



Preparing NEETs to access green jobs

Problem statement

Economies around the globe are looking to shift towards a more sustainable future, and the greening of the economy is at the forefront of this transformation. In view of climate change, global warming, and environmental degradation governments and businesses increasingly invest in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, and more eco-friendly technologies. A critical component of this shift is the adoption of circular economy principles, which focus on minimising waste and making the most of resources by creating closed-loop systems where products and materials are reused, repaired, or recycled. Therefore, the demand for skilled workers in the green sector is on the rise. However, there is a growing concern that some groups in the labour force, including young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) are left behind and don't have equal access to these job opportunities.

Green skills are skills needed to succeed working in the green economy; [Cedefop](#) defines them as the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live, work and act in economies and societies seeking to reduce the impact of human activity on the environment. Future green jobs will demand higher skills in information processing, critical thinking, and analytical skills like programming and problem solving, while existing green jobs focus more on mechanical skills, such as equipment maintenance and repair.

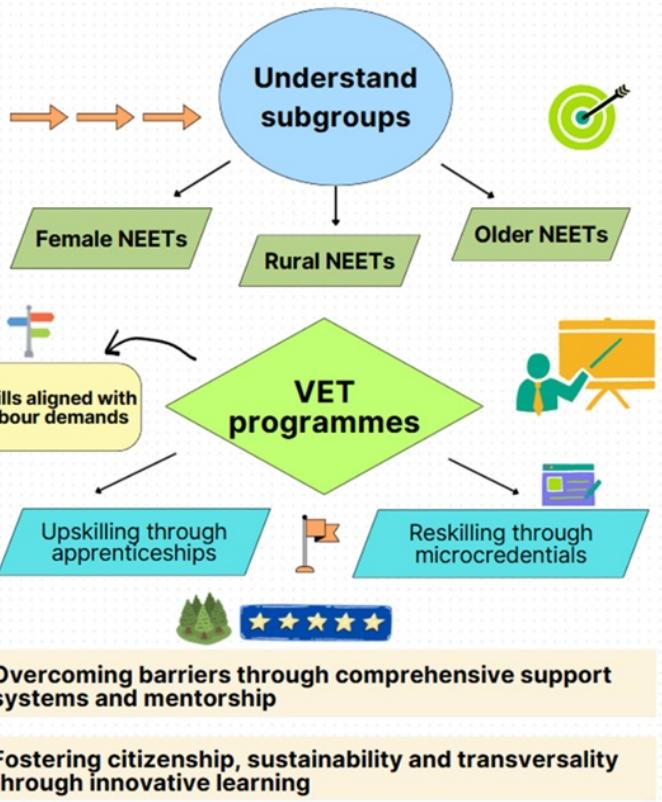
While the green economy requires a unique set of skills combining technical knowledge with environmental awareness and sustainability principles, many young people, particularly those who are NEETs, do not have such skills and may also lack opportunities to upskilling and reskilling. This has contributed to the green skills gap, where the demand for skilled workers in the green sector far exceeds the supply.

To ensure that NEETs can equally access green jobs, it is essential to break down the barriers that prevent them from participating in education and training programmes.

By equipping NEETs with the skills and training needed in the green sector, labour markets can better align workforce capabilities with industry needs, thereby reducing skills mismatches and increasing employment opportunities. This alignment not only supports economic growth but also ensures that the green transition is inclusive, tapping into a wider talent pool to drive innovation and sustainability.

Skills for the green transition and NEETs

Unlocking the potential of the circular economy



Beneficiaries

- ⌚ Re-entrants
- ⌚ NEETs in recent search
- ⌚ Unavailable due to family responsibilities
- ⌚ NEETs in long-term search
- ⌚ Discouraged and disengaged young people

Addressing the problem

The following tips seek to guide policymakers and practitioners working with disadvantaged young people to support them in accessing green jobs.

💡 Tip 1: Raising awareness and access to green career pathways for NEETs

Engaging NEETs in the green transition requires a clear understanding of which individuals can benefit most from programmes aimed at developing skills relevant to this shift. NEETs represent a diverse and vulnerable group, with each sub-group having unique needs and facing specific challenges. By recognising their particularities, policymakers and practitioners can design tailored approaches that maximise the effectiveness of such initiatives. Showcasing successful examples, as highlighted in the good practices below, can demonstrate the tangible benefits of careers in industries like cleantech and renewable energies. These programmes not only provide practical training but also address barriers such as childcare responsibilities, offering flexible options that make participation feasible, especially for NEETs with caring responsibilities.

To effectively reach and engage NEETs, it is crucial to create relatable pathways that align with their interests, prior experiences (if applicable), and career aspirations. Younger cohorts tend to be more committed to sustainability issues and are motivated to reflect these interests in their vocational education and career choices ([Cedefop, 2025](#)). Utilising communication channels that are popular among young people, such as social media, can be used to effectively present role models and real-life success stories, inspiring confidence and motivation among NEETs. This in turn helps to restore trust and encourages NEETs to explore opportunities in sectors relevant to the green transition.

By addressing specific needs and challenges, green skills programmes can offer meaningful and long-term employment opportunities, while also promoting environmental sustainability and community development. Good practice examples show how different sub-groups of NEETs can become effectively engaged in green industry sectors. Older NEETs for example, those aged 25-29, are typically more mature, goal-oriented, and experienced in the labour market and seek stable, well-paid jobs to support their families. Sustainability is important to many in this age group, with some viewing green jobs as advantageous. The "[INTERCEPT](#)" project supports older NEETs by providing them with skills and work experience in the green sector, through a 12-week internship called the Green Career Pathway. Participants receive a 25-hour course on the green economy and job placements in green sector companies, which can provide them with the necessary qualifications to enter emerging job markets and offer them with future-ready employment opportunities.

Another important sub-group of NEETs, NEETs [living in rural regions](#) and/or with limited mobility can benefit from remote working opportunities in the green sector, as these jobs often eliminate the need for relocation or commuting. The "[Back on Track](#)" project for example, empowers rural NEETs by providing them with essential digital skills, which in some cases are crucial for participating in the green transition. Through tailored outreach, mentorship, and digital training, the project enhances participants' ability to access virtual resources and training opportunities across different sectors, including the green one. Such initiatives not only help re-engaging NEETs, but also may stimulate community development through local green industries and environmental sustainability.

💡 **Tip 2: Upskilling and reskilling through inclusive VET**

Upskilling and reskilling NEETs through VET for the green economy enables them to shift from traditional job roles to sustainable careers, promoting economic independence and contributing to environmental sustainability. Engaging NEETs in apprenticeships can be a valuable pathway to access jobs in green industries. Apprenticeships, given their close connection to the labour market, have the flexibility to quickly adapt and address short-term workforce bottlenecks while ensuring long-term employability in the context of the green transition ([Cedefop, 2024](#)). NEETs through apprenticeships may gain relevant skills and experience, thereby increasing their employability and participation in the evolving green economy.

Upskilling and reskilling NEETs to meet the needs of the green economy may also involve providing targeted training programmes that focus on green industries and technologies. These programmes need to be inclusive offering flexible learning options, such as online courses, part-time schedules and [micro-credentials](#), to accommodate the diverse needs of NEETs. The [INTERCEPT](#) project, for example, seeks to proactively tackle any upcoming challenges NEETs may be confronted with by offering support to individuals during job market transitions

and providing reskilling opportunities for the green economy. By creating a customised programme to meet the specific needs of the regional green economy NEETs are engaged, mobilised and equipped with green skill and environmental awareness gained through both formal training and workplace experience.

Another example worth noting is the “[RenewAcad](#)” project. This provides reskilling efforts in the renewable energy sector by providing vocational training to 700 employees from less developed regions across Europe, particularly targeting low-skilled individuals and those from disadvantaged rural areas. Individuals affected by the energy transition in coal energy production can access training courses, close to their area of activity.

Cedefop, furthermore, is exploring the use of data from online job advertisements feeding into its [Skills OVATE tool](#) to lay the groundwork for a classification of green skills. Providing real-time green skills intelligence is crucial to understanding emerging labour market trends based on which adaptation of VET systems can be initiated. Awareness of green skills needs together with adaptability of education and training system to the green transition may help NEETs to become equipped for new openings or ventures from the green sector.

❸ Tip 3: Fostering innovative learning through green practices

“Green practices” may reengage young people not in employment, education or training through innovative approaches. One example of such approaches is located in the area of [citizenship education](#). Climate change is a pressing policy issue that affects everyone, making it a relatable and engaging topic for young people. Participating in climate change activities can give young people a sense of purpose and motivation, helping them feel connected to their community and the environment. Furthermore, these activities can help young people develop valuable skills, such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication, which are essential for employability. Concrete activities for involving NEETs in climate change initiatives include conducting environmental workshops on topics like renewable energy, sustainable fashion, or eco-friendly practices. The “[RREUSE](#)” network focuses on promoting the re-use, repair, and recycling through social enterprises, which helps preserving traditional skills and create job opportunities for vulnerable groups. These workshops can effectively educate and engage young people, providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to make a positive impact in the circular economy. Especially for those among the NEET group who are furthest from the labour market as well as education and training, allowing them to build valuable competences and skills through alternative approaches, can bring them closer to becoming job-ready and accessing more targeted interventions.

Leveraging innovative learning grounded in the [principles of the circular economy](#) (Cedefop, 2022) — redesign, reuse, repair, recycle, recover, rethink, and reduce— employment and educational options can be transformed into more appealing pathways for NEETs. The [Polish Outdoor Learning \(POL\)](#) project for example offers valuable insights for using green skills to reengage NEETs. This project focuses on [female NEETs](#) by incorporating outdoor experiential learning. The holistic support provided, including psychological and pedagogical assistance, addresses both the emotional and practical needs of participants, building their confidence, self-esteem, and resilience. Such a comprehensive approach can be decisive for generating tangible outcomes as in young people re-entering education or employment. Additionally, the focus on green practices equips participants with transferable skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and planning, making them more adaptable and employable in

the future. The emphasis on sustainability not only provides relevant skills but also installs a sense of responsibility towards the environment, potentially inspiring NEETs to explore careers in green industries.

💡 **Tip 4: Creating comprehensive support systems to overcome barriers**

Supporting NEETs during the green transition, means that actions should be taken at individual, institutional, and systemic level. NEETs need personalised career guidance and mentorship, along with tailored training programmes in green skills to foster continuous learning and adaptability. Educational institutions and community organisations need to collaborate to develop comprehensive green skills training, partnering with businesses to offer internships and apprenticeships, while implementing supportive policies such as financial support and flexible learning schedules.

At the systemic level, governments, employers, and trade unions should create opportunities to engage in tripartite social dialogue to design cohesive strategies for upskilling and reskilling NEETs, prioritising green skills development, funding for training programmes, and incentives for businesses to hire and train NEETs, ensuring preparation for the green transition and promoting sustainable economic growth.

Thus, comprehensive support systems are essential for NEETs to successfully access education and training, as NEETs often face challenges such as financial constraints, childcare responsibilities, and limited mobility, which can hinder their participation. By addressing these barriers, comprehensive support systems enable NEETs to engage in continuous learning and development, ultimately achieving financial independence, career growth and sustainable labour-market integration.

Governments, educational institutions, and businesses must work together to provide accessible and affordable training programmes that cater to the needs of NEETs. This could include vocational training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training that focus on green skills such as renewable energy installation, sustainable construction, eco-friendly manufacturing or eco-tourism.

Good practices like [Back on Track](#) and [POL](#) demonstrate the importance of providing holistic support, from digital skills training to [personalised mentoring](#). These initiatives ensure that NEETs have the resources they need to succeed in the green economy, fostering an environment of inclusivity and empowerment.

Expected outcomes

		
INDIVIDUAL	INSTITUTIONAL	SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of career prospects in the green sector • Self-awareness of abilities, aptitudes, and interests associated with actual labour market demand and informed choices about green jobs • Improved work readiness in in-demand sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the labour market dynamics of the green transition • Programmes to meet better the needs of learners and employers • Monitoring labour market transitions and reviewing the outcomes of existing education and training programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rethinking of upskilling and reskilling to future-proof sectors • Future skills anticipation in alignment with labour demands • Increased knowledge about the green transition within learning providers, employers and national agencies

Related resources

Good practices

<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">  Good practice </div> <p>Polish Outdoor Learning - POL</p> <p>A programme specifically targeting women aged 18-35 who are not in employment or engaged in education, apprenticeships, or traineeships, aiming to keep them motivated and equip them with the necessary skills to (re-)enter the labour market.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;">  Norway  Poland </div> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">  Good practice </div> <p>INTERCEPT (motIvating mobiliziNg supporTing nEETs gReen CaReer PaThway)</p> <p><i>Connecting young NEETs with job opportunities in the green sector</i></p> <p>INTERCEPT empowered NEETs (individuals not in employment, education, or training) aged 25-29 by offering tailored training and paid work placements with green companies, assisting them in re-entering the labour market. Through research and a pilot programme in Italy, Malta, and Lithuania, the project provides with valuable insights to shape future EU policy on youth employment in the green sector.</p> </div>
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 Good practice

Back on Track - Support for young NEETs in rural areas

Fostering the (re)integration of NEETs in rural areas into education, training, and the labour market by increasing their basic skills, resilience, and digital inclusion.

Back on Track aims to (re)integrate young NEETs (not in employment, education, or training) in rural areas into general and vocational education as well as the labour market. The goal is to improve their basic skills and resilience, while strengthening their digital competences, to enable sustainable employment and personal development.

-  Austria  Bosnia and Herzegovina
-  Bulgaria  Czechia  Germany
-  Hungary  Romania  Serbia
-  Slovakia  Slovenia

Publications

 Publications

Pilot evaluation of the INTERCEPT project

Project report showcasing good practices from Italy, Lithuania and Malta

This report provides a comprehensive assessment of three pilot schemes implemented in Italy, Lithuania, and Malta, aimed at integrating young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) aged 25-29 into the

 Publications

Successful integration of 25-29-year-old NEETs into the labour market with a focus on green job

INTERCEPT project guidelines

The recommendations of the INTERCEPT project refer to several key steps, including conducting research, providing targeted training, facilitating internships, and securing job

green jobs.

 **Italy**  **Lithuania**  **Luxembourg**

 **Malta**  **Poland**  **Slovakia**

placements for young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) into green jobs.

 **Italy**  **Lithuania**  **Luxembourg**

 **Malta**  **Poland**  **Slovakia**

 Publications

Partnerships and collaborations for success

Europe impact report 2024-2025 from Generation

The report highlights significant achievements in transforming education to employment systems, with over 5,100 graduates trained and placed in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, tech, and the green economy.

 **EU level**

 Publications

EURES (European Employment Services) report

Report on labour shortages and surpluses in 2024

This is the seventh edition of the European Employment Services (EURES) report on labour market imbalances, exploring the status of labour shortages and surpluses in 2024 and how they developed over time.

 **EU level**

 Publications

Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2025

Unlocking the potential of people through promoting higher employment in the EU

This edition of the annual Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) review examines 51 million EU residents (aged 20-64) out of employment and highlights how including groups that are under-represented in the labour market can help offset the impacts of demographic change on Europe's workforce.

 **EU level**

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