

NARRATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ASSESMENT OF THE REPORT

Short description

Employment policies targeting young NEETs (especially the Youth Guarantee) in the coastal and island regions of Greece, Italy, Spain, and Cyprus:

- based on a literature review;
- a thorough quantitative meta-analysis of the expansion of NEETs in the target regions and countries between 2008 and 2018;
- in-depth analysis of rich qualitative data, collected during 2019 in all target countries;
- based on the conclusions derived by the previous analyses, the report performs an impact assessment of contemporary employment policies, focusing mainly on the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee (YG) in the Southern regions of the EU;
- on three discrete levels that call for new knowledge and radical action: a trans-local scale, by mobilising and engaging NEETs in resilient niches of the local economies; on a European level, by coupling local resilient capacities with appropriately adapted best practices implemented across the EU and globally, through boosting the unexploited potential of NEETs in MED EEA, thus, expanding the potential of the latter in social and sharing economies;
- defining the notions “precariat” (p.95) an “underclass” (p.97), “gender discrimination (p.95)

On the methodology

- a mixed methodological strategy – that is, the combined use of quantitative – primary and secondary – and qualitative methods. Such strategy is considered essential to capture the multi-dimensionality and complexity of social processes linked with youth unemployment, 'inactivity' and NEETs;
- Using the Cultural Political Approach with three theses:
 - conceptualization of social phenomena and processes in their totality and multi-dimensionality. CPE de-naturalizes economic phenomena and relations and places them within the whole spectrum of broader social and political processes and contexts.
 - underpinning the social and cultural embeddedness of economic processes and practices of different social actors.
 - emphasising on the reciprocal relations among the material dimensions of social processes and phenomena (for example productive and labour market structures) and the ideological dimensions of dominant structures and relations;
 - avoiding the limitations of both positivist and neo-positivist thinking as well as those of the ‘structuralist theories’.
- Investigating the evolution, type and functions of socio-spatial structures: space is not just a container of socioeconomic developments or a passive outcome of social relations; it instead plays a crucial and active role in forming social processes and relations;
- related to different types of agency, such as individual, collective or institutional agency across different spatial scales and levels;
- focusing on cultural structures, meanings, discourses, ideologies and representations applied on work ethics, flexibility and precariousness as well as discourses on gender and migration within labour markets;
- this research is qualitative,
 - the sample can be small, less representative compared to quantitative research samples, because of different aims and needs but should contribute to understanding or presenting a given phenomenon;
 - selecting participants who can best contribute to the comprehensive examination of the studied phenomenon than those participants who necessarily represent a larger population;
 - avoid a biased sample, the selected participants holds different views and opinions to the study topic and not just confirm the researcher’s assumptions;

- sample meets the criteria of gender, age and employment status in certain regions.
- Using a questionnaire:
 - Identifying several individual characteristics and attitudes;
 - Asking about long-term hopes and expectations;
 - About their experiences with the Youth Guarantee programmes.
- Using the Performing Impact Assessment (SIA) as a methodological framework:
 - “Social impacts include all social and cultural consequences to human populations of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society” (p.144)
 - “Social impacts include all social and cultural consequences to human populations of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society” (p.144)

On the results

- Based on processing the primary qualitative data;
- Illustrated with quotations from the interviewees;
- Reporting on the effects in the different countries and a comparison;
- interesting definition of “precariat”: not homogenous, including
 - teenagers and young people doing temporary jobs;
 - migrants trying to survive through official and unofficial jobs, while worrying about arrest, deportation or immigrant status benefits;
 - single poor mothers or families with limited financial security; or pre-retirement men that take casual jobs to pay for medical services and medicine;
 - however, the critical connection among the aforementioned groups is the sense of labour as: important (to survive), opportunistic (accepting whatever they can get) and precarious (insecure).
- Discussions on the impact of the Youth Guarantee:
 - the YG suffers from a common holistic set of standards while it is targeting a very heterogeneous group of people;
 - the implementation, in many cases engages young people to vacancies that do not provide good, helpful experiences and long term integration (temporal poorly-paid part time or precarious jobs);
 - Strengths of the YG: a basic net of protection against youth unemployment during the years of economic recession that hit Southern Europe severely. And it has a satisfactory participation rate and coverage of NEETs, even though it is not well monitored so far;
 - Weaknesses: no assistance to inactive youth, it may lead to job precariousness due to the nature of the jobs offered (i.e. part time, temporal jobs). it excluded, initially, youth in the age group of 25-29 years old (an age group with high vulnerability regarding the NEET phenomenon), it is not sufficiently funded and it does not implement tailor made policies by taking account of structural issues of economy and society, but rather sets training and skills acquirement as the major problem of employability;
 - Opportunities: the capabilities and opportunities that provide to young people a labour market entry or a re-entry and the existence of market monitoring tools to evaluate the labour market’s needs;
 - Youth Guarantee’s threats are the numerous weak points, which need to be taken into account by the policy makers in order for social prosperity and cohesion to be achieved.

GLOBAL EVALUATION

This reports is built on a well-documented frame of references an all relevant topics, especially on young NEETs (generally, definitions, aspects and specific in the target area’s), for nearly 50 pages. There is a strong analysis of the labour market statistics in the MED EEA regions.

The study offers a large amount of quotations of interviewees, accentuating the qualitative approach.

The report is strongly based on critical sociological theories. In this perspective, the conclusions on the impact of the YG programmes are rather doubtful, surely not overall positive.