Do not accept existing job offers given financial support from parents/partner Obtaining a diploma of study without professional aspirations Lack of work culture
Impact	Do not accumulate social and human capital

3. PERCEPTIONS OF EXPERTS ON NEET YOUTH AND PROBLEMS THEY ARE FACING

3.1. Key actors involved in the inclusion of youth

Challenges facing country' labour market, the availability and relevance of employment policies and youth strategies, the prospect of youth employment and their empowerment for a better integration into the labour market, the importance of qualifications and skills, as well as the influence of migration on the labour market have been discussed with national and local key stakeholders.

The youth sector is a cross-sectorial one, and therefore, the approach to youth issues is addressed by several decision-makers / social actors involved in developing youth policies and strategies, as well as in their promotion. Thus, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP) is responsible for the development of employment policies, the Ministry of Economy (ME) is in charge of the development of job creation policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS)³⁵ deals with policy related to youth, the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (MESR) aims to ensure quality education and inclusive education for all and to promote lifelong learning opportunities, and the National Employment Agency of Moldova (NEAM) is the agency responsible for promoting policies, strategies and programs in the field of labour market development.

The unanimous opinion of the key actors involved in that certain steps have been taken in the Republic of Moldova in this field, by developing policies and strategies targeting young people directly or indirectly and youth employment has become a priority for the public authorities concerned.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection

Representatives of MHLSP have noted that *the National Employment Strategy for 2017–2021*³⁶, adopted in 2016, represents an important document in this respect. Priority number two of this strategy is devoted to human resources and some lines directly target young people. According to them, the aim is to strengthen the link between the labour market and vocational training, to improve the practical skills of graduates, to improve the legal framework on lifelong learning and to improve the image of technical vocational education. In order to implement this strategy, *the National Action Plan* of Employment for 2017 was developed, which specifies active measures, including for youth: promotion of partnerships between schools and companies in order to improve professional capacities; review the staff training plan for all specialties; update the nomenclature of the vocational training areas according to the labour market needs; development by 2020 of 12

35 Remark: The interviews were conducted until the institution was reformed.

36 <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=369765>

occupational standards, in addition to the 33 existing standards; support summer schools for children; organization of the annual volunteer week at the national level; the annual organization of the volunteer festival and support volunteering at national and local level. It was mentioned that in the drafting of these documents have been taken into account the proposals received from ME, MYS and other stakeholders.

Experts from MHLSP mentioned that *the dual learning* (apprenticeship) is being piloted, which represents the on-the-job training, planned for the two most demanded professions on the labour market – tailor and cook. The cook specialization will be piloted for five months, and tailor – for three months, under a grant from the International Labour Organization (ILO). The aim of this measure is that for 10% of the time unemployed should study theory at a vocational school and for 90% of time – at the workplace.

In the same context, the interviewed experts have mentioned the projects of the Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development (OSMESD), which provide *grants for business development* for different categories of population, including for youth from rural areas. It was also mentioned *the economic crediting program for youth PNAET* (the National Program of Economic Empowerment of Youth is for you!), which has been running since 2010.

Both key specialists from MHLSP, as well as NEAM representatives have pointed out that three career guidance centres have been recently opened in Chisinau municipality (Centre), Soroca municipality (North) and Cahul municipality (South). Beneficiaries of these centres are foremost school pupils and young graduates who can get acquainted with labour market trends, employment conditions, how they have to appear in front of the employer, which are the most demanded professions on the labour market, etc.

A number of other measures that these social actors undertake in order to increase the chances of young people on the labour market have been listed: organization of job fairs, conducting campaigns to familiarize the general public about the work of territorial employment agencies and the provided services, including on social networks; possibility of accessing e-employment on-line recruitment tools; familiarization with the profession barometer; opportunity to conduct interviews with employers; providing interviews in various media sources, newsletters, etc.

Ministry of Youth and Sports

The representatives of MYS reported that an important document underlying their activity is *the National Youth Sector Strategy*³⁷, focused on the development of the youth sector, of the entities from this sector. A priority in this strategy is devoted to economic opportunities for young people, with the provision of certain actions by MYS, ME and MHLSP.

According to them, the actions of this ministry are rather “soft activity”, such as: conducting seminars and trainings on how a person should come in front of the employer, what are the socio-economic rights of young people in relation to the employer, what is

37 <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=356215>

a labour contract, providing grants for NGOs to carry out certain activities in partnership with the ministry concerned.

A number of measures mentioned during the interviews by the MYS representatives are related to the promotion of *internships* both in the country and abroad. Young people, not necessarily students, have the opportunity to carry out internships for a certain period both within an economic agent and public institution in order to gain experience and engage later in the workplace.

The MYS key actors mentioned about the achievements of this public authority related to the promotion of *volunteering* in our country. According to them, there is a well-developed normative framework on volunteerism: laws, governmental decisions, different strategies and orders related to their implementation. At the same time, all optional volunteer tools are available: volunteer contract, volunteer card, recommendation letter and volunteer certificate. It has been noted that volunteering in the Republic of Moldova is recognized as work experience and length of service, being a good tool by which young people can actively engage in the life of the country, thus having more chances to get employed.

National Employment Agency of Moldova

National Employment Agency³⁸ represents the central body of the specialized public service empowered to promote state policies, strategies and programs in the field of labour market, social protection of job seekers, prevention of unemployment and combat of its social effects, as well as the implementation of labour migration policy and monitoring of the work of private agencies for employment.

Key people from the agency, both at national and local level (territorial agencies) have taken part in this study. Experts confirmed that the youth unemployment rate is high, especially in rural areas, as shown by statistical data provided by the NBS³⁹. Estimates suggest that about thirty percent of the total number of unemployed registered at employment agencies are young people, and the largest share comes from rural areas. It has also been noted that more than a half of those who access the agency's services are young people with a low level of education and who do not have a profession/qualification. Subsequently, these people are enrolled in vocational training courses in the areas required on the local labour market or are directly targeted to get employed.

"... people who need direct support, starting from information to counselling, are addressing to our agency. They do not know how to look for a job, where to look for it, how to come and talk to the employer, how to write a CV and do not know how to access the information channels ..." (Expert 1).

38 For additional information: www.anofm.md

39 www.statistica.md

A part of young people who do not address directly to the agency can access virtual information channels, job portal, the labour market information centre, the call centre, and periodically, job fairs are organized that are also accessible online.

Specialists from these institutions have presented some estimates based on the analysis of the appeals of different categories of people and not just those from the youth. Thus, according to these evaluations, several categories of beneficiaries can be highlighted.

"... the first category are people who are really looking for a job, accounting for about 20% of the total number of appeals; the second category of people want to benefit from other services, such as social assistance or other benefits, which is the largest – 60%, the third category wants a free medical insurance policy – about 12% and other categories apply for divorce certificates or certificate of exemption in the education process for children ..." (Expert 4).

Specialists from this public employment services have reported a number of issues they are facing related to youth. The most stringent problems are described below:

- **Decrease in the number of youth appealing NEAM**

The absolute majority of the interviewed staff indicated a decrease in the number of people using the public employment services. The explanation is seen in the decrease of the number of young people, the massive departure of youth to study abroad, to work or for family reunification. At the same time, there is an increase in the number of inactive young people on the labour market, who, according to the specialists within these agencies, are rather involved in informal sphere, perform seasonal/occasional work, are discouraged from entering the labour market, do not see employment perspectives and/or are not aware of the need to gain professional skills.

"... previously, we trained more than 200 unemployed people during vocational training courses from three districts. Now there are hardly 100 people. The youth is inert. It does not believe, does not see prospects in employment, even after completing the courses. Maybe there are less young people ..." (Expert 2)

"... we face problems in completing groups, in order to form a group we must go to more than one region to identify, select and convince people to attend these courses. Not always the young people without a profession understand the role of a profession in life ..." (Expert 1)

- **Specialists shortage**

Almost all interviewed specialists indicated on the lack of necessary specialists relative to the workload. In particular, there is an acute shortage of psychologists within these agencies. Of the 35 agencies that currently operate in the country, none of them has a psychologist, which was reduced after the reforms. At the same time, the vast majority have mentioned on the necessity of re-establishing the unit of psychologist or psychopedagogue.

- **Shortage of office space for an efficient activity**

As a rule, the activity of territorial agencies is concentrated in a single office, which makes it difficult for efficient work with different categories of people. It has been mentioned that often people are embarrassed to talk about their problems if there are several people in the room.

- **Location of agencies exclusively in urban areas**

All employment agencies are located in cities, which makes it particularly difficult for young people, especially for those with a precarious financial situation, to travel to cities in order to benefit from their services.

"... there are problems because, as mentioned, most of the young people are from rural areas and we are in cities. So here is the need for some additional sources that many do not have ..." (Expert 1)

- **Issues related to youth training**

In this regard, specialists have mentioned a number of issues such as: limited spectrum of vocational training courses. Most of courses are for women, but there are also needed for men.

"... we are now able to offer more professional training for women at the place of living. I would have liked to include men as well, because we have educational institutions that could have such programs as locksmith, welder, etc. ..." (Expert 4)

The experts indicated on a *small number of vocational training institutions participating in the tenders* for unemployed training. According to them, the low interest in participation is explained by small amount of money provided by state for vocational training of a trainee. It was mentioned that the participants in the tenders must have training programs for each field that need to be approved by the MHLSP. Due to changes in legislation that provide for a certain amount of applied and theoretical hours, not all vocational schools are able to adapt to the new requirements, as this requires additional time and financial resources that are subsequently at risk of not being covered.

In the same context, some experts believe that once the state has no means to entirely finance the studies, it would be appropriate to stimulate the educational institutions by offering small grants for setting up laboratories, study rooms, etc. At the same time, the emphasis has been made on the necessity to modify the procedures of the legislation on unemployed vocational training in order to revise the costs, the amount of hours and to stress the attention on the quality of the courses.

Also in this section it was mentioned that some *young people face difficulties in acquiring professions / vocational training* offered within the agencies.

"... the young wants to study a certain profession, but then they cannot assimilate it and abandons the courses ..." (Expert 1)

Therefore, employment agencies are almost the only state-funded national structures that provide guidance and training services in order to increase the level of employment and, implicitly, reduce the youth unemployment rate.

Local public authorities, local social assistance services

Representatives of the local public authorities have testified that they do not provide any social services exclusively for young people. According to LPA officials, young people / young families usually seek to obtain certificates in order to benefit from unemployment benefits, social aid, etc. It was mentioned that LPAs together with other social local actors could help to solve more serious cases, which often involve young people / children.

"... I was together with a social assistant in a family where alcohol is abusively consumed, in order to take the children, because it was also violence in that family. Unfortunately, this environment influences these children, and often they themselves start a deviant lifestyle, by consuming alcohol, even from an early age ..." (expert 5)

Social assistants have mentioned that activity related to youth lays in providing social help to socially vulnerable families, those with many children, other categories of vulnerable young people (people with disabilities, etc.). For many young people with a low level of education, the functioning mechanisms of the institutions are virtually unknown beyond their role as a social assistance provider.

The staff employed in the social welfare service is overloaded with work, financially and professionally unmotivated, working under difficult conditions, interacting with various vulnerable persons, etc. As a result, all these problems lead to a large flow of personnel in this state structure.

"... in our institution there is a great flow of personnel, no one resists more than half a year with such a salary and hard working conditions, being often and badly insulted ..." (Expert 11)

The data of this study reveals a small range of services for youth at the local level, especially in rural areas. Low levels of trust in public institutions and public authorities, as well as poor access to available public services, indicate on the negative premises for the potential occurrence of positive social change in communities heavily affected by unemployment and social exclusion.

Centres and youth organizations

Experts from MYS have mentioned that the Republic of Moldova is the region's leader in the field of youth, largely due to the substantial financial and logistical support provided by UNDP, UNICEF, and the World Bank during 2008–2009.

According to these experts, a significant number of *youth centres* operate in the country, which represent a youth-friendly area and provide different services. We will enumerate the most important entities:

- *Youth information and documentation centres* at the district level;

- *The National Youth Council* is a network, an umbrella of youth organizations;
- *Local Youth Councils* are youth participation structures that were launched in 2000's;
- Councils created by the Ministry of Education: *councils of pupils* in schools; *councils besides institutions from professional or vocational education*;
- *Community councils* created by the MYS, which include not only young people from educational institutions, but also young people from community, either employed or non-employed, involved in the education system or outside it;
- *The national network of youth-friendly health centres*, a project coordinated by Neovita, which activates in all districts and two localities from the left bank of Nistru river, provides free medical and social services for young people and works with socially vulnerable youth.

Despite a large number of youth centres/organizations, both the qualitative study and the data of different surveys show a very low level of youth information on their activity, and, of course, an even less access to services provided by these entities⁴⁰. Some experts raise the question about the effectiveness of centres under some public institutions, which usually report about a number of young beneficiaries that often does not correspond to reality.

It was indicated on a significant number of NGOs, public associations, which at least according to the statute, provide services for young people. However, key interviewees mentioned that these organizations, mostly created with the support of international organizations, due to the lack of an initial concept and a sustainability plan, cease their activity with the completion of the projects.

According to some key actors, this is also because there was no clarity on the mandate of local authorities in relation to the development of such services and, in particular, in relation to the non-governmental area. The services provided by these centres must be developed according to community needs. The interviews show that *"... it is only now when the concept and what should a centre be in fact is discussed, what has to deliver a youth centre in the national services system ..."* (Expert, 15).

A problem reported by several key actors is that most of the youth services are delivered to the most informed and active young people and practically are not targeted vulnerable, inactive youth, especially from rural areas. According to them, specialists from different centres should be trained to connect all young people to the available services.

3.2. Situation of youth on the labour market in the experts' view

Although a number of policies, strategies, measures aimed at improving the situation of youth have been listed, the impact of these actions at the local level is not felt. Key

40 Centrul de Investigații Sociologice și Marketing "CBS AXA". Cercetarea opiniei privind problemele, valorile și aspirațiile tinerilor din Republica Moldova. Chișinău 2016.

actors from the mayoralties were the most critical. They actually have information about the real situation of young people in the communities they represent. Thus, the vast majority of interviewed key people appreciated the situation of young people as bad and their integration into the labour market as problematic.

"... the situation is very bad, I would say. All the youth in our village has left, there is nobody ... They have no place to work, the salaries are low, they cannot support themselves and they all go ..." (Expert 9)

"... young people have absolutely no prospects and opportunities. Schools, hospitals are closing down, most of the arable land, if previously were agrarian, are now being bought and privatized, the work is already done with high-performance techniques and there is no need for so many workers, that's the situation ..." (Expert 10)

"... the situation of young people is complicated. Due to the low wages, we produce work force for foreign countries. We allow this luxury to prepare people who go abroad. But anyway, our state is losing ..." (Expert 6)

"... it is worse than before, because we work with youth and we want to promote volunteering, but there is no youth ... or they are indifferent, do not want to get involved. In the evening when you go out to town or on Saturday and Sunday, you practically do not see the youth either in entertaining places or on the street, it is like the city has very few young people ..." (Expert 16)

Almost without exception, LPAs representatives from communities involved in the qualitative research have testified that they do not take any concrete measures to improve the situation of young people related to integration into the labour market. The vast majority of these key players believe that the issues in question go beyond their competence, mentioned being over busy with other important issues, and, last but not least, the insufficiency of human and financial resources. Many of them have indicated that they are directing unemployed youth to employment agencies in the district centres.

"... absolutely nothing contributes to improving the situation of young people in the locality, neither in the District Council nor in the Local Council. The problem of young people is not discussed anywhere. I do not know why, young people are left as if they are forgotten. There are problems at the forefront that everyone is saying out loud: roads, salaries, but young people are left ..." (Expert 7)

The interviews conducted with key actors validated a number of findings from interviews with NEET youth. Thus, the key actors listed the same major employment obstacles as those mentioned by young people:

- **Problems of labour supply and labour demand** – a limited number of strategic employers in localities/region, poor job offer in terms of duration (there is mainly seasonal work in rural areas);

- **Low salaries** – most of the available jobs imply insufficient remuneration, especially in terms of the workload. Reference has been made on the budgetary sphere (education, medicine, culture, etc.) where, due to low wages, there is a shortage of labour force. Young people with good professional training could fill in the demands in these areas, but they are demotivated by low wages, which leads them to employ in better paid areas, but which do not have any tangency with their professional training or they are moving abroad;
- **Informal employment** – a phenomenon that has grown in recent years and is a serious problem for our country's economy. Although many young people accept informal employment, experts have mentioned a number of risks that this phenomenon involves. According to them, one of the major risks is the non-payment of salary or partial payment, which demotivates young people for further employment *"... if the young man has disappointed once, twice, he loses his confidence and it is difficult for him to get into the labour market ..."* (Expert 3);
- **The lack of a place of living** – represents a problem especially for rural youth who tend to employ in economically feasible cities, but insufficient remuneration to cover rent expenses makes them quit. Some key actors reported about the Soviet-era experience when young people were offered a place to live in and other incentives. Nowadays, practically no institution has such offers for its employees;
- **The low quality of young people's education and professional skills below the expectations of employers.** From the point of view of the quality of the study, the key people from the employment agencies, but also other key actors, appreciate that both the curriculum and the study materials should be adapted to the reality demanded by the labour market, moreover, most of them consider that economic agents / employers should also be involved in the development of study programs. It is necessary to focus on innovative technologies, occupational skills appropriate to the labour market, employers' involvement in the educational process by ensuring practical training in the workplace.
- **Lack of interest in getting employed.** Many key actors are of the opinion that a large majority of young people are not interested in learning or engaging in work. There are many personal and structural reasons for this disinterest.

3.3. NEET youth in the expert's view

Character of NEET youth

Most of the interviewed experts consider that the NEET youth rate (NBS estimations) do not reflect the true size of the NEET phenomenon in our country. Most of the experts believe that the number of young people who are neither employed nor learning is over-estimated. These statements are justified by the impossibility of estimating and

monitoring the actual number of young people who emigrate either for a short period or to settle in another country. At the same time, the fact that many young people hold the passport of an EU country, or the right to free movement for 3 out of 6 months, makes it even more difficult to monitor the migration process. According to them, it is quite difficult to find out whether people who are appearing as NEET youth are in the country or are abroad.

"... in our locality, every second young person is not employed, they are abroad and are not registered. They do not appear anywhere, some come back from abroad, but they are not registered ..." (Expert 7)

Another aspect is that only a small part of these young people interacts with public institutions, such as local public authorities, employment agencies, social assistance services, and other institutions concerned. This is also confirmed by the results of the NEET youth study.

The key actors involved in qualitative research have been asked to present a characteristic of young people who are not employed, nor are studying at the moment. The study highlighted a sufficiently unfavourable social perception of the young population that is part of the NEET category.

According to the results from interviews with national and local actors, NEET youth are people with the following characteristics.

- **Low level of schooling**, due to school dropout, early leaving of the education system, extremely low rate of baccalaureate promotion. Many of these young people do not have a gymnasium/lyceum graduation certificate.

"... there are people who have no studies, no vocational education or university studies, they are those who have completed 9 grades or at best 12 grades and they have nothing else ..." (expert 16);

"... in my opinion, they are with limited education, they abandon school for economic reasons, they want to hire faster, but there is the problem that having no profession they are discouraged when they try to look for a job ..." (Expert 1);

"... after nine grades we do not know where these young people are going to. We also have a few young people who graduate the lyceum, we have an extremely low rate of baccalaureate promotion. For example, in lyceum there were 23 students, of which about half did not pass the baccalaureate examinations. They do not study and we do not know if they work ..." (expert 7);

- **Prevalence in rural areas** – the absolute majority of the actors concerned believe that these young people come from rural areas, explained by both the lack of educational opportunities in this area and the lack of viable economic agents that would provide the right jobs.

"... in the villages this category of youth without any occupation is the most numerous ..." (expert 7);

- **Low living standard of the family of origin.** It was mentioned that a significant part of these young people come from families with low living standards, have no financial resources to invest in education, to move to other localities to benefit from public employment services and/or to employ in the labour market;
- **Seasonal/occasional informal employment,** due both to the lack of employment alternatives and to the fact that no professional qualifications / skills are required.

"... these young people are usually working with the day because there is no need for studies or because there are no other paid or long-term jobs ..." (expert 16);

"... they rather work with the day than to work officially ..." (Expert 6).

- **Passivity, inactivity.** Many key actors have mentioned that these young people have a very low interest in engaging in some activities, are disinterested in what is happening in society.

"... they are passive. I really do not know why, but they do not want to work, they want to get high salaries, but they do not want to work, they are really passive ..." (expert 9)

- **Involvement / desire to migrate** – according to key persons, an important part of these young people go to work abroad, mostly for a certain period, after which they come back (circular migration).

"... most of these young people go abroad, many through the Employment Agency. They go and register themselves there, we offer them some acts of lack of property, work place, that it is not engaged on the labour market. Thus, in a year or a half, they leave. And they continue to leave through the district NEAM ..." (Expert 6)

- **Hardly accessible and poor communication** – In some cases, these young people are hard to be identified, given their vicious lifestyle, they are experiencing difficulties in communication.
- **Lack of aspirations and motivation to work.** The vast majority of key interviewees think that these young people are uninterested in finding a job or professional advancement. At the same time, their parents, husband/wife support some of these young people.

"... they do not want to work ... none of them. Whatever they are proposed, they are not available. They do not agree. I have an expression: 'lived away from school'. In the sense that they have no documents, they are thinking of going somewhere but have no document of graduation of 9 grades ..." (Expert 6);

"... exactly the young people who have gone through the transition of old and new times. We grow young people who are parasitic because many parents of these young people

are abroad, they are at home thinking that parents are sending money, and thinking about why they should work?..” (Expert 5).

- **Hardly adaptable** – a part of these young people are characterized as being not adaptable to the conditions required by the employer – compliance with a work regime, perseverance, desire to acquire new knowledge, etc.
- **Insufficient relationship with public institutions.** Only a small part of these young people is addressing public employment agencies, while some are seeking for social assistance.
- **Vulnerability** – these people lack in support, are in a chronic condition of poverty, are unable to take advantage of the existing opportunities or to deal with the problems they face.
- **Deviant and addictive behaviours.** Key actors have reported some behavioural problems among youth from this category (alcohol abuse, involvement in illegal activities, etc.)

“... I would say that there are young people who do not want to work, who do not have finished studies, do not have a profession and many of them consume alcohol, have a deviant way of life. I repeat, who wants to work, finds his job ...” (expert 5)

Consequently, the qualitative study conducted with the directly or indirectly concerned key stakeholders in solving young people’s problems has highlighted a predominantly unfavourable perception of this category of youth. At the same time, the statement of a participant in the study, which describes the attitude of people on these young people, is relevant.

“... these young people are being dissed by others, because they are considered lower-class or ‘second-hand’ persons. Firstly, poverty makes the human to steal, to drink alcohol, to use narcotic substances, be violent, have an asocial way of life, and of course they are not well-liked ... people in general, as well as those with a higher status deprive them, people are indifferent, they reject them ... and society is divided, there is no support like used to be in the past, no one is trying to help, even when they see someone laying in the street, he may be sick or dead, people are just walking away and not trying to find out the situation and this absolute indifference, that is, the division of society is like in the Middle Ages, when a society was divided on classes, here we have the same classes ...” (Expert 7)

Experts’ perceptions on the NEET youth categories

Participants in the study were asked to give a punctual approach on the NEET youth sub-categories, initially pre-set in the study concept: active NEET youth on the labour market, inactive NEET youth and potential migrant NEET youth.

Active NEET youth. According to key actors, NEET youth actively looking for a job is the least numerous sub-category. Most of them are young people with studies and/or previously employed, and for some reasons (inappropriate remuneration, company

bankruptcy, optimization, etc.) have lost their jobs. Most of these young people are from the urban area, especially from large cities where most of the employment opportunities are available.

Only a part of these young people is registered at the labour office. The LPA representatives in these cases give them certificates that they do not own a share of agricultural land. In this context, it was mentioned that young people who own agricultural land can not benefit from the full range of services provided by these agencies.

According to NEAM specialists, a category of young people are addressing the agency but are not registered, i.e. they benefit from counselling but are not assigned the status of unemployed. As a rule, these people just want to get information about vacancies, employment conditions, and then go to the employers themselves.

Most surveyed key stakeholders noted that most of these young people do not accept existing offers because of low salaries. The experts have confirmed the conclusions of the study carried out within the NEET youth – in many cases, these youth are forced to accept jobs that are not tangential to the field in which they had studied, or focus on hiring abroad.

Inactive NEET youth. According to interviewees, the category of inactive NEET youth is the most numerous and heterogeneous. These young people do not usually address the employment agencies, they are young people who are not looking for a job for various reasons (they are supported by close relatives, take care of children or elderly people, sick people etc.) are discouraged from accessing the labour market.

Most key actors, especially at the local level, have indicated that some of these *young people are employed informally, perform seasonal/occasional work.*

"... they are inactive, they were not accepted to education institutions ... And they do not work. But this does not mean that they are doing nothing. They are employed either illegally or engaged in home activities (in the subsidiary farm). Basically – this is certainly an informal employment, a seasonal one. In the summer they work the land, in winter they stay at home, maybe they go somewhere ..." (Expert 2)

Some experts argue that some inactive young people on the labour market *have some sources of income* and do not accept a job that offers them a low salary. Reference has been made to young people who receive money from their parents/spouse from abroad, and other close relatives.

Key people have drawn attention to the fact that these young people face further difficulties in integrating into the labour market and in the family life.

"... these young people will find it difficult to adapt, because when they have family and children, they will have to support them, and because of this there are many divorces, as they cannot integrate either in the family, nor on the labour market ..." (Expert 4).

In the category of inactive youth are also young mothers who being at home with small children lose their competitiveness and are no longer interested in employment.

Other young people are those involved in domestic activities and do not see the need to employ.

"... there are many women in this category who stay at home with their children. They are not employed or not looking for a job, they take care of the household, of children, etc. In many of these families, the husband goes to work abroad ..." (Expert 5)

It has been pointed out that some of the inactive young people, especially from rural areas, are dependent on their home environment, are not mobile, i.e. they do not want and/or do not have the opportunity to go to another locality to get employed. Reasons would be the low salary that does not cover travel expenses, rent payments, other expenses. It has been reported that the institutions concerned, along with employers, need to find solutions to support these people.

Specialists from employment agencies find difficult to identify and monitor inactive youth on the labour market and who do not interact with public institutions. However, some measures are being taken to inform them about the need for a profession/occupation, employment, through both the media and the local public authorities.

An important problem highlighted by the vast majority of key actors is social aid as a demotivating factor in employment. In the interviews, it was mentioned that some young people, especially from rural areas, use the services of employment agencies exclusively to benefit from state social assistance. In many cases, the offered salary does not exceed the amount of social assistance granted. It was noted that social assistance is also granted to jobseekers who are registered at the territorial employment offices.

"... often, when we propose a job, we find out that social aid is equivalent to the salary offered by an employer, or a little bit higher than the salary. In this way they have no interest in working if their social help comes without effort and they can work informally thus having another income that we can not prove ..." (Expert 4).

"... I'll tell you what's happening here – social benefits kill the desire to work. There is already about unemployment that affect all family members. There is a reproduction of poverty ..." (Expert 2)

"... this situation is quite alarming, that in fact through these benefits of the state we develop social parasitism ..." (Expert 4)

"... we also have some of these, there is a person that sleeps every time I go to visit him, regardless of the hour of the visit. This category of youth benefits from social assistance, including social and humanitarian aid. They do not have and do not want to have something more, they know that there is no more for them and they have resigned to the fact. They come from disadvantaged families and lead a disastrous way of life, they are always drinking ..." (Expert 11)

According to the specialists' opinion, the legislation on granting social assistance for job-seekers needs to be changed, this benefit has to be given in another form. According

to the provisions, there is expected that registration for employment will be excluded and community work will be introduced.

Potential migrant NEET youth. Emigration of the population, especially of youth, is one of the most pressing problems our country faces. The study data with key actors involved confirm the results of the NEET youth study, namely that leaving of youth to work abroad is a problem with immediate and long-term consequences that are felt at community level and will widen in the future. According to representatives of the local authorities, the phenomenon of emigration affected virtually all the population categories in the localities involved in the study.

"... potential migrant youth come from good families, only those who have no money and no possibility to get the documents are not looking to go abroad ..." (Expert 6)

The main causes of emigration remain the lack of jobs and insufficient remuneration that does not ensure the minimum of existence. The most serious consequences listed by the participants in the study are: a significant proportion of young people is leaving the country, mostly active and with a medium/high level of education, and because of this depopulation of the localities takes place, there is a shortage of specialists, especially in the budgetary sphere.

"... a great part of the problems in the country are due to leaving abroad, we do not have specialists, if we go right now in the culture department, all of them are of ages 45 and up, all of them have 2–3 or 5 years and retire; at the library, practically all the staff is retired or at least is close to retirement and no one comes to work ..." (Expert 16);

"... the greatest risk for the district would be to remain without youth. There is the risk of departure of 'enlightened minds' that might serve here for the benefit of the state; another risk would be the drop in birth rates because they leave and form their families there and therefore, remain to live there. Another risk is the loss of our national values, as the youth is leaving and those not so attractive for the labour market remain, because in the end the youth is the 'locomotive engine' ..." (Expert 4)

It was pointed out that in many localities, especially in rural area, only "problematic" young people remain:

"... they have to eat, have to live and thus they steal, or they are desperate and start drinking alcohol and there are more of them. The best young people, who also have a faculty go abroad, but the others remain, they do not do anything ... and yesterday the policeman called me that there was a theft, violence, beating, that's the situation ..." (Expert 9)

Key actors have also pointed out on some benefits of this phenomenon, such as investment in goods and infrastructure, raising living standards, investing in own/children's education, opening up businesses, etc.

The vast majority of study participants consider that the state practically does nothing to stop this process, and some have even said that emigration to work abroad is intensively mediated and promoted by employment agencies and media sources.

"... it seems that the state is calling for us to come home, and on the other hand, all televisions and radios are sending out employment announcements for abroad, the state practically kicks you out of the country. From one side, the government is calling you, and at the same time all advertisements are related to work abroad (Italy, Germany, Poland) to work with a labour contract ..." (Expert 6)

At the same time, it is difficult to integrate young people returned from abroad on the local labour market. According to the key actors, PHARE "1 + 1" program is not sufficient and it is not for sure that a young person initiating a business will be supported here in the country and will not be persecuted with different controls and different "invisible stones".

"... when a young man wants to open a business and encounters so many problems he is disappointed and finds himself again in going abroad ..." (Expert 4)

In turn, employment agency specialists have reported that migrants are accustomed to high wages and the remuneration offered on the local labour market is not attractive to them at all. In these cases, they are guided to start their own business; they are informed about all the funding programs for returning migrants.

It has been mentioned that a common guide is now being developed entitled "guide of the Migrant Returned from Abroad" which will contain all the structures with phone numbers.

Approaches to NEET youth issues

A major problem raised during the interviews is the lack of a systematic and well-defined approach to problems related to the situation of young people in the Republic of Moldova in general and of the NEET youth in particular. Reference has been made to the multitude of services provided by public institutions, specialized centres, NGOs, other entities whose activity is not sufficiently coordinated among them and do not produce the expected result.

According to the study participants, the existing strategies are not tangible, impact-oriented, but are rather a set of interventions and monitoring indicators.

In turn, a large number of participants in this study have talked about the inaccessibility of youth services, and especially their inaccessibility for the most vulnerable sub-categories from the NEET group. As a result, the issue of the effectiveness of youth centres and how they interact with other multifunctional centres, public institutions, etc. was reiterated. These centres must "connect" young people to public life, to existing services at the local level, to communicate with all categories of young people.

It was highlighted that the generalist and some hands-off approach to the socially vulnerable categories should be overcome, and a personalized approach should be

adopted solving specific cases. By developing this topic, some key actors have reported that local problem is not only about the availability of staff / number of specialists at the local level, but also about the wrong approach to issues related to the inclusion of young people, the misunderstanding of the role they should have, which they see mainly through the distribution of social aid. According to experts' opinion, the paradigm of working with youth should be rethought, and local specialists must be trained to understand the categories of people they work with, including NEET and non-NEET youth.

"... if we do not work with youth, we would have a large group of young people that should be supported anyway, they do not produce anything, and we invest in them certain resources from the state budget directly or indirectly. The problem is with local and social workers because they are not ready to adopt this personalised approach, meaning that some of these people – one is alcoholic, another is of other kind ... an effort must be made to communicate with each person, to get the person's trust. Now, people are not trained for this and they do not even realize the role they have. Just we gave them 2 kg of pasta, we had a project or an initiative and that is all ..." (Expert, 15)

Some experts believe that social assistance needs to be reduced for certain categories of population, and investments are needed for economic development and opportunities for young people for having eventually more taxpayers. According to them, with the beneficial impact of investments, youth issues would be made aware and some outcomes would be seen.

Representatives of LPAs have repeatedly stated during the interviews that they do not have the necessary resources and, in most cases, redirect the NEET youth issues to other concerned institutional actors. According to the experts, the system of social support based on the performance of LPAs, i.e. the provision of funds depending on the results, could render the situation even though the performance evaluation system is a very complicated one, and not necessarily this is desired at the central level.

"... we do not have the possibility. LPAs have only empowerment, but we fail to do everything. The mayoralty faces many striking problems, we do not offer job places, we inform and we can give some advices ..." (Expert 5)

To be noted that key-actors at the national level consider that public authorities must be persistent in implementing measures to solve the problems of NEET youth. According to them, there should be increased the awareness of the costs that communities will bear directly or indirectly, in the medium or long term. It was mentioned on the loss of human and economic capital, cost of social assistance and medical services and possible social risks such as crimes, offences and others.

Dealing with youth from the most vulnerable category, experts from the employment agencies face the problem of not having a psychologist that would efficiently interact with these young people. At the same time, due to the reduction in the number of employees within these entities, the workload required by a specialist has increased, which may affect the quality of the services provided.

"... for example, if someone asks for support in business development, then you need to know specific laws related to the economics. If we talk about workplace training, once again, one person will be unable to know all areas. For interaction with vulnerable categories, there is required an another specialist ..." (Expert 4)

At the same time, some key actors are sceptical that these young people, speaking of the most vulnerable NEET youth, can be helped to overcome this situation.

"... I do not know if the mayoralty could do something, only if along with others, but I'm sceptical that these young people can be helped if they do not want this thing. We give them a hand, but we also wait for them to do something, but unfortunately, they do not want to do anything. They are social parasites ..." (Expert 5)

3.4. Inclusion of NEET youth according to experts' vision

The key actors involved in this study have formulated a number of recommendations for the inclusion of young people, especially NEET youth. The most relevant recommendations are listed below.

- **Inter-institutionalized cooperation.** The absolute majority of key people mentioned that close co-operation between ministries, agencies, local public authorities, civil society, economic agents and other actors is needed to address youth issues. Organization of seminars, roundtables between all these institutions to generate strategies, effective solutions, to complement the provision of services for NEET youth is required.
- **Job creation** (open new enterprises, including social ones, etc.) in the most disadvantaged communities, regions. According to the key actors, if young people are not given employment opportunities at the local level, including in the region, the situation will continue to stagnate and even to get worse (extension of emigration process, continuous degradation of localities, etc.).
- **Cooperation between national decision-makers, employers, business owners, trade unions to establish reasonable salaries**, as it is hard to persuade a person to accept a job when the offered salary does not cover the subsistence level and may be even lower than social aid;
- **Development of new measures to stimulate economic agents** that employ young people, especially vulnerable categories, improving the legal framework for this purpose;
- **Development of long-term labour market studies** that would underpin employment policy changes in order to know the specialties that will be required over two, three years;
- **Development of forward-looking businesses** such as organic farming, other prospective areas. Local producers must be promoted and supported and the mass importation of goods to the local market should be halted/minimized.

- **Development of social entrepreneurship.** In our country the law on social entrepreneurship was approved at first reading. The vast majority of experts believe that this is a good practice, as is shown by the experience of many European countries.
- **Development of mobility opportunities** – development of transport infrastructure in communities where such opportunities are lacking. Ensuring public transport during morning and evening hours would facilitate more employments on the labour market. It was noted the importance of involvement of the mayoralities for this purpose and compensation of transport expenses by the employer.
- **Supplementing human resources in terms of number and professional training** to improve services in public employment agencies, social assistance, etc. Reference was made in particular to psychologist, psycho-pedagogue;
- **Development of services for some people not accepted by the employer**, discouraged persons (representatives of ethnic minorities, persons released from prison, etc.).
- **Solving the problems related to the access of agricultural landholders** to the services of public employment agencies.
- **Granting credits on advantageous terms for young people.** Simplification of procedures for accessing funds under various projects.
- **Implementation of measures to prevent school dropout, early leaving of the education system.** Referring to the support measures that young school leavers may face, most social actors strongly support the need to introduce specific legislation that would create premises for financial and technical assistance to disadvantaged families, where the risk of school dropout of children is much higher.
- **Improving the quality of education.** From the point of view of the quality of the education, the social actors appreciate that both the curriculum and the study subjects should be adapted to the reality demanded by the labour market and it is necessary to involve the economic agents in the educational-instructive process.
- **Development of programs for acquiring the minimum level of education** (secondary school graduation documents). Social actors believe that education programs need to be developed to help young people continue and complete their studies. The “Second Chance” program was successfully implemented in Romania.
- **Development of programs to validate professional skills acquired outside the formal education system.** Particular reference has been made to people returning from abroad.
- **Development of career guidance services in schools**, detailed information activities about occupations/professions, labour market opportunities, awareness of the need for lifelong learning;

- ***Development of identification, monitoring and implication (outreach) measures of NEET youth*** at the community level. Representatives of the local public authorities are the most informed about this. It was mentioned that the most effective actions for this purpose would be the direct contact of families where there is such kind of youth. Some key actors are of the opinion that some coercive measures should be applied if people refuse to integrate into the labour market.
- ***Development of community centres*** that would connect young people, especially those from socially vulnerable families to public life, to develop services for these people according to their needs (psychological, legal assistance, career guidance, skills development, etc.). Involvement of local key actors, including church representatives.
- ***Development of specialized psychological assistance services*** for certain categories of youth (vulnerable), psychological diagnosis activities (psychological assessment of the development of life skills, professional skills, etc.);
- ***Development of measures to prevent deviance among youth.*** Provide psychological assistance to children and families with a high risk of developing asocial behaviours. Involvement of key actors for this purpose: police, probation officers, mayoralty, social assistance, church.
- ***Carrying out campaigns to change the predominantly negative attitudes/perceptions of some vulnerable young people.*** The results of the study denote an unfavourable attitude towards some of the young people in the NEET group, which represents an impediment to successfully solving the problems of these young people. Mutual tolerance and assistance should be promoted in the public environment through various media sources, field activities, etc. Some key actors, especially youth workers, have indicated that it would be appropriate to involve people in the field of culture and other areas that have the confidence of the population.
- ***Carrying out campaigns to promote the culture or work.*** In the opinion of the experts, the idea of easy earning money without too much effort was rooted in our society. In addition, the fact that an important part of young people gets money from parents from abroad without working deepens this idea.
- ***Development of local infrastructure for youth.*** The vast majority of experts reported that in villages, but also in many cities, there are no recreational centres, sports halls, community centres where young people can spend their free time. Dance, crochet, hand-made activities, etc. should be developed.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study on the structural characteristics of NEET youth and the determinant factors of this phenomenon demonstrate the existence of systemic problems that favour the maintenance of a high share of this category in the total young population.

The major challenge for young people aged 15–29 years to find a place on the domestic labour market is the lack of employment opportunities. Therefore:

- the presence of NEET youth among the 15–19 years age group is the result of school dropout / early school leaving and lack of vocational training;
- the high NEET rate among young people aged 20–24 years reflects the limited employment opportunities for young people with low qualifications, including for those who have dropped out higher education and face obstacles during the transition to work;
- the very high NEET rate among young people aged 25–29 years is determined by the lack of opportunities for integration into employment and also affects young graduates trying to enter the labour market.

At the same time, the widespread involvement of population in labour migration, including of youth, leads to establishment of a segment of population that practices either circular migration, seasonal or occasional migration, and thus is excluded from the domestic labour market. In turn, this leads to the overestimation of NEET youth segment in the total number of young population.

The weak development of the labour market in the last decades has led to a state of uselessness of the labour potential of the population, diminishing the value of work within the structure of personal values, especially of young people. Social and professional integration are important for self-realization and social recognition, and in the conditions of crisis these aspects lose their value, while work as a way of life of the individual turns into means of survival.

Currently, several systemic problems in the labour market of the Republic of Moldova can be highlighted:

- inefficient activity in some sectors, especially in the agricultural sector, the tendency to return to primitive technologies, the predominance of manual labour, which direct the population to low incomes and unprotected social activities and leads to poverty and limited capacities to overcome situations of crisis (NEET status) with its own forces;
- structural inefficiency of the labour market – lack of qualitative jobs, maintaining the high share of elementary occupations with low wages, which makes the internal labour market unattractive for young people and favours labour migration abroad;

- the high share of the informal sector in the structure of the labour market, which, on the one hand, is determined by the willingness of employers to reduce the costs and to hide tax revenues and, on the other hand, by the attempts of the population to earn more and maintain or improve the families' standard of living. This phenomenon leads to a decrease in the work culture, including among youth, which is manifested by the subsequent non-acceptance of the regulated labour conditions in the formal sector;
- poor entrepreneurial activity, underdevelopment of many types of business that would compensate for the lack of large economic units;
- poor territorial and professional mobility at both national and regional levels, due to the lack of housing, high rent prices, difficulties in accessing the real estate market;
- the erosion of the quality of labour force as a result of labour migration abroad.

The lack of a well-functioning interaction between labour market and national education system remains to be a weak point, and there are significant discrepancies between the structure of specialties / levels of education and the profile of professions/specialties required on the labour market. Currently, the educational services market is developing in parallel with the labour market, the connection points and the adaptation to the national economy requirements are relatively weak. A significant part of young people is geared towards higher education, and the broad educational offer in this field allows these aspirations to be achieved, despite the low performance of the candidates. Special secondary education and vocational schools have become less attractive to young people, and the status of a skilled worker is low in youth perceptions. All this leads to significant discrepancy between demand and supply on the labour market, causing difficulties in the transition from school to work, and placing youth in the NEET category.

The obstacles in solving the problems of young people related to the labour market are mainly the lack of investments in the important sectors of the national economy, lack of financial resources (especially in the context of the economic crisis), inertia and the malfunctioning of the educational system (difficulties in correlating the educational curriculum with labour market requirements, corruption, etc.), but also low levels of youth activism and participation. Public authorities at both national and local levels are responsible for finding and implementing solutions in terms of legislative changes (reform of the education system, correlation of the educational curriculum with labour market requirements, offering a qualitative internship), economic development (attraction of foreign investments, job creation), providing entrepreneurs with facilities in order to create new jobs for young people, organizing information campaigns, setting up counselling centres, community centres, organization of (re) qualification courses.

The overall context of NEET youth is influenced by a multitude of issues that have a considerable impact on their life trajectories. Late entry into the labour market makes young people postpone their plans, prolonging the transition to adulthood and gaining a personal status of social autonomy.

The study highlighted that a significant proportion of the NEET youth are a low level of education, thus limiting the access of these young people to the labour market. At the same time, young people with a low level of education who do not have any professional qualifications are at the highest risk of being always unemployed or being poorly remunerated later, plus the risk of taking over deviant or addictive behaviours, or to face health problems.

The insufficiency of economic capital has negative effects on the educational path of young people in the Republic of Moldova and, in the long term, on the socio-professional one. Young people from families with a poor material situation are at risk of early leaving the education system. Material shortages in the family force young people into early employment in unskilled labour, often in the informal sector, to work with the day, which is a lifelong vulnerability and contributes to the reproduction of poverty.

The lack of employment and, above all, of an infrastructure that would generate employment opportunities with a decent payment seem to be the main labour market problems with major consequences on the social inclusion of young people. These problems are perceived more acutely in small towns and rural areas, where the lack of jobs affect the life of these communities, and the causal chain of deprivations greatly influence the population' quality of life and favour an extensive emigration abroad of the economically active population.

The emigration of the population abroad, especially of the young people, is considered one of the most serious problem that our country has been facing over the last decades. Both young people and key actors are aware of the social and economic consequences of this phenomenon, such as the loss of human capital, wasting state investments in youth education, depopulation and population aging. At the same time, it was emphasized that a significant segment of active young people, mostly with medium and high education are leaving the country, and young people with low levels of education, with behavioural problems, unhealthy lifestyles remain in communities.

The decline in the standard of living and worsened urban – rural disparities, social and economic polarization are persisting in youth' perceptions and the income assessment in relation to the needs put young people and their families in the situation of absolute poverty or at the risk of poverty. There is attested that social position of young people appears to be one of economic dependence on parents / other family members or on various forms of support received from the state (social aid, unemployment benefit). The quality of life of the interviewed young people is low,

and financial shortcomings and concerns about the future of their children seem to be major issues affecting their family life.

The rural area is also facing problems with the lack of adequate infrastructure and public transportation, which hamper the living conditions of citizens and affect the mobility of jobseekers in order to access offers in the urban areas.

The study highlighted that situation of young people outside the education, employment or training systems has a significant impact at the individual level, on their mental health, among the most frequent being states of depression, stress, loss of self-esteem, lack of communication, frustration, apathy and blame for failures. Lack of job and a sense of insecurity about employment prospects increase the risk of illness.

The socio-professional insertion of NEET young people will contribute to improving the health status of this category of population, given that young people will be able to benefit from the full amount of healthcare provided in the Single Program of Compulsory Health Insurance. Ensuring stable incomes would reduce health inequalities and increase access to qualitative health services. At the same time, the high degree of control over a person's professional life, the opportunities for developing new skills and abilities, a decent salary, and self-realization prospects contribute to a good health.

As a result of the NEET status for a longer period, large varieties of unfavourable social conditions may occur: isolation, employment in unsecured jobs with low wages, crime, physical and mental health problems, family failure or divorce, etc. These consequences entail a certain cost and therefore the status of NEET is not only a problem for the person concerned but also for society and the economy as a whole.

Relationships with family and close friends are crucial to how young people are emerging in their contexts of life. Family members represent the fundamental support both in making a major decision in life and when young people have financial difficulties or other problems. Being in problematic situations, young people are heading towards the ones they trust, namely family and close friends. Institutions responsible for providing services to various vulnerable social categories are categorised as sources of social assistance rather than sources of specialised support in difficult situations.

Youth services (information, counselling, labour market mediation, etc.) are precarious, underdeveloped and poorly diversified in relation to the existing needs, being limited mainly to the services provided by employment agencies, located in urban area. In rural area, these services do not exist, with the exception of social assistance services that take the shape of distribution of various forms of social aid. The deficit in covering the need for specific services to vulnerable young people is more stressed in rural areas.

The activity of employment agencies is little known by youth and an insignificant number of young people accesses their services. A large part of young people

appreciates the services provided by these agencies as ineffective in the professional integration and non-customised according to the needs of young people. At the same time, the provision of youth services, with the specific targeting of vulnerable young people could facilitate the transition of young people from education to the labour market.

Necessity for a differential and cross-sectorial approach

The diversity of NEET youth subcategories determines the need for a differential approach in the development and implementation of policies to mitigate this phenomenon, with measures being geared towards each group, and taking into account their characteristics and necessities.

According to the research results, the group of the “unskilled” NEET youth are the most disadvantaged young people at the individual level and the most problematic from the social point of view and of necessary interventions. They have a low level of education, do not have professional qualifications/skills, most of them are not willing to work and are at the risk of inadequacy and social exclusion.

The results of the research show that the following categories can be found in the structure of the NEET youth who are not actively looking for a job:

- marginalized youth;
- young people discouraged in finding a suitable job;
- women with family responsibilities – take care for children or elderly relatives;
- young people who live with their parents or have their parents abroad, have a fairly high level of education, but do not accept offers on the labour market with low wages, while are waiting for “better working conditions”.

Specific interventions according to the NEET youth category

1 st type. "Unskilled" NEET youth	
The size and characteristics of the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures to identify, record and monitor the NEET youth from this category by direct contact, appeals to LPAs, employment agencies, etc.; - Development of the individual profile for each young person; - Creation of an integrated, permanent updated database;
Education	<p>Preventive measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of an early monitoring and warning system for pupils with the risk of abandonment; - Establishing causes of abandonment and cooperation between representatives of educational institutions, LPA, family, other targeted actors in order to avoid abandoning and early school leaving; - Financial and technical assistance for disadvantaged families for further education / establishment of funds for education at the local level; - Innovative and inclusive teaching methods for pupils with learning difficulties; - Training, education, counselling among young people from gymnasium and their parents about the need to complete/continue their studies; - Counselling, vocational guidance in gymnasium classes, information about professions/occupations with employment potential; <p>Reintegration measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of community centres that would connect all categories of youth; - Psychological counselling, informing young people, including their parents about the importance of reintegration into the educational system / importance of integration into the labour market; - Personalized reintegration services in the education system, professional training courses; - Identification, development and validation of skills and abilities acquired in the informal and non-formal environment; - Acquiring practical skills (handicraft, hand-made, etc.); - Access to information;

1st type. "Unskilled" NEET youth	
Labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orientation of young people and their families on the labour market; - Specialized assistance in finding a job/placement on the labour market; - Establishment and support of economic agents that open up new jobs, employ young people; - Support of the development of social enterprises, protected workshops; - Involving young people in town planning works, volunteering, etc. - Campaigns to raise public awareness on youth issues, changing attitudes towards the most vulnerable categories;
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and training activities on health behaviour, personal development; - Ensuring youth access to health centres, including family planning;
Actors targeted	Joint working teams with representatives from LPAs and NEAM, school, social workers, psychologists, psycho-pedagogues, specialized NGOs, other targeted actors;
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of jobs / poor remuneration, especially in rural areas; - Difficulty in identifying and accessing young people; - Do not have a certificate of graduation of 9 grades, which is an obstacle to accessing the next level of education; - Lack of interest among young people, especially vulnerable ones, to continue their studies / to engage in work; - Deviant and addictive behaviours (alcohol abuse); - Instability of young people, unreasonable renounce of studies/ employment; - Poverty (lack of financial resources to continue their studies / professional training courses); - Lack of financial resources available at the local budgets level; - Poor infrastructure, insufficient traffic of transport operators in some localities; - The target institutions (especially LPAs, social workers) are overloaded with stringent problems at the local level, the issue of young people being not among their priorities.

2nd type. "Low/medium" qualified NEET youth	
The size and characteristics of the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures to identify, record and monitor the NEET youth from this category by direct contact, appeals to LPAs, employment agencies, etc.; - Development of the individual profile for each young person; - Creation of an integrated, permanent updated database;
Education	<p>Preventive measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counselling, vocational guidance in gymnasium classes, information about professions/occupations with employment potential; - Development and implementation of mechanisms for anticipating the professions/occupations/competences required by the labour market; - Institutionalization of effective mechanisms for monitoring the insertion of graduates of vocational/specialized secondary institutions into the labour market, referring to the fields of economic activity and the skills they need at the workplace and which are useful for employment etc., drafting proposals to adapt the curriculum to the requirements of the labour market; - Revision of the curriculum of the vocational/specialized education system in accordance with the requirements of the labour market, technological change, as well as the specific requirements of a competency-based curriculum; involvement of relevant economic agents in this process; - Development of quality internships as learning experiences in the workplace, thus facilitating insertion into the labour market; - Development of continuous professional training programs for teachers, in particular those teaching technical disciplines; - Development of transferable skills for young people; - Development of entrepreneurial skills; - Carrying out the image-raising activities of vocational-technical schools / excellence centres; <p>Reintegration measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on the educational offer for continuing education/training; - Enrolment in vocational training courses / continuation of studies according to individual abilities and the needs of the local labour market; - Identification and development of skills and validation of skills acquired in informal and non-formal environment; - Development of transferable skills; - Access to information;

2nd type. "Low/medium" qualified NEET youth	
Labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth orientation on the labour market; - Specialized assistance in finding a job/placement on the labour market; - Implementation of mechanisms/measures for activating young people on the labour market; - Actions to promote entrepreneurship among young people; - Establishment and support of economic agents that open up new jobs, employ young people; - Support of the development of social enterprises, protected workshops; - Support of youth mobility for educational/occupational purposes; - Websites and other virtual tools that can provide information and advice on education and career guidance, bringing together young people, employers and educational institutions. - Involving young people in town planning works, volunteering, etc. - Campaigns to raise public awareness on youth issues, changing attitudes towards the most vulnerable categories;
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and training activities on health behaviour, personal development; - Ensuring youth access to health centres, including family planning;
Actors targeted	Joint working teams with representatives from concerned Ministries, LPAs and NEAM, school, social workers, psychologists, economic agents;
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of jobs / poor remuneration, especially in rural areas; - Difficulty in identifying and accessing by young people; - The lack of interest of some categories of young people to employ; - Instability of young people, leaving the workplace in favour of leaving abroad; - Poverty (lack of financial resources to continue their studies / professional training courses); - Poor infrastructure, insufficient traffic of transport operators in some localities; - Lack of financial resources available at local budgets level; - The target institutions (especially LPAs, social workers) are overloaded with stringent problems at the local level, the issue of young people being not among their priorities.

3rd type. "Highly qualified" NEET youth	
The size and characteristics of the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures to identify, record and monitor the NEET youth from this category by direct contact, appeals to LPAs, employment agencies, etc.; - Development of the individual profile for each young person; - Creation of an integrated, permanent updated database;
Education	<p>Preventive measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counselling, vocational guidance in gymnasium classes, information about professions/occupations with employment potential; - Development and implementation of mechanisms for anticipating the competences required by the labour market; - Development of entrepreneurial skills; - Institutionalization of effective mechanisms for monitoring the insertion of graduates of higher education institutions into the labour market; - Revision of the curriculum of the higher education system in accordance with the requirements of the labour market - Development of quality internships as learning experiences in the workplace, thus facilitating insertion into the labour market; - Development of continuous professional training programs for teachers, in particular those teaching technical disciplines; - Websites and other virtual tools that can provide information and advice on education and career guidance, bringing together young people, employers and educational institutions. - Carrying out qualitative internships; <p>Integration measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification, development and recognition of competences and abilities acquired in the informal and non-formal environment; - Enrolment in vocational training courses according to individual abilities and the needs of the local labour market; - Development of transferable skills; - Access to information;

3rd type. "Highly qualified" NEET youth	
Labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth orientation on the labour market; - Implementation of mechanisms/measures for activating young people on the labour market; - Specialized assistance in finding a job/placement on the labour market; - Actions to promote entrepreneurship among young people; - Establishment and support of economic agents that open up new jobs, employ young people; - Involving young people in town planning works, volunteering, etc.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and training activities on health behaviour, personal development; - Ensuring youth access to health centres, including family planning;
Actors targeted	Joint working teams with representatives from concerned Ministries, LPAs and NEAM, school, social workers, psychologists, economic agents, specialized NGOs;
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of jobs / poor remuneration, especially in rural areas; - Difficulty in identifying and accessing young people; - Instability of young people, leaving the workplace in favour of leaving abroad; - Lack of financial resources available for solving the youth problems;

4th type. "Volunteers/opportunists" NEET youth	
The size and characteristics of the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures to identify, record and monitor the NEET youth from this category; - Development of the individual profile for each young person; - Creation of an integrated, permanent updated database;
Education	<p>Preventive measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counselling, vocational guidance in gymnasium classes, information about professions/occupations with employment potential; - Development and implementation of mechanisms for anticipating the competences required by the local labour market; <p>Integration measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification, development and recognition of competences and abilities acquired in the informal and non-formal environment; - Development of transferable skills; - Development of entrepreneurial skills; - Websites and other virtual tools that can provide information and advice on education and career guidance, bringing together young people, employers and educational institutions. - Access to information;
Labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of mechanisms/measures for activating young people on the labour market; - Assistance in finding a job/placement on the labour market; - Actions to promote entrepreneurship among young people; - Support actions for the development of the culture of work;
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and training activities on health behaviour, personal development; - Ensuring youth access to health centres, including family planning;
Actors targeted	Joint working teams with representatives from LPAs and NEAM, school, social workers, psychologists, economic agents, specialized NGOs;
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of jobs / poor remuneration, especially in rural areas; - Difficulty in identifying and accessing by young people; - The lack of interest of young people to employ; - Instability of young people, leaving the workplace in favour of leaving abroad;

ANNEX 1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE INTERVIEWED NEET YOUTH

No. IP	Sex	Age	Studies	Residence area	Locality
IP1	Man	28	Secondary professional	Urban	Chisinau
IP2	Man	22	Specialized secondary education (college)	Urban	Chisinau
IP3	Woman	29	University (Cycle I)	Urban	Chisinau
IP4	Woman	23	Lyceum	Urban	Chisinau
IP5	Woman	25	University (Cycle I)	Urban	Chisinau
IP6	Man	24	Gymnasium	Urban	Chisinau
IP7	Man	29	Gymnasium	Urban	Chisinau
IP8	Woman	23	Lyceum	Urban	Chisinau
IP9	Woman	20	Secondary professional	Urban	Chisinau
IP10	Man	27	University (Cycle I)	Urban	Nisporeni
IP11	Man	26	University (Cycle I)	Urban	Nisporeni
IP12	Woman	22	Specialized secondary education (college)	Urban	Nisporeni
IP13	Woman	22	University (Cycle I)	Urban	Nisporeni
IP14	Woman	25	Secondary professional	Urban	Nisporeni
IP15	Woman	25	Gymnasium	Urban	Nisporeni
IP16	Man	24	Gymnasium	Rural	Micleuseni
IP17	Man	23	Secondary professional	Rural	Micleuseni
IP18	Man	26	Gymnasium	Rural	Micleuseni
IP19	Woman	22	University (Cycle I)	Rural	Micleuseni
IP20	Woman	29	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Rural	Micleuseni
IP21	Man	28	Secondary professional	Rural	Horesti
IP22	Woman	19	Secondary professional	Rural	Horesti
IP23	Woman	25	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Rural	Horesti
IP24	Man	24	Specialized secondary education (college)	Rural	Horesti
IP25	Woman	23	Specialized secondary education (college)	Urban	Soroca
IP26	Woman	25	Gymnasium	Urban	Soroca
IP27	Woman	20	Primary	Urban	Soroca
IP28	Woman	20	Specialized secondary education (college)	Urban	Soroca
IP29	Man	29	Primary	Urban	Soroca

No. IP	Sex	Age	Studies	Residence area	Locality
IP30	Woman	17	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Urban	Soroca
IP31	Man	29	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Rural	Oliscani
IP32	Man	25	University (Cycle I)	Rural	Oliscani
IP33	Woman	24	Gymnasium	Rural	Oliscani
IP34	Woman	27	Gymnasium	Rural	Oliscani
IP35	Man	26	Secondary professional	Rural	Corbu
IP36	Man	27	Secondary professional	Rural	Corbu
IP37	Man	20	Secondary professional	Rural	Corbu
IP38	Man	27	Gymnasium	Rural	Corbu
IP39	Woman	28	University (Cycle I)	Rural	Fintinita
IP40	Woman	25	Gymnasium	Rural	Fintinita
IP41	Woman	29	Gymnasium	Rural	Fintinita
IP42	Woman	21	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Rural	Fintinita
IP43	Woman	26	University (Cycle I)	Urban	Comrat
IP44	Woman	20	Lyceum	Urban	Comrat
IP45	Man	28	University (Cycle I and II)	Urban	Comrat
IP46	Woman	27	University (Cycle I)	Urban	Comrat
IP47	Woman	24	Specialized secondary education (college)	Urban	Comrat
IP48	Man	20	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Rural	Cismichioi
IP49	Woman	28	Secondary professional	Rural	Leova
IP50	Woman	28	University (Cycle I and II)	Urban	Leova
IP51	Woman	22	Primary	Rural	Cania
IP52	Man	25	Gymnasium	Rural	Cania
IP53	Woman	25	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Rural	Cania
IP54	Man	28	Gymnasium	Rural	Cania
IP55	Man	25	Secondary professional	Rural	Ciobruciu
IP56	Woman	20	Gymnasium	Urban	Ciobruciu
IP57	Man	28	Specialized secondary education (college)	Rural	Ciobruciu
IP58	Man	22	Secondary professional	Rural	Ciobruciu
IP59	Woman	28	Incomplete gymnasium studies, do not have a certificate	Rural	Ciobruciu
IP60	Woman	25	Gymnasium	Urban	Leova

ANNEX 2. LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED KEY ACTORS

Institution	Function of the interviewed person		Number of interviews
NEAM	Deputy chief	Expert 1	4
NEAM, UTA Gagauzia	Main consultant	Expert 2	
NEAM, Leova city	Agency chief	Expert 3	
NEAM, Soroca city	Agency chief	Expert 4	
LPA, Horesti village (Ialoveni district)	Secretary of the local council	Expert 5	4
LPA, Micleuseni village (Straseni district)	Mayor	Expert 6	
LPA, Oliscani village (Soldanesti district)	District and local councillor	Expert 7	
LPA, Mirzaci village (Orhei district)	Mayor	Expert 8	
Social assistance service, Cania village (Cantemir district)	Social worker	Expert 9	4
Social assistance service, Nisporeni city	Social worker	Expert 10	
Social assistance service, Soroca city	Social worker	Expert 11	
Social assistance service, s. Fîntînița	Social worker	Expert 12	
Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection	Superior Consultant, Occupational Policies Direction	Expert 13	1
Ministry of Youth and Sport	Chief of Youth Direction	Expert 14	1
The National Youth Council of Moldova	General Secretary	Expert 15	1
Information and Documentation Centre for Youth, Leova city	Centre manager	Expert 16	1
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	Main specialist	Expert 17	1
Police Inspectorate, Ciobruciu village (Stefan-Voda district)	Sector police officer	Expert 18	1
Police Inspectorate, Horesti village (Ialoveni district)	Sector police officer	Expert 19	1
NGO (SYSLAB Centre)	Project manager	Expert 20	1
Total			20

