



Flexible and permeable education and training systems




Problem statement

Flexible and permeable education systems enable learners to move within and across education, training and employment. Flexibility means that learning pathways can adapt to the changing interests and abilities of young people as they progress. Permeability means that young people have the option to progress to programmes at a higher level or to switch to another programme to achieve their long-term career plans. More specifically, flexibility in the delivery of learning opportunities means that young people whose education was interrupted may benefit from an extended period to complete their studies, the possibility to study part-time, or alternative delivery methods (e.g. online).

For NEETs, flexible options for education and training can substantially improve their life chances. Innovative thinking can identify ways to engage and support NEETs to make the most of their knowledge, skills and talents, according to their own learning interests and aptitudes.

Flexible systems can be achieved by breaking programmes into units or modules to enable movement across the system and by offering opportunities for credit transfer or recognition of prior learning. Delivery options can include the possibility to attend evening classes or courses on a part-time basis, while pedagogical approaches could give teachers the capacity to use various teaching methods in line with students' needs, for example.

Beneficiaries

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

Addressing the problem

Policy makers and practitioners involved in the design and delivery of measures for flexible and permeable education and training systems may find useful the following tips.

 **Tip 1: Dividing programmes into distinct blocks**

Modularisation and partial certification enable learners to pursue learning at their own pace. There is a sense of achievement each time a module is completed, which can help to change NEETs' outlook on educational success. In addition, it enables young people who left education early to catch up and 'fill their skills gaps' rather than having to repeat a full course.

Tip 2: Offer alternative routes to achieving a formal qualification

Young people who left school early need alternative routes to achieving a formal qualification. Maintaining links between mainstream education and [second chance and compensatory measures](#) is key to giving NEETs the chance to complete upper secondary education. These links can lead to referrals from second chance measures to mainstream education, or vice versa. This also implies the recognition of learning outcomes achieved through second chance and compensatory measures. Other alternative routes for NEETs to achieve formal qualifications include on-the-job training and validation, recognition of prior learning, and modularisation of educational programmes.

Tip 3: Ensure that VET pathways accommodate progression

VET can open options for NEETs to pursue further lifelong learning opportunities and progress their career. Education and training systems should allow progression from VET into higher education. Promoting deeper collaboration between VET and higher education providers can ensure smooth and successful transitions. Such collaboration can be highly beneficial for NEETs who plan to re-enter education in order to achieve their professional ambitions.

Tip 4: Ensure that providers can deliver flexible programmes

Part-time, distance or blended learning (combination of online learning and traditional face-to-face instruction) opportunities can be helpful for young people who face external barriers to learning. For example, young people who have caring responsibilities may be able to complete their qualification through evening classes, distance or online learning.

Tip 5: Support NEETs to make informed

decisions

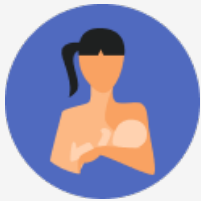
Guidance and counselling can give young people the confidence and motivation to decide the pathways they wish to pursue. It gives NEETs the opportunity to reflect on how to move forward in their professional development and find the most appropriate pathway back into education or training.

Strengthening links between guidance and counselling services provided by the education and employment sectors for both initial and continuing VET can help to engage young people with flexible learning pathways and their work life goals.

Tip 6: Support NEETs to identify and improve their existing skills and competences

NEETs considering going back into education or training can benefit greatly from a skills audit or portfolio development that will help them to identify the programme that best suits their profile, strengths and professional aspirations. Recognition of existing knowledge and skills can constitute a basis for developing individual learning plans and approaches that avoid repeating curriculum content. Validating non-formal and informal learning can also help NEETs who have acquired skills outside of formal education to regain the confidence to return to education and upgrade their qualifications.

Related risk factors



Early motherhood

Related resources

Good practices

 Good practice

400+Future

400+Zukunft

400+Future is a low threshold programme that targets young NEETs to support them to re-engage in education and training activities. The programme offers individualised support and practical experience in a variety of vocational fields as well as the opportunity to attain a lower secondary education certificate.

 **Germany**

 Good practice

BEYOND NEET(D)s

Integrated guidance and support for vocational education pathways for highly disadvantaged youth beyond the status of NEET

The aim of the practice is to change the status of young people from (beyond) NEETs to SEEDs (Searching for Education Employment and Development)[1].

[1] İbrahim Çelik, spacelab_umwelt
(Offene und Aufsuchende Jugendarbeit)

 **Austria**  **Cyprus**  **Czechia**

 **Ireland**  **Italy**  **Portugal**

 Good practice

Comprehensive pathways for the integration of young people

 **Spain**

 Good practice

Crafts Square

Piazza dei Mestieri

 **Italy**