



WP3 NEET and BaCEProfiling

0.3.1 NEET profiling - existing situation analysis and methodology

ENI CBC MED Programme 2014-2020 HELIOS Project

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Preface

HELIOS - enHancingthEsocial Inclusion Of neetSis a 36-month project funded by the cross-border cooperation programme for the development of the Euro-Mediterranean area – ENI-CBC MED running from 2019 to 2022 with partners from 6 Euro-Mediterranean countries: Italy, Spain, Palestine Authorities, Jordan, Greece and Tunisia.

The project aims to provide young people, especially NEETS and women, with marketable skills of interest to enterprises within the Blue and Circular Economies (BaCE).

One of the main challenges in the Mediterranean region is to reduce the high rates of NEETs and prominent skills mismatch which currently prevail. Curricula for skills courses are often not based on a strategic analysis of the local economy and/or consultation with local enterprises in order to determine sectors of potential growth capable of absorbing new trainees. HELIOS will tackle this issue focusing on the Blue and Circular Economies (BaCE), identified as economic sectors with great potential for regenerative economic growth among NEETs. The project will provide curricula for innovative targeted and tailored skills-training courses oriented towards specific needs of the BaCE labour market and the needs of NEETs, based on direct interaction with local enterprises. This will be achieved through soft skills coaching and mentoring actions, as well as the creation of e-learning tools and methodologies supported by new technologies to facilitate skills learning for NEETs and women.

Our partners on the project:

- Lead Beneficiary ARCES Association, Sicily, Italy
- Fisheries and Blue Growth District - COSVAP (Distretto della Pesca e Crescita Blu), Sicily, Italy
- Action against Hunger - ACH (Acción contra el Hambre), Cataluña, Spain



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- Institute of Entrepreneurship Development - IED (Ινστιτούτο Ανάπτυξης Επιχειρηματικότητας), Thessalia, Greece
- Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fishery, UTAP (البحري الاتحاد التونسي للفلاحة والصيد), Tunis, Tunisia
- University College of Applied Sciences, Planning and External Relations Affairs – UCAS, (الكلية الجامعية للعلوم التطبيقية), Palestine,
- The National Center for Agricultural Research and Extension – NARC (المركز الوطني للبحوث الارشاد الزراعي), Jordan

Introduction

The Mediterranean faces a multitude of common challenges, including climate change, pollution, youth unemployment and social inequality¹.

The labour force participation rate of young people (aged 15–24) has continued to decline. Between 1999 and 2019, despite the global youth population increasing from 1 billion to 1.3 billion, the total number of young people engaged in the labour force (those who are either employed or unemployed) decreased from 568 million to 497 million. While this trend reflects growing enrolment in secondary and tertiary education, resulting in a better-skilled workforce in many countries, it also highlights the substantial numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), a large majority of whom are women.²

Climate change interacts with employment in several ways. Climate change and environmental degradation pose significant challenges to economic growth and employment

¹<http://www.enicbcmed.eu/about-us/the-programme-at-a-glance>

² Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2020.



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and climate change-related shocks will slow down our progress in reducing poverty. “Fixing the economy to fix climate change”³; the Blue and Circular Economy (BaCE) are broad concepts which seek to ensure production processes are sustainable; they call for a paradigm shift in the way businesses, services and society are conducted. The BaCE has the potential to open new and innovative career prospects for young people, plus create a cleaner, less wasteful society. What is more, young people have the potential to be catalysts and pioneers of this change.

One of the most pressing joint challenges for the ENI CBC MED area is to generate inclusive growth and buoyancy in the jobs market, and to reduce the high NEETs rates and prominent skills mismatch which currently prevail. This project provides a fresh strategy for implementing measures to mitigate the high levels of NEETs in any given badly affected area.

Curricula for skills courses are often not based on a strategic analysis of the local economy and/or consultation with local enterprise in order to determine sectors of potential growth capable of absorbing new trainees. The project began with a preliminary needs analysis of local economy requirements together with identification of the main NEETs subgroups and determination of best methods to reach and engage NEETs. In order to pilot the Helios project actions and innovative approach, the Blue and Circular Economy (BaCE) was identified as the chosen economic sector with greatest potential for regenerative economic growth.

The project provides a fresh approach to engaging vulnerable young people and women through social media tools and curricula for innovative targeted and tailored skills

³<https://climate.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org>



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training courses oriented towards specific needs of the BaCElabour market and the needs of NEETs, based on direct interaction with local enterprises. This will be furthered through soft skills coaching and mentoring actions, as well as the creation of e-learning tools and methodologies supported by new technologies to facilitate skills learning for NEETs and women.

Cross-border cooperation

Cross-border cooperation provides the opportunity to compare and analyse present-day issues of extreme concern regarding NEETs by allowing each region to exchange information on current practices and to look for a common way forward together. We are especially enthusiastic about bringing together the skills provided by such a diverse set of partners in creating new curricula based on market needs, in implementing new, media-based training tools, and in the exchange of cultures, especially through young people, facilitated by the e-platform, forums, social networks etc. with no boundaries between nations.

In some of the partner areas, the culture of the blue economy still plays a huge cultural role, in other places this connection has been lost and the fishing sector no longer enjoys the esteem it once did, especially in the eyes of the younger generation. The Blue Economy, in particular, suffers from an ageing-workforce in need of new recruits and professional training, and a lack of implementation of innovations in environmental issues and technical areas. We are confident that through this cooperation project, we can generate new interest in the blue economy and ‘introduce’ the circular economy and its huge potential as the basis for sustainable, regenerative growth in all the regions. This needs to be done together. There are a number of sectors where a specific partner country has specialized knowledge due to



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generations of ‘skills accumulation’ which could be of interest not only in curricula development but also in a cross-border job market.

Benefits of cross-border cooperation from the point of view of the target group NEETs: An immediate benefit of the collaboration is the creation of networks for traineeship exchanges as part of the course curricula, future training/placement collaboration and cascading of actions/skills acquired within each partner country.

Target Group:

40 NEETs and women will be trained in courses per year per country. A total of 720 NEETs engaged in courses will be trained, tutored and coached over the 3 project years in 6 different countries.

Further 1000 NEETs including women will be trained via the e-platform over the lifetime of the project.

Helios is leading the inclusion of NEETs and women in the Mediterranean region through empowerment of those groups in activities that are representative of the BaCE. Young people and women have many roles in the transition to a BaCE. The following are a few suggestions:

- Promoting BaCE through design
- Supporting BaCE through data and digitalization
- Changing consumer patterns to support BaCE
- Creating a well-functioning market for waste and recycled products



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- Obtain more value from buildings and biomass

One of the major goals of Helios is the NEET profiling activity (O.3.1). The aim is to analyze NEET and women job seekers in the 6 Mediterranean economies with the help of a qualitative and quantitative approach.

The Helios Project proposal seeks to engage a minimum of 720 of NEETs and women in the project area to get an overview of the existing situation of NEETs in the consortium countries as a first step. The following stage is to carry out profiling of the economic sector in each partner country to establish a link between the NEETs and the enterprises through well-constructed curricula.

NEETs and Women employment under the COVID-19 Pandemic

In this time of crisis and uncertainty, the voices and actions of young people and women can all too easily be pushed to one side. Recognizing the integral part they have to play in recovery, the ENI CBC MED programme seeks to draw attention to the actions and views of young people and women in fighting all the many the socio-economic repercussions of the pandemic. With this common objective in mind, the HELIOS consortium has joined efforts and started action by conducting online NEET and women profiling (output 3.1).

The impacts of any crisis never impact gender in neutral way, and COVID-19 is no exception. For the single mother, COVID-19 lockdown measures have paused her small business that brings food to the table; for the domestic worker, the pandemic has meant no job and no unemployment benefits or other protection; for countless women in economies of every size, together with losing income, unpaid care and the domestic work burden have



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exploded. While everyone is facing unprecedented challenges, NEETs and women are bearing the brunt of the economic and social fallout of COVID-19⁴.

However, despite the worsening of some already consolidated dynamics, companies have been able to experiment with new, more flexible types of contracts that have included remote work or teleworking, many of which are more attractive to young people and compatible with parenting.

These new, more flexible mechanisms cannot be applied to most production sectors; however, many tasks could be *reshaped* to intercept the cultural, health and social needs of the workers. We consider it an achievement that many companies have decided to accept greater flexibility/homeworking as regards office, administrative tasks, networking, etc. which can be carried out virtually.

Obviously, there are some obstacles that emerge following analysis of the data obtained from the companies; however, the reduction of direct costs related to the use of physical locations and the possibility of interfacing with more efficient employees due to their own flexibility will be a considerable incentive.

NEETs and the job market

Here below we have included a short description of the concept of NEET according to Eurofound⁵. It may help to illustrate the main aims behind the Helios preliminary NEETs profiling strategy.

⁴<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women>



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*The concept of NEET – young people not in employment, education or training – has been useful in enabling policymakers to better address the disjunctions between young people and the labour market. While the traditional labour market dichotomy of employed or unemployed is valid, **it fails to capture modern school-to-work transitions and the legions of young people who are outside the labour market and not accumulating human capital and hence who may be vulnerable to a range of social ills.** In 2015, some 4.6 million young people aged 15–24 were unemployed. This is just a subgroup of the broader category of NEET, which comprises 6.6 million young people, meaning that had the concept of NEET not found currency, 2 million young people would have attracted limited attention from a policy perspective. NEET has put previously marginalised populations such as young mothers, young people with disabilities and young labour market dropouts back into the policy debate about youth unemployment.*

*NEETs is a broad category encompassing a heterogeneous population. **Disentangling the subgroups within it is essential for a better understanding of their different characteristics and needs, and for tailoring effective policies to reintegrate them into the labour market or education.***

***Identifying the subgroups also aids in identifying who is most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion.** While individuals in the NEET category often experience multiple disadvantages, including a low level of education, poverty and difficult family backgrounds, the population of NEETs is made up of both vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people who have in common the fact that they are not accumulating human capital through formal channels.*

⁵ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/it/news/news-articles/who-are-the-neets>



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This 2016 study illustrates an aspect which has been the greatest challenge of this project; that is, to identify, within this heterogeneous group of people, the various subgroups, allowing us, therefore, to target those subgroups deemed most vulnerable and specific to the partner country. Throughout this project, we have found that treating the NEET category as a homogenous group of people is of little gain when trying to identify and engage this group in any given community.

The NEET label is only useful when the indicator is disaggregated into sub-groups based on reasons for becoming alienated from the labour market (Furlong, 2006) (highly educated with skills not required by the market, unemployed, discouraged, family caregivers, inactive etc.), some of which are extremely culture based and must be taken into consideration. It was an indicator which became popular when trying to gauge real unemployment levels and, more importantly, it succeeded in bringing our attention to aspects of *vulnerability* held within unemployment categories, especially regarding young people and women. Recent attention is now focusing on how to better define the various subgroups, and to encourage distinctions between long-term and short-term unemployed, those in a vulnerable life situation or effectively inactive, and those who insecure or very low-paid jobs who might also benefit from attention. Profiling has spread among public employment services (PES) as a tool to support the growing need for service customization and targeted engagement of the user/NEET. Therefore, project partners will work together to develop a common methodology/best practice profiling tool in order to identify and engage the most vulnerable groups in any given area.

The Helios project aims to identify a minimum of two of the most vulnerable subgroups in each partner community and employ modern technologies and new methodologies to *identify* and *engage* members of those subgroups.



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Few Helios partner organizations use NEET profiling software: the project has extended the use of open-source profiling software to all partner countries and plans to create a methodology or best practice ‘manual’ which standardizes the following aspects for the areas:

- Profiling the NEETs in a given area and training on how to identify the most vulnerable sub-groups for intervention measures such as training
- Identifying the best methods of reaching and engaging target NEETs and monitoring success of engagement

The methods to be used include e-tools, peer-to peer methods, social media tools (a digital application piloted by Spanish partner ACH for reaching, engaging, monitoring success and progress, exchange of information. In particular, we made careful analysis of the Swedish PES ‘UngaIn’ Peer to Peer project using young NEETs themselves to carry out outreach.

Activities regarding methodology development were disrupted badly by the COVID-19 crisis, however, we hope to bring news in this regard in the coming year.

The study, therefore, employs new techniques to identify and engage those most vulnerable groups. Some partner countries were able to take advantage of national programs for the unemployed (Youth Guarantee programs, for example). However, not all Helios partner countries have such programs in place. In Jordan, for example, it is supposed that, among the various factors contributing to unemployment, the lack of specific counseling and guidance programs may impact greatly. This often means that obtaining a university or post-university level of education does not necessarily create a benefit for the graduate.

A further fact that emerges from an overall analysis of the data is the lack of trust on the part of companies in these very subgroups considered to be the most fragile (women



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(often mothers) and very young people without experience or practical training), triggering a vicious circle of unemployment.

Although many governments are working hard to offer tax exemption mechanisms which companies can apply to these categories, it is often difficult to demonstrate to companies how valuable young people and women can be to an enterprise, mainly due to misconceptions and discrimination linked, for example, to the prospect of maternity leave or lack of technical skills. This means that these same categories are universally discouraged from looking for work.

With regard to the acquisition of new skills, even within the same company, flexible contracts are not available which would allow employees to update their skills through study/ training courses or cooperative learning/ peer education mechanisms. This is an indication of the sea change required by many companies in HR management in general, including recruiting.

It follows, therefore, that an analysis of issues surrounding NEETs must also take into consideration not only macro issues related to specific national job incentive schemes (including, for example, attendance allowances), but also the level of proactivity and innovation (including technological innovation) present in companies, which often complain as much of a lack of staff as a decrease in business. It also follows that the corporate fabric must change radically and turn its attention towards new markets, new employment models (moving away from the traditional 9-5 model towards new sustainable, productivity-focused models, such as freelancing, gig-platforms, homeworking, job sharing etc.) and innovation-based development. All of this, unfortunately and paradoxically, greatly spurred by the COVID-19 crisis.



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Finally, it is crucial not to overlook that fact that each piece of data in this analysis must be interpreted considering the Mediterranean area as a macro area of reference, and the demographic cross-section of each individual nation. This latter greatly influences the job sector, especially in relation to retirement policies. Jordan, for example, has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 63% of its population under the age of 30. As this large youth population grows older and begins to enter the workforce, the demographic transition presents a unique opportunity for Jordan, however, not without its challenges regarding skills-transfer and experience. In Italy, on the other hand, we are witnessing an ever greater demographic decrease accompanied by an increase in life expectancy and the minimum retirement age, thereby compounding an ageing-workforce. The need to create new jobs in markets currently unexplored is, undoubtedly, the next step forward, both for employment and environmental sustainability reasons.

Part of the bigger picture

Before moving on to the details of the questionnaire development and implementation, it is perhaps useful to place the NEET profiling activity into its bigger context and provide some details of the profiling of the economic sector to be carried out alongside the NEETs profiling.

The blue and circular economy: the innovative approach for the area is the use of the BaCE to provide job profiles to be filled by NEETs and women in areas particularly affected by the economic crisis. The project includes:

- Developing targeted and tailored training courses oriented towards the specific needs of the BaCE labour market and addressing vulnerable NEETs and women in order to better connect NEETs and women with market needs;



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- Enhancing the attractiveness of the BaCE sector for young people, also through the use of new technologies;
- Foster access to new job opportunities for NEETs within the BaCE by creating strong, direct links to local businesses in the sector by involving them in mentoring, curricula development, work-based learning etc.

This approach seeks to standardize best practices for future application in other local economies within the programme area. This will allow project results to be cascaded down to other local towns severely affected by high NEET rates and provide TVET or LAs with the a ‘best’ method of identifying how/what sectors of the economy to focus on with new skills-based courses.

The Helios project will focus on those areas of BaCE with high potential for sustainable job creation together with new job profiles within BaCE to develop training courses and provide NEETs with sought-after profiles.

NEETs profiling methodology

Acting together to address these challenges and improve the lives of men and women across the region is the impetus for the 2014-2020 ENI CBC “Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme”. ENI CBC Med is the largest Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) initiative implemented by the EU under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).⁶

Step one concerned development of the questionnaire. This was done as a consortium; a draft questionnaire was developed and this was disseminated to partners for feedback and adjustments. Cultural differences in ways of approaching and engaging people were also

⁶<http://www.enicbcmed.eu/about-us/the-programme-at-a-glance>



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taken into consideration and the questions adjusted accordingly. The questionnaire was then translated into the partner country language and uploaded onto the relevant survey software tool used. (*Google form*)

To achieve the general objective of the Programme fostering fair, equitable and sustainable economic, social and territorial development, the profiling technique was selected as it is a collaborative analysis approach. A unique feature of the profiling is that it establishes a collaborative platform early on to guide decision-making and to share ownership and responsibility. Partners work together and with the target populations to create an evidence base of the displacement situation⁷.

The Helios partnership, although having jointly established specific objectives, created the profiling survey by carefully evaluating the tools available. This was not intended to be directly and exclusively correlated to the health emergency in progress (we will address this aspect subsequently). The various subgroups and age groups, levels of digital competency and access to digital technologies was taken into consideration and different communication channels were adopted by the partners based on the specific situation.

In Italy, for example, both traditional and electronic tools were employed to send and collect the profiling questionnaire in order to reach as many people as possible and try to cover the entire Sicilian territory. A mix between Google Module (a combination of the Sendinblue.com platform (engagement tool) and the ARCES website for data collection via the electronic form) and paper questionnaires (implemented by COSVAP) were used. A more traditional paper approach was deemed suitable for our “target” small fishing town of Mazara Del Valloas special attention was given to NEET immigrants with very little access to or familiarity with digital technologies.

⁷<https://jet.iips.org/>



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In Jordan, however, women's charities (women with no source of income) were used as a channel of communication to the target group, also using the youth office and the Association of Agricultural Engineers as an intermediary to access the charities.

The Palestinian partner started its investigation through alumni and employment agencies as a one-stop shop related to the ministry of labor, the society of graduate women, etc. NEETs were contacted via the TVET website, Facebook page, alumni unit group, employment agencies, Facebook group targeting young unemployed graduates, Facebook group targeting unemployed young people. Prior to using websites to distribute surveys, many visits were made to employment agencies to present the project and work with them to distribute a survey on their website and social links.

UTAP in Tunisia contacted local (ULAP) and regional (URAP) trade unions for lists of women; women and young people were invited to participate in open meetings, during which staff helped women fill out the questionnaire as largely unable to read or write, thus providing practical tools to facilitate this extremely fragile category of NEETS.

iED in Greece used a list of 300 contacts for the promotion of the questionnaire and the NEET profiling. This list was created for the specifications of the HELIOS project and included the entire project target area. The contact and engagement process of NEETs used by iED was divided into three phases: the first step was the development of the awareness raising. This contained information regarding the project, the survey and a link to the questionnaire. The second step was to publish an article on the iED website in Greek. The article was then reposted on social media, clearly stating the target group that was to participate in the survey. It has also been reposted in several social media groups, such as job search groups (regional), Facebook groups for mothers (regional), Regional groups in general. Direct contact and communication with the target group and target group organizations was



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also carried out; a cover letter was provided together with the questionnaire on behalf of iED. During the questionnaire and profiling process, particular attention was paid to women as a vulnerable group among the respondents. In Greece, many women are part of the country's workforce, although a very small percentage of them hold key roles in their work environment.

In Spain, tools for sending mailing lists were used for the distribution of the questionnaire. Reminders were then sent at programmed intervals. Having access to email information but not phone numbers made it difficult to enter indirect contact to help complete surveys. This was identified as an evident criticality of local organizations (public and private) and their ability to reach their users. The problem seemingly is the data protection law in Spain governing large organizations. The law protects anonymity for everyone, making it difficult to pass user information from one organization to another.

From the above, it is evident that the adoption of common basic guidelines within the consortium (for example, a common questionnaire, surveying tools, approach to identify the most vulnerable subgroups) applied to different methodologies for the identification and engagement of the NEETs guaranteed the success of the profiling as a whole.

Sampling Methodology

Regarding the NEET profiling, as mentioned earlier, the number of NEETs (young people and women of all ages) to be trained is an overall consortium target of 720. Using simple division by the number of countries and a working hypothesis of 20 students per course (total of 6 courses per partner nation), the total number of students to be trained per country is 120. We then used this same figure as the starting number for NEET profiling. Each country aimed to send the questionnaire to a minimum of 120 NEETs within their remit.



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HELIOS is targeting NEETs in six countries of the Mediterranean: Italy, Spain, Greece, Jordan, Tunisia, and Palestinian authorities. Cluster sampling procedure was proposed and the clusters were selected according to high numbers of NEETs and in areas with potential for BaCE growth (see Table 1 for details of partner target areas).

As the target groups (NEETs young/women) in the specific partner target area differed greatly (90,000 in Palestine Authorities versus 400 in Agia, Greece, for example) this created a substantial imbalance between the number of NEETs to be profiled when based on a structural sampling procedure proposed by our Palestinian partner UCAS.

Table 1: Cluster Description

Country	Estimate of Number of NEETs in the specific area	Cluster area	Characteristics
Italy	1,400 young NEETs	Sicily, Palermo and Mazara del Vallo	The fishing town of Mazara del Vallo in the West of Sicily. The area has one of the largest fishing fleets in Italy.
Spain	1,800 young NEETs	Viladecans	Involving the 'multi-stakeholder council for vocational training' (VT council) in BaixLlobregat region.
Greece	400 Young NEETs	Agia	Agia lacks services and tourism infrastructures and there is a strong request for training in the tourism sector.
Jordan	4,500 young NEETs	Balqa governorate	Eco-agri-water tourism near water bodies has been identified as a possible sector within the BaCE, given the limiting factor that Jordan is almost entirely landlocked



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Tunisia	11,000 young NEETs	Zaboussa under the governorate of Sfax	Target groups will be women in clam collecting rural areas.
Palestinian Authorities	90,000 young NEETs	on NEETs in UCAS TVET programmes	– focus will be that have fallen through the net (dropouts) throughout the Gaza Strip

As seen in table 1, the characteristics of NEETs within the Cluster area (HELIOS target group) vary. As a consequence, each subpopulation (stratum) was sampled independently. Stratified random sampling is a method of sampling that involves the division of a population into smaller sub-groups known as strata. The population size of the Mediterranean partner regions was clearly too large as a reference for the stratified sampling, based on the time and funds available. A stratified sampling method ensures a representative selection of units from the population and a sufficient number of samples allocated to each group. This method also improves the precision of the sample by reducing sampling error.

Based on Helios project outputs, 120 NEETs and women will be trained in courses per country, therefore, the minimum number of NEETs in the sample should be at least 120. However, as the target group in the Gaza Strip and Zaboussa was a great deal larger compared to the other Helios partner areas, the sample size was increased in these two areas in an attempt to ensure more accurate profiling data. However, it is also important to add that the response from the implementation of the questionnaires far exceeded our expectations, perhaps an indication of the value of the work this ENI-CBC project proposes.

Strata(Country)	Estimated target group Population (N)	Sample size(n)



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Sicily (Italy)	1400	120
Viladecans (Spain)	1800	120
Agia (Greece)	400	120
Gaza Strip (Palestine)	90000	1067
Zaboussa (Tunisia)	11000	173
(The Balqa)Jordan	4500	120



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Building the Profiling Questionnaire

The profiling questionnaire was developed in a collaborative manner, also in line with capacity building needs of partners. The TVET partners in the consortium had a great deal of experience in this area and were able to ensure standardized results across the consortium. Drafts were sent to all partners for feedback and edited accordingly. All partners agreed on the final version of the questionnaire.

For the creation of the questionnaire, we started from the final objective: to identify the most fragile categories belonging to the NEETs category for each target country or region of intervention.

Personal data was combined with salient information about their level of education, propensity to update skills (internships/training) and familiarity with soft skills (CV writing etc.). Specific questions were also included regarding knowledge on the Blue and Circular Economy to get a better idea of awareness of these sectors amongst potential course participants, also in view of curricula development.

Data Collection under the COVID-19 pandemic and the Helios e-learning platform

Face-to-face data collection was suspended and is yet to recover in many cases. The HELIOS consortium adapted quickly to challenges raised by COVID-19 by changing data collection modes or using alternative source/profiling approach. As an aside, the Blue and Circular Economy courses which are running in all countries are a mix of face-to-face and online courses, also thanks to the Helios e-learning platform <https://heliosportal.eu/en/forms/login>.



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One of the main outputs of HELIOS is the Development of an e-training platform for training, exchange, interaction between enterprise and TVETs, social networking also across borders.

Objectives of Development of e-platform:

- a) as an e-training tool (learning materials of all modules (BaCE, soft skills and entrepreneurship) video clips, streaming of lessons, interviews and testimonials with mentors and links to other learning sites);
- b) to stimulate entrepreneurship and the use of new marketing tools; encourage ‘shuttles of employment’ and supportive entrepreneurship;
- c) for coaching and mentoring activities;
- d) for labour demand and supply skills matching;
- e) for the evaluation and monitoring of skills gained by targeted NEETs pre/post course.

Fortuitously, the availability of the e-platform was decisive in allowing training activities to continue relatively unhindered, even in the shadow of the pandemic.

Software to collect questionnaire responses was the next challenge. Jordan partner NARC introduced ODK (Open Data Kit) to the consortium. This tool allows the questionnaire to be created in as many languages as required and the questions are coded to allow collection in the same sheet; there is also a georeferencing function. The lockdown conditions and subsequent social distancing measures of COVID 19 forced partners to look for other digital profiling tools to complete the data collection in their countries.



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The NARC team converted the questionnaire into Google Form in English and sent it to the partners for translation into local languages (form is available in English, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Arabic, see Annexes).

Where the target population of NEETs (young people/women) had no access to the internet (as was the case for the Tunisian partner (UTAP) target group) an alternative non-digital, more traditional approach was proposed: an ad hoc call centre was set up and participants were reached and questionnaires answered by phone or face-to-face at info days.

Spain was badly affected by the pandemic during 2020 and the partner experienced difficulty in obtaining the minimum number of responses set as a goal (150 responses), collecting in this initial wave only 91. However, ACH is now working on the recruiting phase for courses and will continue to issue the questionnaire to ensure the minimum number of responses.

NEETs Profiling Results

The success or failure of young people in the labour market is affected by a combination of individual characteristics and the labour market itself. As outlined above, the HELIOS project aims to create strong links between SMEs which have adopted sustainable economic models (Blue and Circular Economy) and unemployed young people and women. The development of employable skills in young people is an opportunity both to fill the skill-mismatch and to facilitate the long-needed transition towards such eco-models.

Unemployment rates are usually two to three times higher in young people than in older people⁸. A total of 4157 questionnaires were collected from the project area, the majority were carried out in Palestine. The results of the first wave of profiling are shown below (gender, age, qualifications, and knowledge on circular and blue economy).

⁸ Profiling youth labour market disadvantage: A review of approaches in Europe



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Personal data

Gender

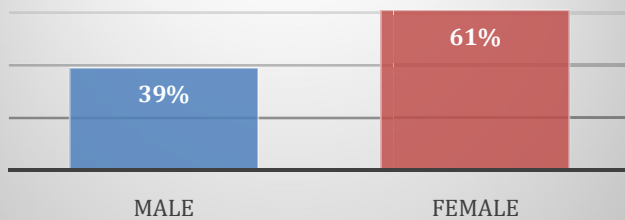
The data on gender show marked variation between countries in which male participants represented the highest percentage and countries in which the majority of the answers came from the female target group; with the exception of Italy and Palestine which, on the other hand, a substantially balanced percentage was found. However, it is important to add here that these answers were also affected by initial targeting: in Tunisia and Jordan, for example, women's groups were the initial primary target.

Consortium overview of gender

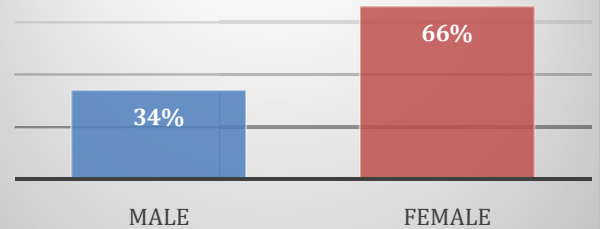


In Jordan, Spain and Greece, approximately 60-70% of survey participants were female and 30-40% male, an approximate ratio of 2:1.

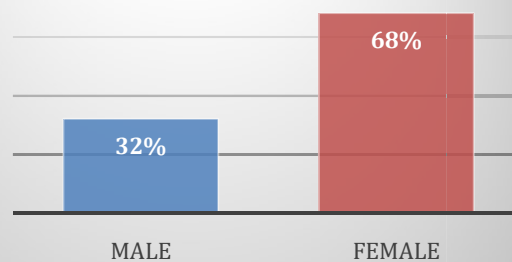
Gender - Jordan



Gender - Spain



Gender - Greece



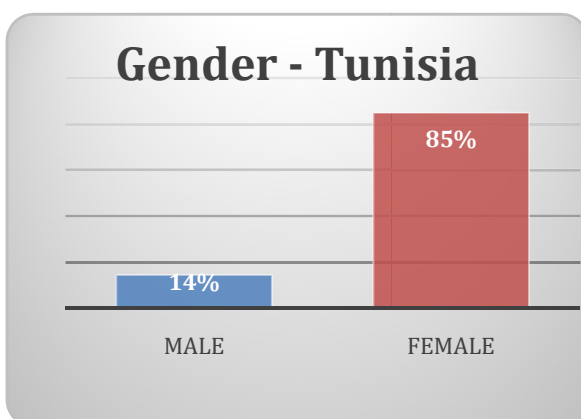
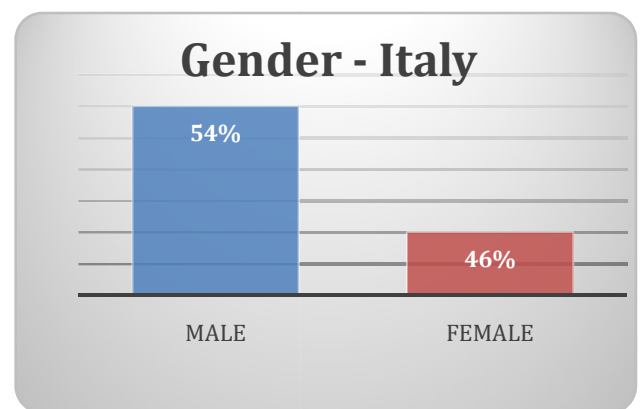
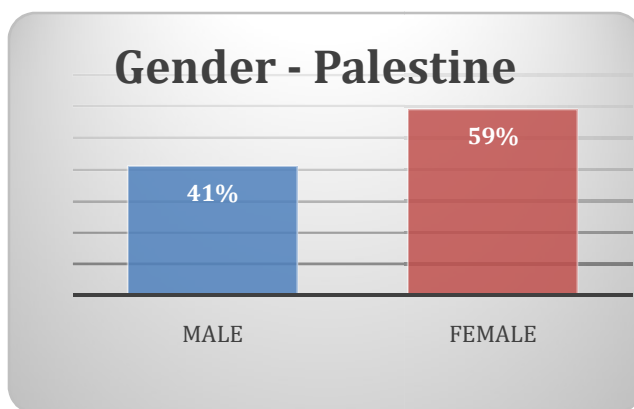
In contrast, the of men and women who the questionnaire in Italy balanced between men slightly more men This was also the case in

percentage completed was fairly women, answering. Palestine



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where males represented 60% of the total sample of the study and 40% of females.



Tunisia reported overwhelmingly the greatest participation of women in the survey at almost 85%. This skewing in the data is due to the fact that women's groups were specifically targeted in Tunisia.

As mentioned above, these data were not collected randomly but rather the result of preliminary investigations carried out with the help of the various regional and national agencies which were able to guide the project partners in identifying the weakest groups. This would partly explain a predominance of women in some of the countries. However, it is also,



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undoubtedly, a reflection of the fact that women have always been at a disadvantage in work world, especially in many Mediterranean regions.

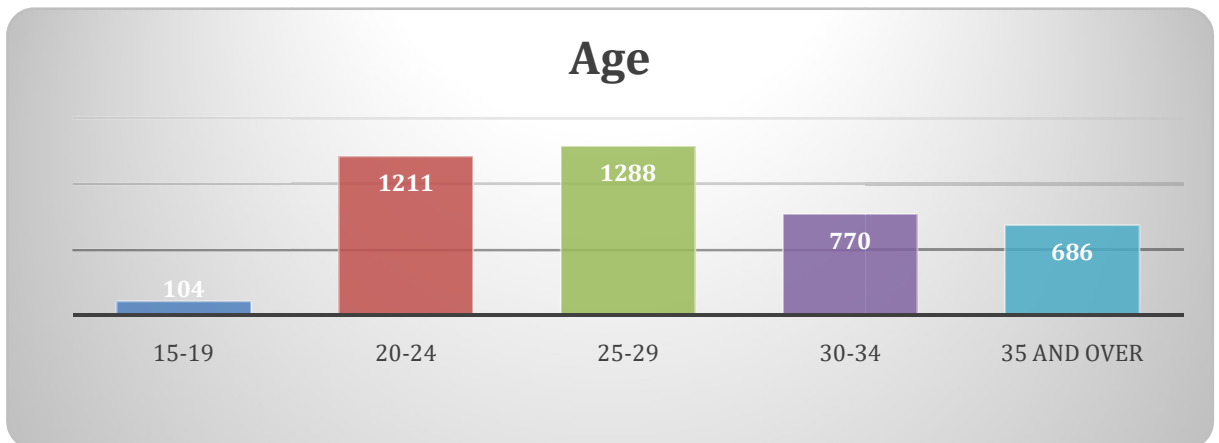
Age

As regards the collection of data for the purpose of identifying the age of the participants, we proceeded by dividing the macro age range of 16-30 (generally accepted conventional age range for identifying NEETs) **into 5 sub-categories: 15-18, 20-24, 25 -29, 29-35, 35 and over.**

As is clear from the chart below, most of the NEETs interviewed were in the 20-29 (20-24 and 25-29) category but with a strong presence also of the over 30s. The lowest frequency was found in the 15-19 category, a somewhat unexpected result given that only one of the partner countries (Italy) has a compulsory school-leaving age of 18 (thus we would not expect the 15-19 category to be strongly represented by NEETs in this country). For the other 5 countries, the school-leaving age is 16 (Palestine Authorities 15 years). This low representation in most Helios partner countries may be due to the fact that this category is not yet 'on the radar' for social and community groups and further enquiry should be made into successful outreach within this category. In our study, Spain had the highest representation in this very young age group, perhaps due to successful outreach of the Youth Guarantee programme in that age-group. This is an extremely valuable feedback loop which needs to be factored into our next steps.

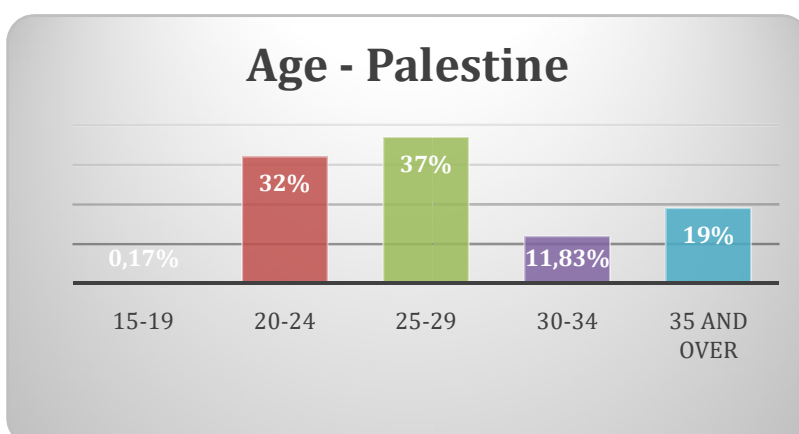
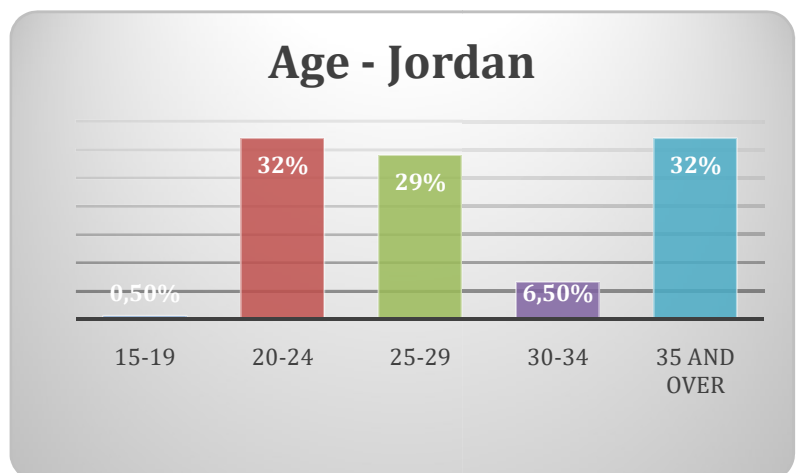
Overall consortium results

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Results per country

In Jordan the highest frequency was found in the 20-24 age bracket and 35-and-over bracket, closely followed by 25-29 age group. The frequency was fairly evenly distributed between the 3 groups (approx. 30%). The lowest results were found for the subgroup 15-19 years with only 5% of people.

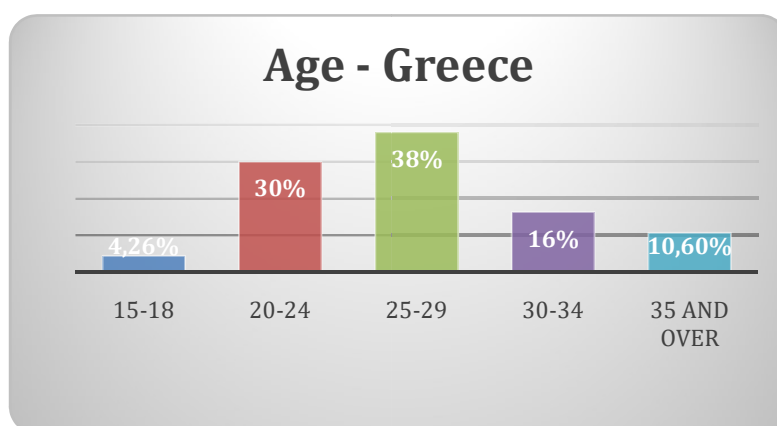


In Palestine, the highest frequency in the study sample was 25-29 and 20-24 years (32% and 35% respectively). 35-and-



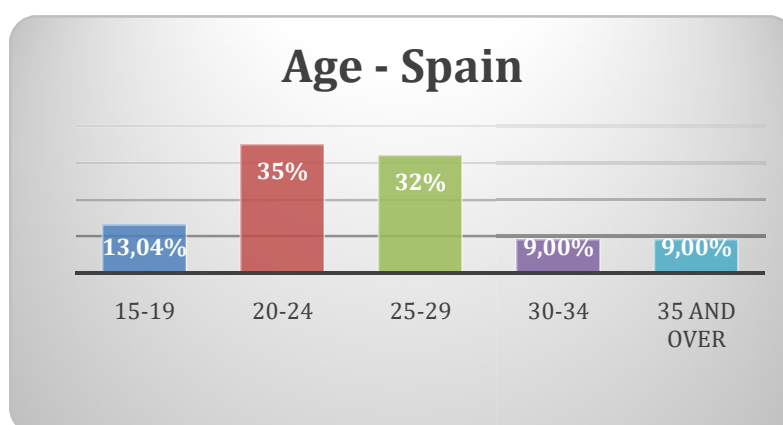
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over were also well represented. Once again, the lowest rate was recorded for the group 15-17 years at less than 1%.



Almost identical results were found for Greece, with a lower representation of the oldest age-bracket and a slightly larger presence of the 15-18 age bracket.

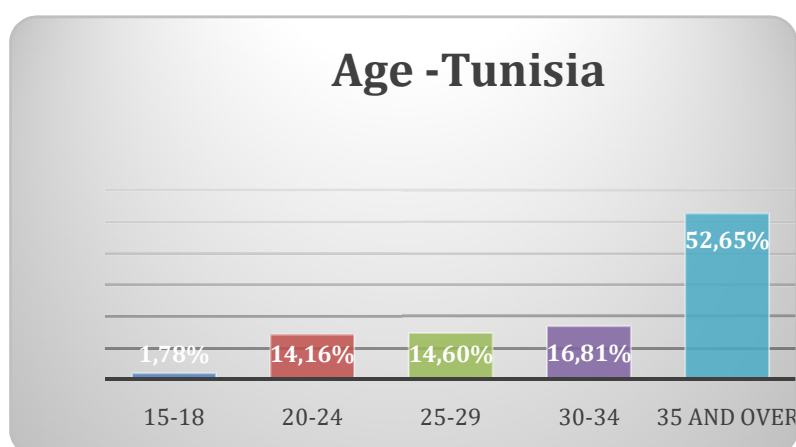
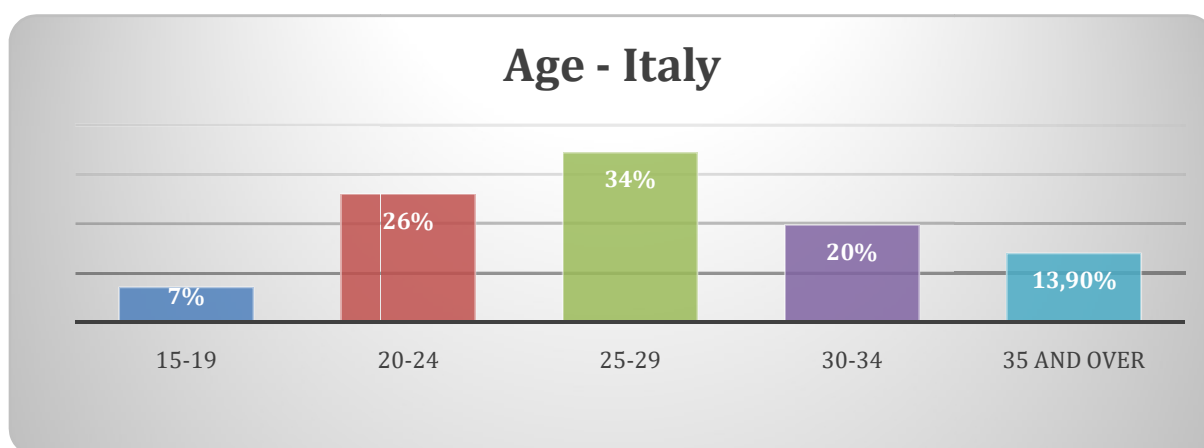
An interesting result in Spain compared to the rest of the consortium samples with a far greater frequency of 15-19-year-olds (13%). A higher frequency was in the slightly younger age range of 20-24 (similar to Jordan) was also found, although followed very closely by 25-29.





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In Italy, the most represented age groups were those from the 25-29 range with fairly similar results in the 20-24 age group and 30-34. Interestingly, both the youngest and oldest age ranges were also fairly well represented overall.



In Tunisia, it is immediately clear the marked participation of older NEETs in this survey. This predominance of older participants was undoubtedly due to the type of target group selected (women's community groups). The central age-

ranges were evenly represented at around 15% each group with a small number of very young participants.



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It is evident that the age-bracket which responded most frequently (with the exception of Spain and Tunisia), was the 25-29, closely followed by 20-24. In many of our partner countries, this would correspond broadly to the end of further education studies. This is an observation which would also fit with the results of the qualifications analysis, which reported over 70% of participants with a university degree. This may reflect the current difficulty many graduates are having in finding qualified employment in the Southern European/Mediterranean states (see results of qualifications for the sample survey).



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Education, continuous training and job search

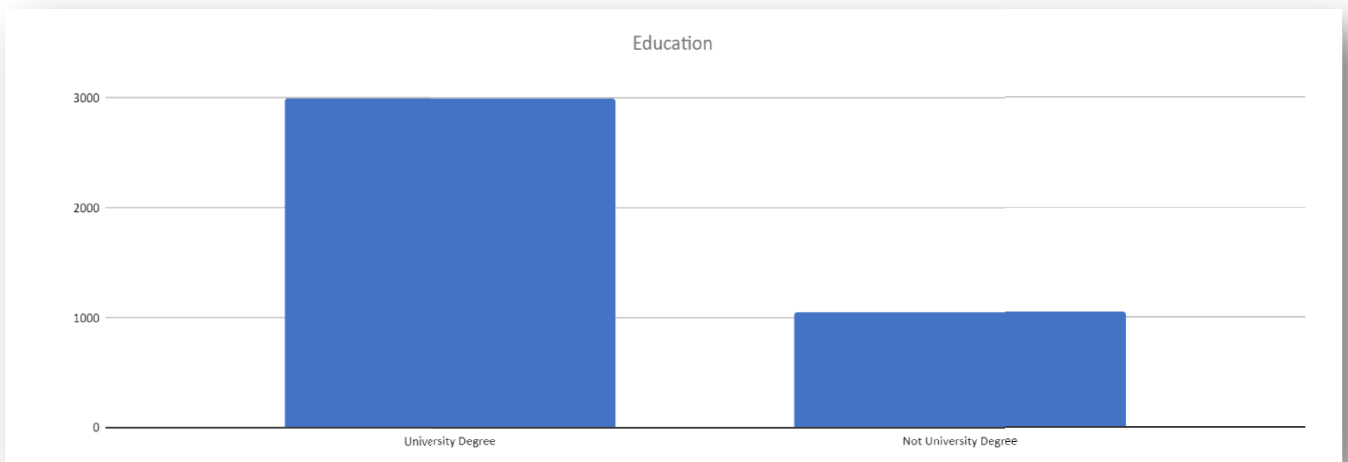
Education.

In order to obtain an overview of the general level of education and training held by the NEETs participating in the country profiling, a number of categories were identified. Two large subgroups were formed according to whether participants held a degree or school-leaving qualification. However, variations in the education system in the various partner countries created the need to include postgraduate training and vocational training in the subdivisions.

As seen below, the overall consortium results showed that the majority of NEETs participating in the survey had a high level of education (over 70% university degree). The methodology used to reach those participants needs to be considered, notwithstanding, results would suggest that the category of NEET-graduate is critical. This data needs to be compared to the results from the BaCE company survey, however, **preliminary results confirm a marked mismatch of skills in the partner target areas as an overriding issue.**



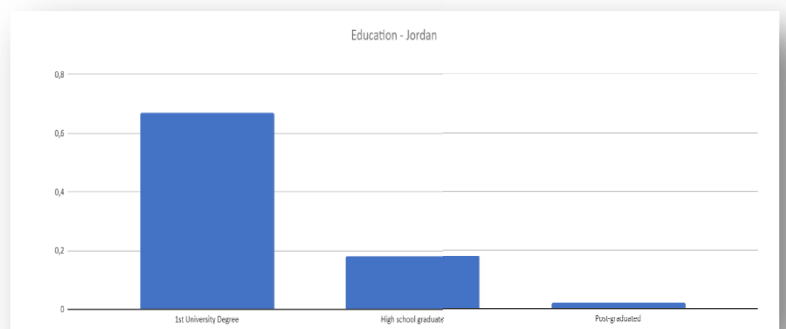
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Overall consortium results

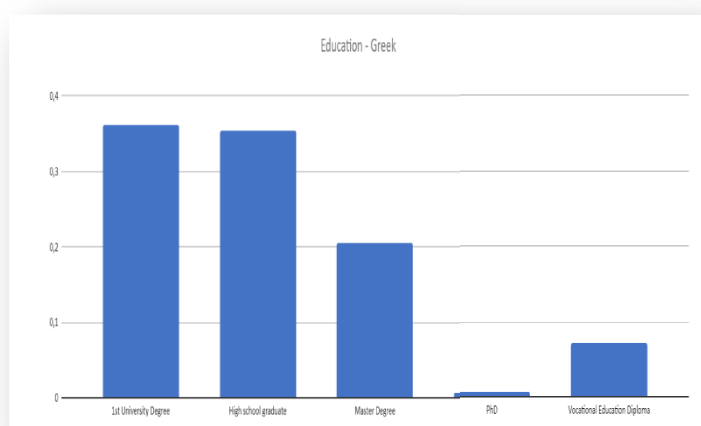
Partner results

In Jordan within the sample examined, nearly 70% of participants held a bachelor's degree, followed by 18% non-graduates and a small percentage of people who had also completed post-graduate studies (2%).





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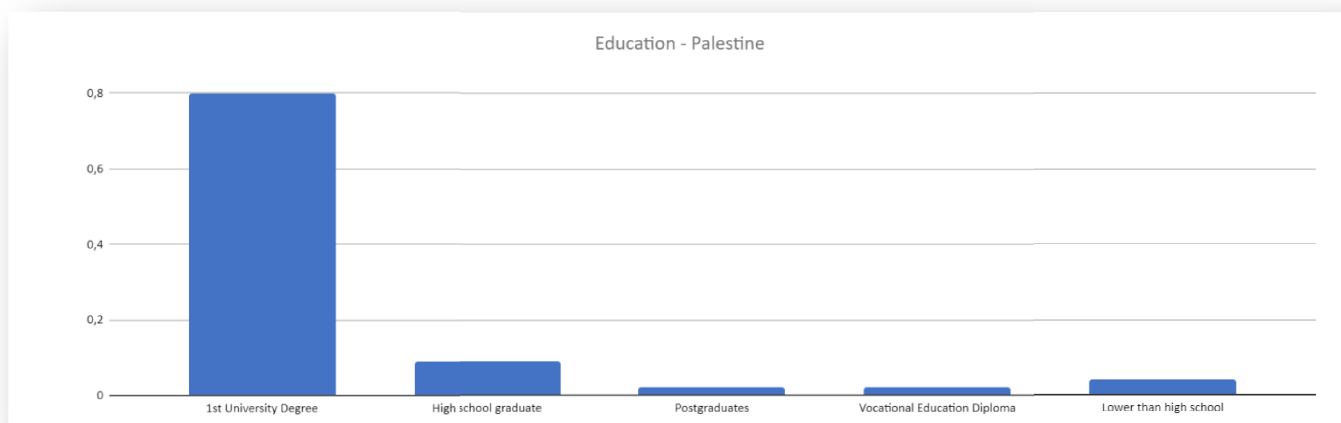


Similarly in Greece, over 55% of participants held a higher education qualification (first university degree or master's degree) and 20% a high-school diploma. Once again, only a very small percentage held a PhD.

In Palestine, however, overwhelmingly the greatest group (around 80%) was formed by people with a first university degree, followed by 9% of people with a high school diploma. Postgraduates, those with vocational training and lower than high-school level education were relatively few, between 2-4% of participants. This predominance of NEET graduates was also due to the fact that graduates were targeted specifically by the Palestine partner UCAS.



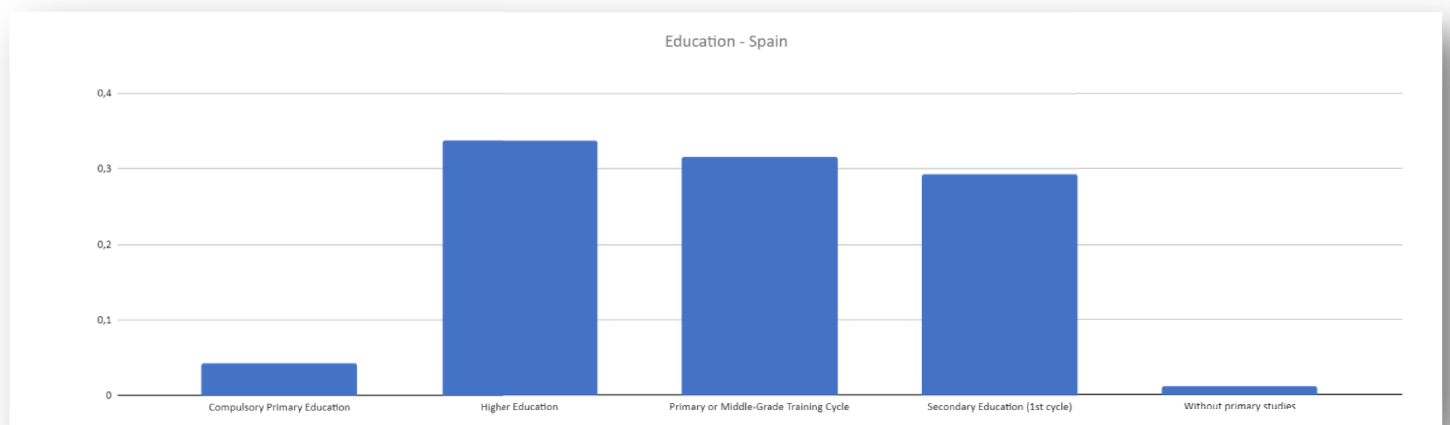
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In Spain, finding between those with higher education, vocational training (primary or middle education cycles) and secondary education (1st cycle, 13-14 years) were fairly even (around 30% each). Those with very little schooling were found to be few (5%).

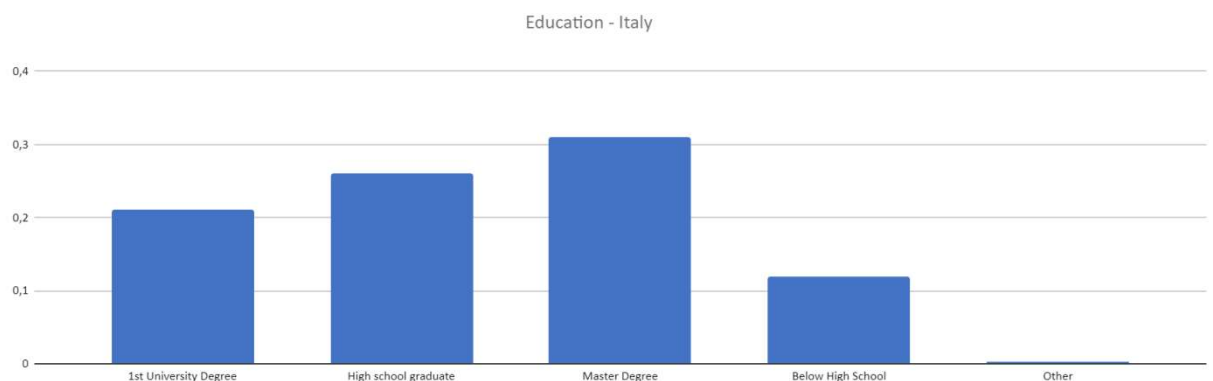


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In Italy, the response was mixed. Over half of respondents said they had a university degree (1st or 2nd level), while 44% had no degree and over 10% without a high school diploma.

It should be noted here that all the young people involved in the COSVAP partner survey (survey implemented in Mazara Del Vallo, Italy) were foreign immigrants residing in Sicily, and declared that they did not have a high school diploma. This is an extremely important and pertinent category of NEET, increasingly common in Europe, which Helios

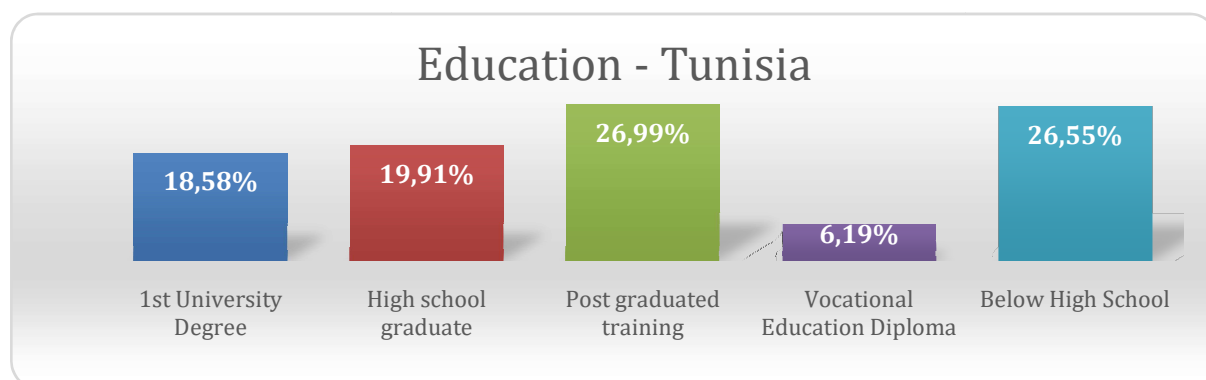




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will take care to target in courses.

Regarding Tunisia, where most of the participants in the questionnaire were women, educational levels were more heterogeneous. Nearly half of the participants held higher education certificates (a notable 26% with post-grad training) and a fifth completed schooling. However, this was coupled with over a quarter with below high-school education.



How long have you been unemployed?

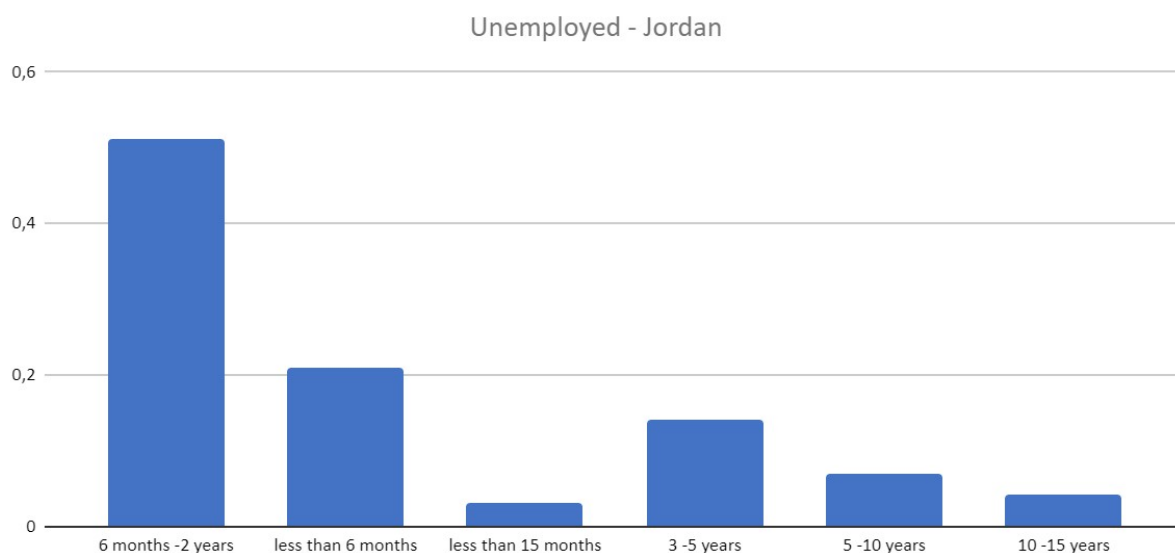
An extremely important but not always easily obtainable data concern the period of time for which a person remains unemployed. Often candidates may prefer not to provide this information or the participants may have been employed in undeclared work, creating a situation of unease.

Partner results

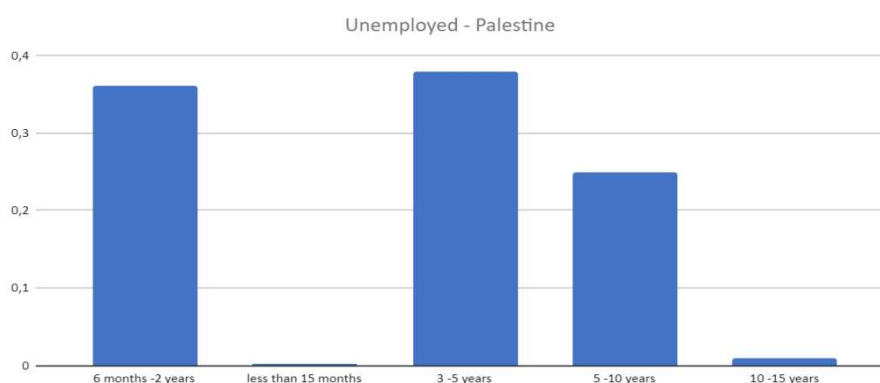


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In Jordan, results showed that the NEETs participating in the Helios survey had been unemployed for at least 6 months (75%), with the greatest frequency lying in the 6 months to 2 years category. This may have shown the sharp consequences of the pandemic although most of the questionnaires were implemented at the start of the pandemic in Spring 2020.



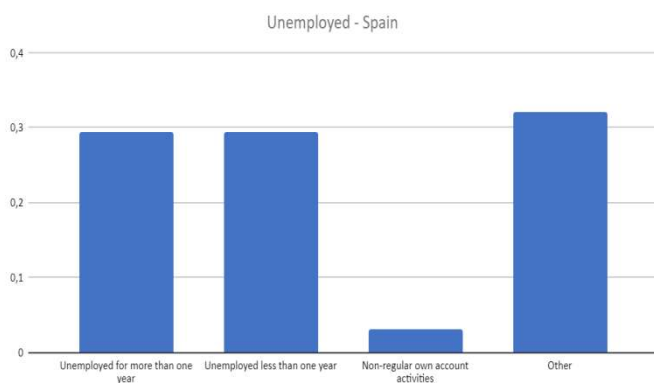
In Palestine, results would seem to demonstrate a higher degree of chronic unemployment with 65% of participants remaining unemployed for at least 3 years and over





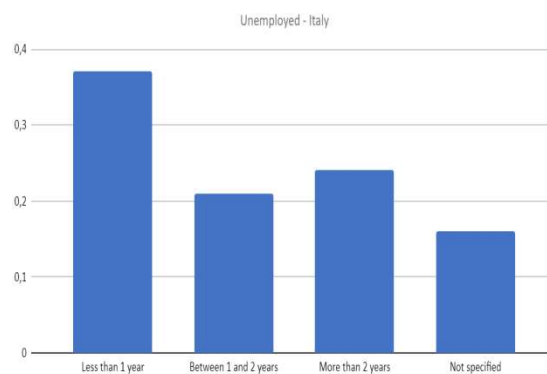
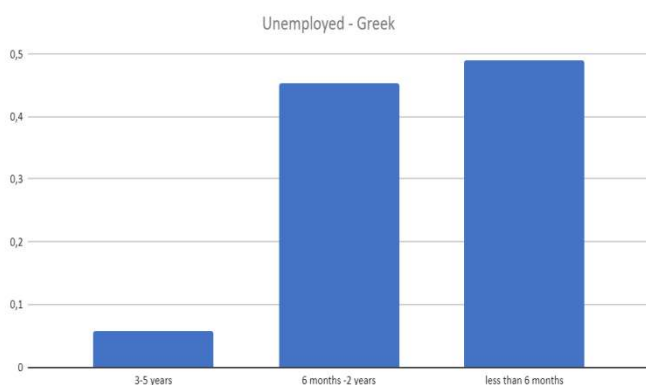
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35% for between 6 months and 2 years.



Similar situation in Spain where the highest percentage of study participants - 29.35% - remained unemployed for more than a year.

The situation in Greece seems to be slightly more encouraging, where nearly half of participants seem to have remained unemployed for less than 6 months, and in Italy where the over a third has been unemployed for less than 1 year.





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Updated CV

Although the more fragile subgroups of NEETs include those people who are no longer actively engaged in jobseeking, Helios included a question about updating their curriculum vitae in the survey, also a means of gauging vulnerability and as an aid in the development of the soft skills curricula.

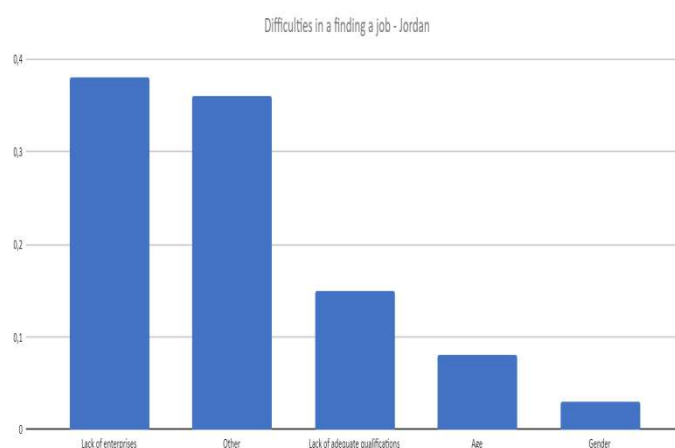
This question was designed to intercept forms of training or work (including internships) that from a regulatory point of view do not interrupt the unemployed or unemployed status.

In Jordan, for example, approx. 60% of participants declared that they update their CV, in Palestine around 56%, in Greece around 77%, in Tunisia 40%.

This image differs from the traditional depiction of the more fragile subgroups of NEETs who are not interested in the mechanisms of the world of work as they are now disinterested and disenchanted with the labour market.

What difficult do you face in finding a job?

The data on unemployment and training must necessarily be supplemented by data that illustrate the difficulties young people experience in finding work and to identify the gaps between the world of work and trainingf.



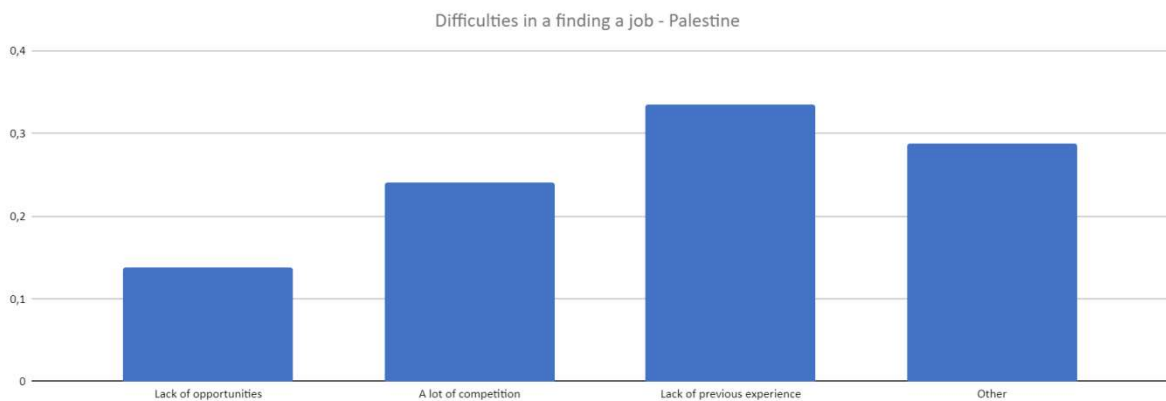
In Jordan, regarding the difficulties a person encounters in finding a job, most people (over



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70%) cited too few companies or other as the primary reason for not finding a job. Interestingly, they did not perceive age, gender or a lack of skills are the main obstruction to employment.

In Palestine, however, a lack of opportunity (presumably linked to too few companies and job openings) was not reported as the main stumbling block but rather a lack of experience (over 30%), and other (cited as a focus on a specific qualifications, gender,

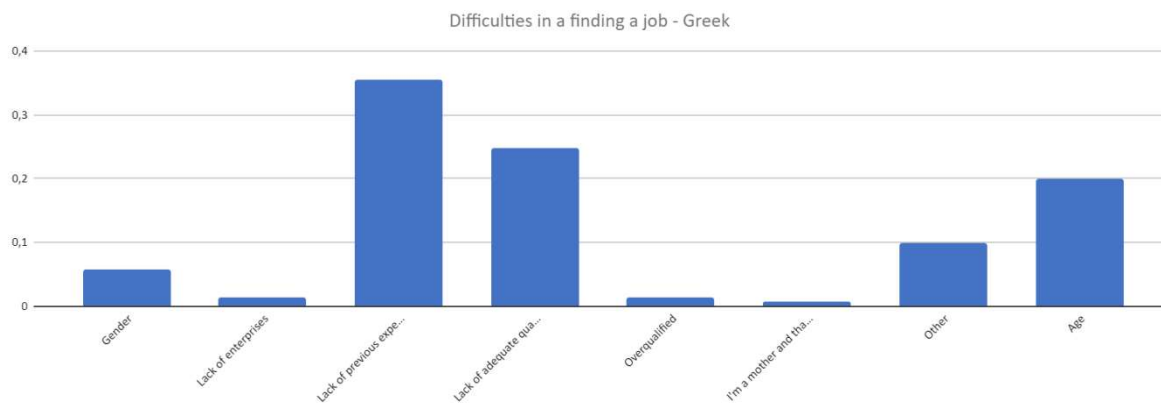


favoritism and other reasons) .



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Likewise In Greece, a lack of experience and lack of adequate qualifications were perceived as the main components hindering their employment, with age also featuring strongly (20%). This is somewhat surprising since, as we saw above, over 55% of the participants in the survey held a university degree, perhaps once again, a clear sign of skills

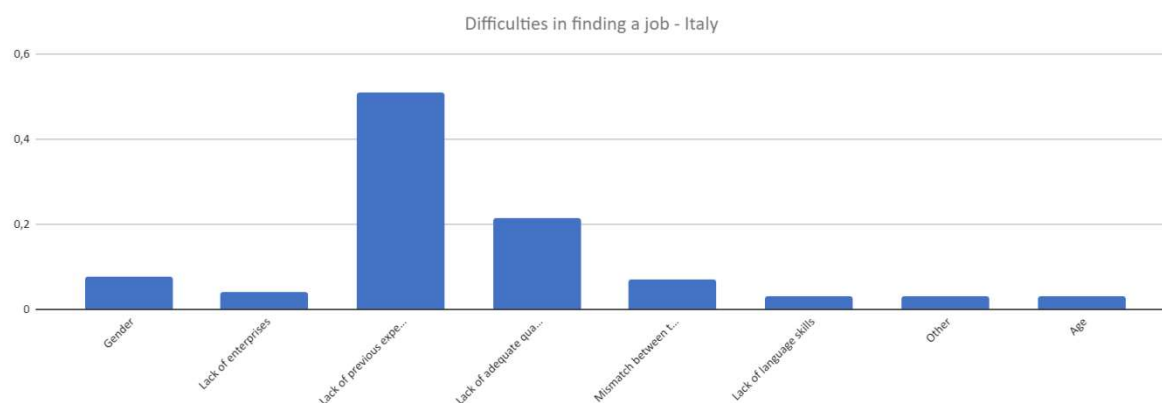


mismatching. A shortage of opportunities and companies was not perceived as significant.

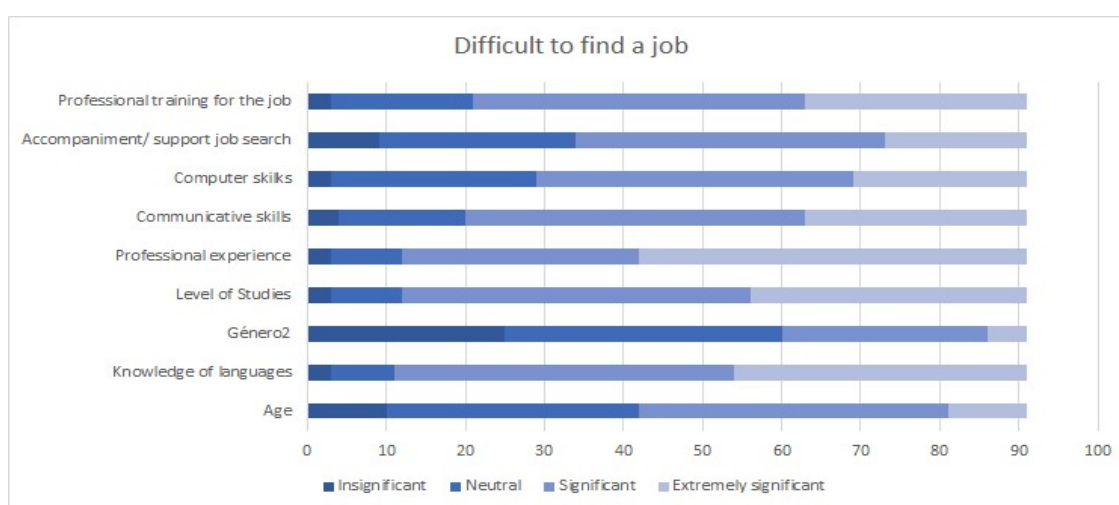
Similar to Greece, results for Italy showed that nearly three quarters of participants indicated lack of previous experience and lack of adequate qualifications as the main hindering factor.



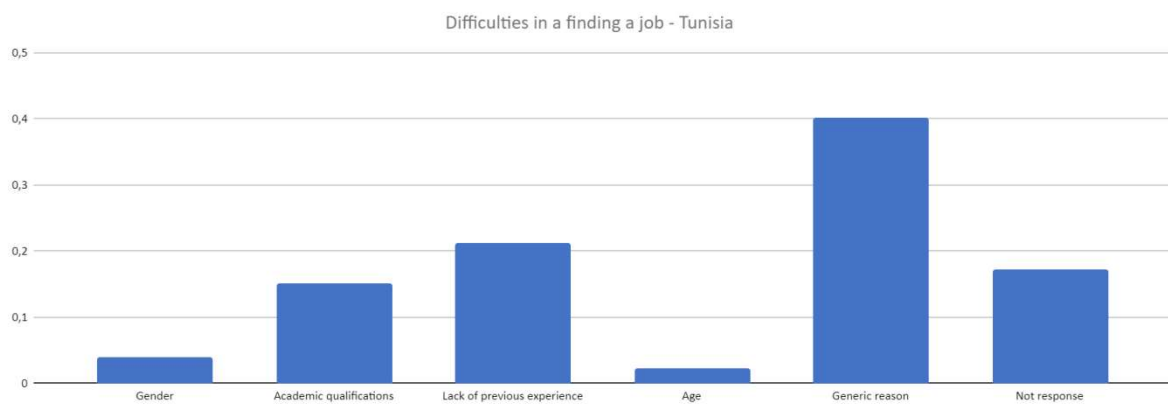
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In Spain, where the level of detail of the analysis was greater, it became clear that skills (IT, communication and linguistic), training, experience and education were deemed overwhelmingly as the most significant factors affecting finding a job and not a lack of opportunity or jobs. This would seem to suggest that more focused courses providing skills for the local economy needs may be well received.



The data collected from Tunisia were more uncertain as 40% indicated generic reasons and nearly 20% did not respond to the question. However, over a third cited academic qualifications and lack of experience as affecting success in finding a job.



It is evident from our analysis that one of the major reasons *perceived* by the participants as hindering their lack of employment is not a lack of opportunity but rather a lack of experience and skills. Coupled with the fact that over 70% of the participants in the survey held a higher education qualification, once again, this confirms at least a perception of mismatching. It is important here to remember that the reasons given for a participants difficulty in finding a job is given as perceived by the participant and not as a necessarily validated response.

Aid for young people in finding a job

In Jordan, a significant percentage of respondents (24%) were not able to suggest what help and support might help young people or NEETs to find work. However, an equally high



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proportion replied that on-the-job training would be of use to young people in finding work. A good number of participants also expressed interest in orientation towards self-enterprise policies and incentives. 25% say they would prefer grants to help create their entrepreneurial projects and introduce young people to the world of work, while 17% would opt for an adequate job opportunity within the specialized training courses and 13% chose training courses.

In Palestine, 73% believe that institutions should provide specific and targeted training, followed by 13% who indicate the generic need for training courses. 6%, on the other hand, would prefer active policies for equal opportunities while 7% would like better job opportunities.

In Greece, 21% said they would appreciate training courses on soft skills followed by 16% who would like EU funding for the creation of new jobs

In Italy, 30% want specific training and on-the-job internships, 6% direct financial support and 4.5% economic incentives for hiring young people. 11% ask for greater dialogue between universities/high level training and job sector.



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Circular and Blu Economy knowledge

Our survey also included specific questions regarding knowledge of the selected sample of the Blue and Circular Economies and the participant's willingness to participate in job shadowing opportunities. These data were also able to provide us with information on the participants awareness of emerging markets and their desire to embrace new challenges professional point of view.

In Greece most respondents (79%) declared they did not know what the Circular Economy was, compared to only 21% of those who said they did. However, the great part of participants (71%), attached great importance to the Circular Economy. Similar results were obtained for the Blue Economy as most of the study sample declared no knowledge of the Blue Economy (89%).

In Italy, However, 56.6% are familiar with the Circular Economy sector compared to 43.4%, who declared having no knowledge. The level of awareness of the Blue Economy was slightly higher at 63.9% .

However, as regards willingness to participate in courses to improve skills in the fields of the Blue and Circular Economy in Greece, we note that most expressed an interest in attending a professional training course in the Circular Economy (70%), compared to 30% who either declined or did not give an answer. The percentage of survey participants who were interested in professional training on the concepts and practical applications of the Blue Economy reached 77% of the study sample, compared to only 23% of those who said they were not interested.

In Spain we note over half (55%), would be interested in learning about and / or participating in specialized training, and 21% expressed the need for more information; only



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1% said they were not interested. In Italy 93% were interested in professional shadowing experience with regard to the Circular Economy and 65% are interested in shadowing experiences within the Blue Economy.

In Jordan the percentage of those who would like to attend a professional training course on the concepts and application of the Blue or Circular Economy was 76% of the study sample, compared to only 24% of those who said they were not interested.

In Palestine, the percentage that would prefer to attend a professional training course on the concepts and application of the Blue or Circular Economy was 78%.