

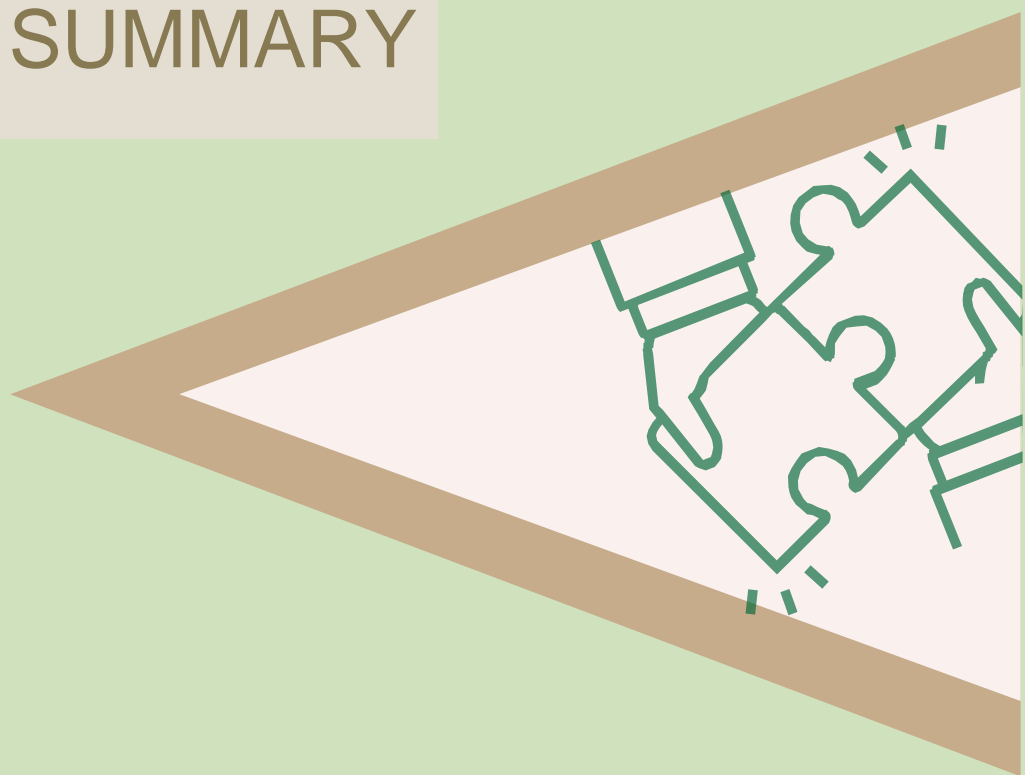


# White paper

Recommendations for an  
ecopreneurial competence framework

June 2023

## SUMMARY



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“EcopreNEETs: Boosting the eco-preneurial skills of NEETs”

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## EcopreNEETs: Boosting the eco-preneurial skills of NEETs

### Description



The project focuses on young NEETs who have long been disconnected from the labour market and promotes an inclusive approach to encouraging environmental entrepreneurship among NEETs through experiential learning. This approach will enable young people to develop their entrepreneurial skills through environmentally focused activities, while improving their digital skills.

### Objectives



- Re-engaging young NEETs in the labour market,
- Increasing the eco-entrepreneurship skills of young rural NEETs,
- Bridging the communication gap between young job seekers and employers,
- Creating a peer community for young NEETs.

### Target groups



- **Direct target group:** NEETs (aged 18-30), including those from rural areas
- **Indirect target group:** Human Resources departments, business consultancy organisations, eco-companies, companies wishing to adopt eco-practices, youth policy-makers and digital agencies.

The project will also involve representatives of the target groups in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the project.

### Work Packages (WP)



- **WP1. Creation of MOOC on eco-competences**

The MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) will introduce young NEETs to the world of eco-entrepreneurship, focusing on entrepreneurial and digital skills they need to make a career in a company, or even to set up their own eco-enterprise. Interactive multimedia training materials will be developed as open educational resources (OER).

- **WP2. Train the trainer**

This programme will aim to train trainers and youth workers to provide a more sustainable and eco-entrepreneurial education for NEETs. The partners want to offer effective and innovative training methods.

- **WP3. EcopreNEETs incubator**

This programme will aim to develop and promote a solid framework that will help young NEETs to create their own business. The e-internship methodology and action plan will involve both young people and stakeholders, as well as professional mentors appointed by the partner organisations.

### Consortium



 [Ligue de l'Enseignement Nouvelle-Aquitaine](#)

 [Ecocenter Alapitvány](#)

 [Digicult](#)

 [Atermon](#)

 [Learning Seed](#)



### Purpose of the white paper

The ambition of this white paper is to develop and promote an eco-entrepreneurial skills framework where NEETs will find inspiration, motivation, valuable knowledge and expert advice on how to create their own eco-business, or be hired in existing companies where they can practice their eco-business skills.

Two steps:

1. Explore the European and local contexts, to identify and collect data to understand a context;
2. Carry out a survey of 3 target audiences (NEETs, accompanying persons of NEETs, eco-entrepreneurs) on their practices and knowledge of the eco-entrepreneurship field.

The recommendations of this white paper will contribute to the methodology and action plan of the EcopreNEETs work packages (MOOCs, mentoring, coaching and incubator):

- Support young NEETs in setting up their own business. The e-learning methodology and action plan created will aim to involve both NEETs, stakeholders, as well as professional mentors appointed by the partner organisations.
- Provide young NEETs with guidance, mentoring and coaching to help them become active and competitive in the labour market and support them in setting up their own eco-business.

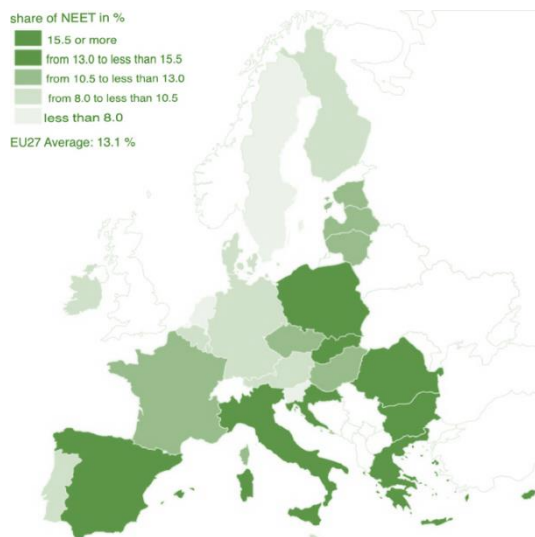


Figure 2

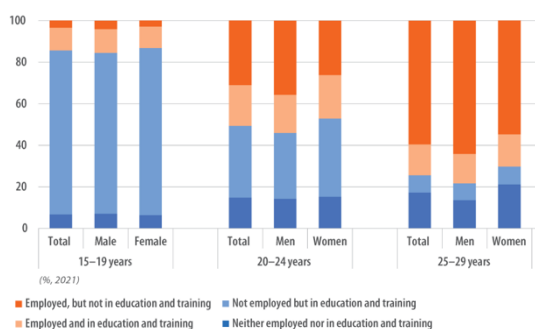


Figure 2

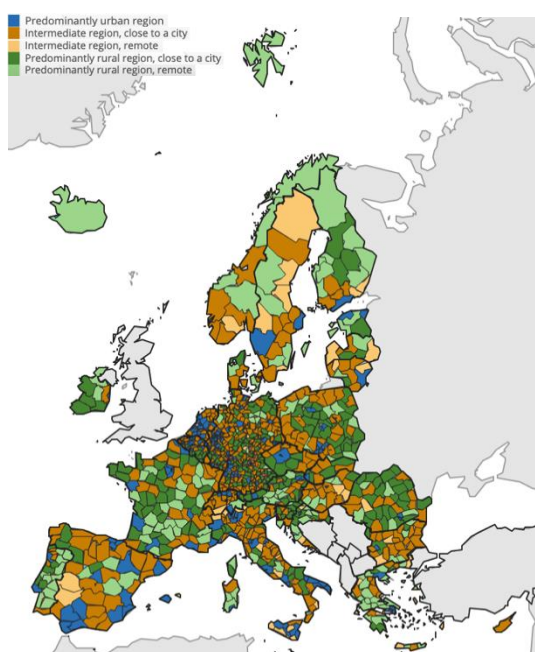


Figure 3

## 1. European and local contexts

### 1.1. Characteristics of NEETs

#### 1.1.1. Statistics

13.1% of the 15-29 year olds in 2021 were NEETs. Young women are more likely NEETs than young men. 14.5% of young women aged 15–29 were NEETs.

10.9% of young people aged 15–19 were both employed and in education and thus made use of this more flexible transition from education to work. The share rose to 19.6% among those aged 20–24, then fall for older age groups, 14.9% among those aged 25–29 and 10.8%.

The EU gender gap for NEETs increased in relation to age. For those aged 25–29, the rate was consistently higher for women than for men in all EU Member States.

The NEET rate for young people aged 15–29 was 15.5% among those with a low level of education, compared with 13.1% among those with a medium level of education and 9.2% among those with a high level of education. Concerning people aged 15–29 with tertiary education, NEET rates were in general considerably lower than for the other levels of education.

Figure 1: Share of young people aged 15 to 29 who are NEET in the European Union in 2021<sup>1</sup>

Figure 2: Participation rate of young people in education and training by sex, age and labour status (incl. NEET rates)<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.1.2. Urban and rural areas

In 2021, the share of young people (aged 15–29) who were NEETs was lowest in cities (12.2%) and about the same level in towns, suburbs (13.9%) and rural areas (13.7%). The pattern of lowest NEET rates in cities was repeated in 15 EU Member States<sup>3</sup>.

Young people living in rural areas generally have access to fewer services and do not have the same opportunities to get involved in youth work and non-formal learning. They face age-specific vulnerabilities and suffer directly the consequences of the lack of opportunities, underdevelopment of infrastructure and services in their communities (employment, housing or access to basic services). They are more likely to be educated than those living in small towns and rural areas.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the closure of education and learning facilities left a large proportion of rural youth outside education, owing to the difficult context they live in, and difficulties in accessing technologies for distance learning<sup>4</sup>.

Figure3: Urban–rural typology including remoteness, 2021<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: INSEE (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies - France) FOCUS - n°285 (10.01.2023) [After a peak due to health crisis, the proportion of young neither in employment, nor in education and training is falling again](#)

<sup>2</sup> Source: Eurostat (October 2022) [Urban-rural Europe - education and training](#)

<sup>3</sup> Source: Eurostat - Statistics explained (26.05.2023) [Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training](#)

<sup>4</sup> Source: EU - CoE youth partnership (2021) - [Young people in rural areas: diverse, ignored and unfulfilled](#)

<sup>5</sup> Source: Eurostat (October 2022) [Urban-rural Europe - Introduction](#)

### 1.1.3. Information per country

#### France



France has been actively addressing the NEET issue through various policies and programs. The country offers a range of educational pathways, including vocational training and apprenticeship programs, to facilitate the transition from education to employment. These efforts have helped reduce the NEET rate in France, although challenges remain, but NEETs' rate stays higher than the European average. Compared to other countries, the NEETS rate is lower in rural areas (18%) than in cities (20%) and between the ages of 15 and 24, young men are more likely to be NEET than young women (9.7% in 2021). After 24, this changes afterwards.

#### Hungary



NEETs' rate is relatively high compared to the European average. The country has faced challenges in providing adequate education and employment opportunities for young people. The government has implemented several measures to address the issue, such as vocational training programs, subsidies for employers hiring young people, and entrepreneurship support. Despite these efforts, youth unemployment and NEETs' rate remain a concern in Hungary. As for many countries, the young women are more represented than men in NEETs profiles. The average of young women is higher than EU average while the number of young men is lower. NEETs are more presents in town, suburbs, and rural areas than in cities. The youngest people (aged 15-19 years) have the highest unemployment rate.

#### Poland



Poland has been experiencing a significant reduction in NEET rates over the past years. The country has implemented various initiatives and reforms to combat youth unemployment and improve education and training opportunities. Specific policies include vocational training programs, apprenticeships, and job placement services. However, regional disparities and structural issues still contribute to a higher NEETs' rate in certain areas, particularly in rural regions. Majority of NEETS are resident of small towns and rural areas. In line with European characteristics, the rate of women is higher than men, but it is important to note that the gender difference is higher than the other countries for the women: only 23% of 25-34 years old women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2020 compared to 59% of men. However, Poland is the best country concerning the 15-19 years old: it is the country with the lowest rate.

#### Netherlands



NEET's rate in the Netherlands has fluctuated around 5%, with the lowest rate in 2021 at 5.5%. Young women, especially those with lower levels of education, are less likely to be employed compared to young men. Foreign-born young adults (15-29 years old) have a higher likelihood of being NEET compared to native-born young adults. Many NEETs have not completed their education or lacked the necessary qualifications for employment. To finish, NEETs are more likely to be found in rural areas.

#### Greece



Greece has been grappling with a high NEETs rate, exacerbated by the economic crisis in the country. The prolonged recession and limited job opportunities have affected young people's employment and access to education and training. The government has implemented various measures, such as subsidised employment programs and entrepreneurship support, to address youth unemployment and NEET rates. Efforts are also being made to enhance vocational training and improve the match between education and labour market needs. The issue to find work for young people is particularly showed by the rate of young people with tertiary education, which is the largest majority of NEETS in Greece, and a specificity in Europe. As with the other countries, women are most represented (18.1% for 16.6%).



## 1.2. Youth employment and entrepreneurship policies

### 1.2.1. Youth employment policy

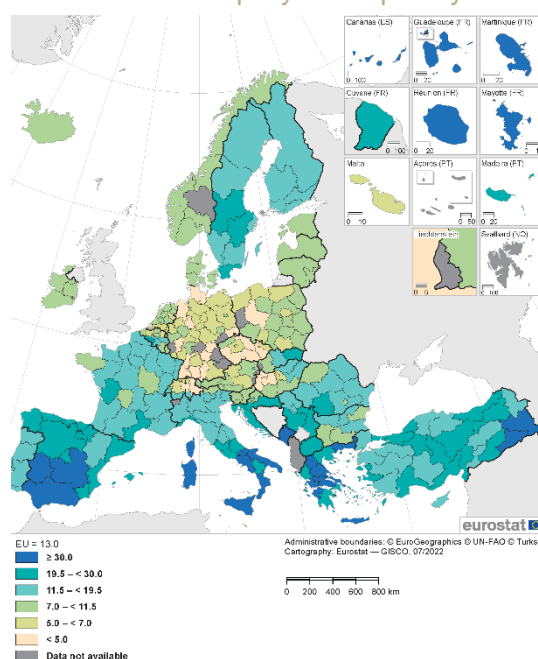


Figure 4

The EU unemployment rate and ratio for people aged 15-29 was 13% and 7.1% respectively<sup>6</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on labour markets across the world<sup>7</sup>.

Significant structural differences among Member States in young people's participation in the labour force exist due to institutional factors, cultural determinants, job market for students, etc. Differences in the national systems of education and training also play a major role<sup>8</sup>. A higher proportion of young female NEETs aged 15-29 were outside the labour force compared with young male NEETs of the same age. The share of young men outside the labour force was 6.3%, compared to 10.2% among females<sup>9</sup>.

In 2021, 42.3% of all early leavers were in employment, while 34% were not employed but wanted to work and 23.7% were not employed. In relation to the people aged 18-24, this corresponded to 4.1% of employed early leavers, 3.3% of early leavers who were not employed and wanted to work and 2.3% of early leavers who were not employed and did not want to work<sup>10</sup>.

Figure 3: Youth unemployment rate, 2021 (% of labour force, people aged 15-29)<sup>11</sup>

The 2020 [Youth Employment Support package](#) is built around 4 strands.

1. The [Youth Guarantee \(YG\)](#) (2013) aims to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. The [reinforced Youth Guarantee](#) (2020), aims at dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic's effects through 4 phases: mapping, outreach, preparation, and offer. The [Youth Employment Initiative \(YEI\)](#) is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of the YG.
2. The [Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training \(VET\) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#) defines key principles for ensuring that vocational education and training is agile, as it adapts swiftly to labour market needs and provides quality-learning opportunities for young people and adults alike.
3. The [European Alliance for Apprenticeships \(EaFA\)](#), established in 2020, unites governments and key stakeholders with the aim of strengthening the quality, supply and overall image of apprenticeships across Europe, while also promoting the mobility of apprentices.
4. The [European network of Public Employment Services \(PES\)](#) was established in 2020 by the Council and the European Parliament, to maximise efficiency of public employment services. The network compares PES performance, good practices and foster mutual learning, prepares inputs to the [European Employment Strategy](#) and the national labour market policies.

### 1.2.2. Entrepreneurship in Europe and policy

In 2018<sup>12</sup>, the majority of enterprises in the EU were small enterprises, with shares of 97% or above among the EU countries. Small enterprises typically accounted for between 40% and 60% of total employment<sup>13</sup>.

Youth have a high level of interest in self-employment but only 6.5% of working youth (20-29 y/o) in the European Union were self-employed.

The gender gap in self-employment starts early. Young women were only about 60% as young men to be self-employed (4.8% vs. 8%). Youth are slightly more likely than adults to be involved in starting a business. Survey data indicate that 4.7% of youth (18-30 y/o) were actively working on setting up a business between 2014 and 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Eurostat - Statistics explained (August 2023) [Youth unemployment](#)

<sup>7</sup> Source: Eurostat - Leaflet and other brochures (September 2022) [2022 edition Young people in Europe - A statistical summary](#)

<sup>8</sup> Source: Eurostat - Statistics explained (August 2023) [Participation of young people in education and the labour market](#)

<sup>9</sup> Source: Eurostat - Statistics explained (26.05.2023) [Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training](#)

<sup>10</sup> Source: Eurostat - Statistics explained (23.05.2023) [Early leavers from education and training](#)

<sup>11</sup> Source: Eurostat regional yearbook 2022 [Youth unemployment rate, 2021 \(% of labour force, people aged 15-29\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> Source: European Union and OECD iLibrary (10.12.2019) [Youth self-employment and entrepreneurship activities | The Missing Entrepreneurs 2019 : Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship](#)

<sup>13</sup> Source: Eurostat - Statistics explained (July 2023) [Entrepreneurship - Statistical indicators](#)

## European policy measures for entrepreneurship

- The European Commission supports social and inclusive entrepreneurship through [funding](#), [knowledge-building](#), and [policy work](#). Thus, the European Commission promotes [social economy](#) and [inclusive entrepreneurship](#) because of their important role in job creation, work integration and inclusive and sustainable growth.
- The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) sets out [20 key principles](#) and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets, structured around three chapters: [equal opportunities and access to the labour market](#), [fair working conditions](#), [social protection and inclusion](#).
- [Inclusive entrepreneurship](#) policies aim to support the creation and growth of businesses by under-represented groups and the unemployed.

## Supporting youth entrepreneurship in Europe

Youth entrepreneurship is high on the EU political agenda as a tool to fight youth unemployment and social exclusion as well as stimulating innovation among young people:

- Fostering youth entrepreneurship is one of the objectives of the [Europe 2020 strategy](#)
- Employment and Entrepreneurship is one field of action promoted by the [EU Youth Strategy](#)
- Entrepreneurship is a key competence in the [European Reference Framework on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning](#) (2006).
- The [EU Youth Strategy Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field](#) includes entrepreneurship among its eight fields of action.
- The importance of youth entrepreneurship is stressed in [Conclusions on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people](#) (Council of European Union, 2014).
- The [Erasmus+](#) programme has a strong focus on innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in the Key Action 2 through strategic partnerships and transnational youth initiatives.
- [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#) is a cross-border exchange programme, which aims to help new and aspiring entrepreneurs acquire the relevant skills to run and grow a small business by working with an experienced entrepreneur in another country for 1 to 6 months. Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is one of the key actions of the [Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan](#).
- [NextGenerationEU](#) is a recovery plan, which aims to emerge stronger from the pandemic, transform economies, and create opportunities and jobs for Europe. The EU can help fund start-up grants and loans for young entrepreneurs, mentoring schemes and business incubators, bonuses for SMEs hiring apprentices, training sessions to acquire new skills needed on the labour market, capacity-building of public employment services, career management training in formal education, investments in digital learning infrastructure and technology.

Youth work and non-formal learning play an important role in developing the creative and innovative potential of young people including entrepreneurial skills.

## Fostering skills and qualifications

- [EU Member States have committed to increasing the opportunities for youth entrepreneurship](#), as a way to facilitate school-to-work transition and boost employment. One of the core actions is promoting the attainment of entrepreneurial competences both in and out of school<sup>14</sup>.
- Several European initiatives support quality traineeships through the [EU Youth Guarantee](#). To uphold the quality of traineeships, several requirements have been identified in the [Quality Framework for Traineeships \(QFT\)](#). Traineeships are organised in the framework of formal education, as compulsory or optional part of study curricula, offered by [active labour market programmes \(ALMP\)](#), delivered by employment services and targeting young job seekers<sup>15</sup>.
- The initiative called [ALMA \(Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve\)](#) is being implemented within the [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#). It aims to help young people finding their way to the job market, especially NEETs aged 18-29. ALMA offers participants a supervised work-experience in another EU Member State for a period of 2 to 6 months, a project cycle with coaching and counselling at every step.

## The European entrepreneurship competence framework (EntreComp)

As part of the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), the Commission established a [European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework \(EntreComp\)](#). It intends to support and inspire actions to improve the entrepreneurial capacity of European citizens and organisations. [EntreComp](#) offers a comprehensive description of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that people need to be entrepreneurial and create financial, cultural or social value for others. [The common reference framework identifies 15 competences in 3 key areas that describe what it means to be entrepreneurial](#).

<sup>14</sup> Source: European Commission - Youth Wiki (September 2020) [Comparative overviews - Employment and entrepreneurship - Measures furthering entrepreneurial competences through non-formal learning](#)

<sup>15</sup> Source : European Commission - Youth Wiki (September 2020) [Comparative overviews - Employment and entrepreneurship - Regulations on traineeships outside formal education](#)

### 1.2.3. Information per country

#### France



The number of new enterprises is increasing in all regions, with significant growth in sectors such as transport and storage, specialised, scientific and technical activities, and other household services.

40.2% of sole traders are under 30 years old, and the average age of sole traders is 35 years old. Women are in the majority in sectors such as human health and social work, other household services, industry, and education, while men dominate in construction, transport, storage, and information and communication.

Public authorities have introduced programs and tools to facilitate initial fundraising for start-ups, implemented through Bpifrance (French public investment bank) and the Ministry of Economy. Various initiatives provide financial support, tax exemptions, and legal frameworks for start-ups. Various organisations and schemes are also supporting young people in their enterprise.

#### Hungary



Hungary has a slightly lower percentage of adults with the skills to start a business compared to the EU average, and men tend to be more confident in their business skills than women. The typical entrepreneur falls between the ages of 25 and 44.

Factors such as low risk appetite fear of failure, unpredictable economic conditions, lack of effective entrepreneurship education, and negative societal opinions contribute to lower entrepreneurship rates among young people.

Several initiatives and organisations support entrepreneurship for young people, providing information, mentoring programs, funding opportunities, and support for business creation.

#### Poland



Due to the pandemic, the number of entrepreneurs starting new businesses has decreased over the past two years. Men are more inclined than women to engage in start-up activities, with a widening gender gap observed over the past two years.

In addition, there is a gender imbalance in the Polish start-up market, with only 21% of start-ups having more than half of their team comprised of women. The majority of Polish start-ups are young or very young companies and small entities led by 30+ years old men.

The Polish government prioritises boosting entrepreneurial activity through the New Polish Deal, aiming to simplify and cut taxes for entrepreneurs and incentivise investment in innovative technology.

#### Netherlands



In 2019, nearly 15% of the working population in the Netherlands were self-employed, slightly above the EU average. Women were 60% as likely as men to be early-stage entrepreneurs, and youth (18-30 years old) were very active in early-stage entrepreneurship, more than double the EU average.

Administrative burden remains a significant obstacle for certain population groups. The Netherlands has a high level of entrepreneurship skills in the population, and fear of failure is less of a barrier compared to the EU average.

Regarding this, the Dutch government has implemented measures to create a favourable environment for business creation. Various national and local initiatives aim to support entrepreneurship, particularly targeting women, youth, and migrants.

#### Greece



The European economic crisis had a devastating impact on businesses in Greece, leading to job losses and unemployment. However, it also created an environment where people started their own businesses due to the lack of job opportunities or new business prospects. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a significant role in the Greek economy.

Youth entrepreneurship programs target individuals aged 18 to 29. Measures include funding support for business plans, entrepreneurship education in the formal education system, start-up incubators, mentorship programs, and simplified regulatory procedures.

The Greek government has implemented various actions and programs to support youth entrepreneurship (counselling and mentoring services, strengthening entrepreneurship, and funding initiatives).



## 1.3. Green economy / business / entrepreneurship

### 1.3.1. Sustainable goals

Figure 4: The 2022 SDG Index Scores and Rankings by country and subregions<sup>16</sup>

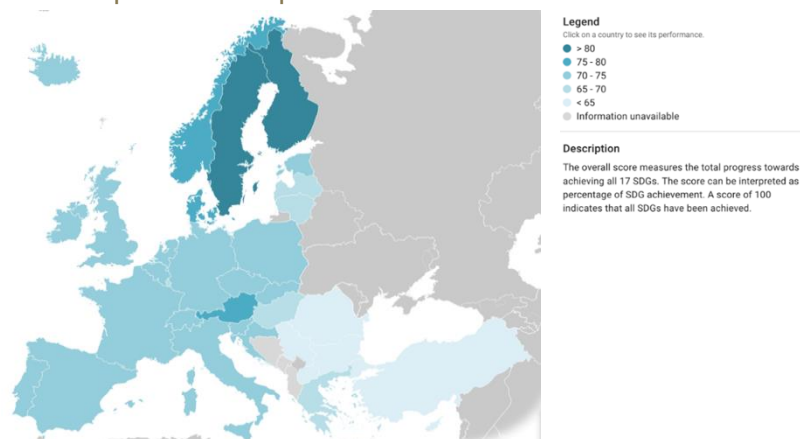


Figure 5

### 1.3.2. European green deal

- To achieve the goals set by the [European Green Deal](#), the Commission has pledged to mobilise at least €1 trillion in sustainable investments over the next decade. 30% of the EU's multiannual budget (2021-2028) and the EU's unique [NextGenerationEU](#) (NGEU) instrument to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, has been allocated for green investments.
- The [EU Cohesion Policy](#) helps EU countries, regions, local governments and cities to implement large investments that contribute to the European Green Deal. They must devote at least 30% of what they receive from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) to these priorities (investments in a smarter, greener, more connected and more social Europe that is closer to its citizens).
- The Commission has put in place the [European Green Deal Investment Plan](#) (EGDIP), also referred to as [Sustainable Europe Investment Plan](#) (SEIP), as part of the Green Deal. This includes the Just Transition Mechanism, which focuses on ensuring a fair and just transition to a green economy.
- The [InvestEU programme](#) contributes to this effort and provides the EU with crucial long-term funding by leveraging substantial private and public funds. The InvestEU Regulation provides that the InvestEU fund as a whole will target at least 30% of investment contributing to climate objectives<sup>17</sup>.

### 1.3.3. Horizon Europe

[Horizon Europe](#) is the EU's research and innovation program for 2021-2027. It provides funding opportunities and support for eco-entrepreneurs and start-ups working on sustainable technologies, renewable energy, and environmental solutions. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth.

### 1.3.4. European tools and international gateways

- [The Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool](#) is an online tool designed for policy-makers and other interested parties at local, regional and national level who wish to explore how public policy can support youth, women, migrants and the unemployed in business creation and self-employment and support the development of social enterprises<sup>18</sup>.
- [Better Incubation](#) is kick-starting an "eco-systemic" change by bringing incubation and business support services closer to society as a whole and to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment as means to create jobs, develop skills<sup>19</sup>.
- [The EU SWITCH to Green](#) supports EU international cooperation by providing technical assistance where good will or enthusiasm for innovation may be complemented by additional operational, knowledge or other capacities.
- [Learning for Nature](#) is an e-learning programme brought to you by the United Nations Development Programme. The Learning for Nature platform aims to promote best practices in conservation and sustainable development, Develop the capacity of biodiversity policymakers, practitioners, and local and Indigenous communities, catalyse ongoing peer-to-peer learning and facilitate knowledge exchange.

<sup>16</sup> Source: [Europe Sustainable Development Report 2022 - Achieving the SDGs: Europe's Compass in a Multipolar World](#)

<sup>17</sup> Source: European Commission - Strategy and policy - Priorities - [A European Green Deal - Finance and the Green Deal](#)

<sup>18</sup> Source: European Commission and OECD - [The Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool](#)

<sup>19</sup> Source: EBN (European Business & Innovation Centre Network) [Better Incubation](#)

### 1.3.5. Information per country

#### France



Approximately 80,000 people under the age of 30 work in the green economy in France. The green economy in France encompasses nearly 1 million jobs. Approximately 10,000 to 12,000 eco-companies operate in France, consisting of a few large operators, 90% SMEs and VSEs (very small enterprises), and around fifty intermediate-sized companies (ETIs). The sector is structured in networks, clusters, and competitiveness clusters. Workers under the age of 30 represent 20% of green economy occupations in France. Young people are more prevalent in energy and water production and distribution and nature and environmental protection. Among the greening professions, tourism and entertainment have the highest percentage of young workers.

#### Hungary



21% of businesses in Hungary aim to produce from recyclable materials. Smaller companies showed the highest proportion of using recyclable raw materials. The main challenges faced by micro and small businesses in becoming greener include a lack of resources or external support, frequent and difficult-to-follow regulatory changes, and insufficiently encouraging regulations. Global Green Growth Institute assists the Government in achieving climate objectives. They provide support for the delivery of the National Clean Growth Strategy and policy support under the European Green Deal.

#### Poland



Poland has recognised the importance of environmental sustainability and has set ambitious targets for reducing carbon emissions and increasing renewable energy. The government has launched initiatives and organisations like the Polish Green Building Council and Polish Wind Energy Association to support green technologies and sustainable practices. Young people have an important role in eco-businesses. Initiatives. Climate Academy program and Green Tandem program support young people's engagement in eco-businesses and offer training, mentoring, and support for their careers in the environmental sector. Several networks and organisations support eco-entrepreneurs. They offer programs, training, mentoring, networking opportunities, and access to funding for eco-entrepreneurs.

#### Netherlands



The Dutch government has a strong focus on green growth and promotes eco-innovation to create new employment opportunities while reducing pollution and resource consumption. The Dutch government has identified sectors where Dutch businesses and research centres excel internationally. These sectors play a central role in governmental policies aimed at promoting innovation and enhancing the country's economic competitiveness. The Netherlands prioritises innovation and research in green business. Innovation hubs and technology institutes foster collaboration between businesses and researchers.

#### Greece



The pandemic accelerated the adoption of new practices, as digital technologies, e-commerce, or greener activities. The economic and environmental challenges have prompted a greater emphasis on sustainability and the green economy. The National Action Plan for the Promotion of Green Economy (2016) aims to promote sustainable development across all sectors of the economy. It focuses on the use of renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, as well as energy efficiency measures to reduce consumption in buildings and transport. In addition, Greece has initiated several plans to reduce waste, promote the reuse and recycling of material, product electricity from renewable sources, and promote sustainable tourism.

## 2. Interviews

### 2.1. Methodology and profile of interviewed persons

Profiles interviewed:

- NEETs x 2 in each country<sup>20</sup> (A total of 16 interviews)
- Eco-entrepreneur x 2 in each country (A total of 10 interviews)
- Accompanying persons x 2 in each country (A total of 10 interviews)

An interview grid was designed for each person profile.




For each one, one main objective has been set:

- NEETs: knowing the knowledge and expectations of NEETs in the field of eco-entrepreneurship
- Accompanying persons for NEETs: thinking about support in line with NEET's needs
- Eco-entrepreneurs: definition and understanding of eco-entrepreneurship by those who practise it
- The aim was also to encourage them to participate in the project.

Interview process:

- Presentation of the project EcopreNEETs to the person interviewed
- Method: recording and transcribing of the interview
- Duration: 1h

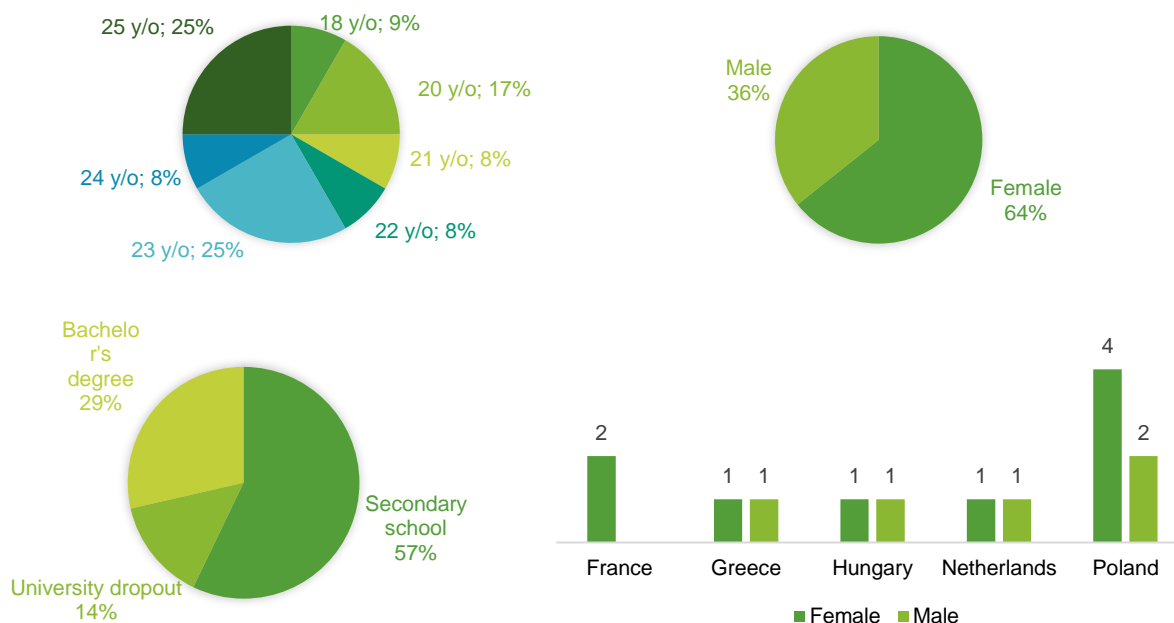
All the interviews were transcribed. **Download interview transcriptions:**

	NEETs	Accompanying persons	Eco-entrepreneurs
	<a href="#">FRANCE</a>	<a href="#">FRANCE</a>	<a href="#">FRANCE</a>
	<a href="#">HUNGARY</a>	<a href="#">HUNGARY</a>	<a href="#">HUNGARY</a>
	<a href="#">POLAND</a>	<a href="#">POLAND</a>	<a href="#">POLAND</a>
	<a href="#">NETHERLANDS</a>	<a href="#">NETHERLANDS</a>	<a href="#">NETHERLANDS</a>
	<a href="#">GREECE</a>	<a href="#">GREECE</a>	<a href="#">GREECE</a>

### 2.2. Analysis of the interviews

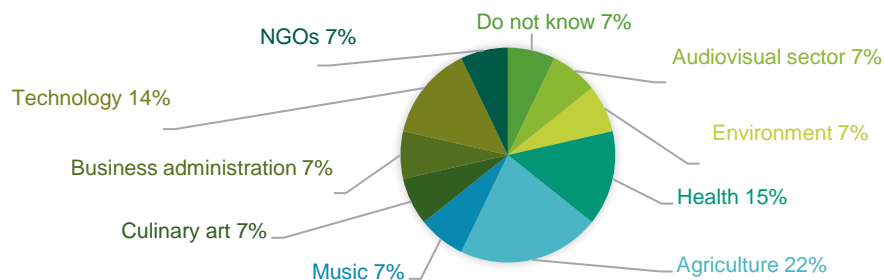
#### 2.2.1. NEETs

**Profile (age, gender, level of education, location)**



<sup>20</sup>The Polish partner conducted 6 interviews with NEETs.

## Field in which they would like to work



## Why were they left out of the labour market?

- The most frequent occurrences relate to the skills that young people still need to acquire, indecision about a potential career and the lack of opportunities (in relation to their area, in this case rural).
- The testimonies support the statistical data mentioned above concerning the greater difficulties encountered by young people in rural areas in finding employment, training or support.

## Weaknesses

- Some of the weaknesses mentioned repeatedly include a lack of professional experience, missing studies, and insufficient specific knowledge or skills. Furthermore, the lack of basic digital skills emerged as additional weaknesses, considering the place of digital in modern workplaces.
- Weaknesses related more to soft skills than to knowledge. Issues related to basic work skills were mentioned, such as understanding instructions and meeting deadlines, the ability to see the overall picture, setting objectives and even oral communication.

## Employability potential

NEETs interviewed seem rather defeatist about their employability potential. They think they need to go back to school, have more experience to be interesting for employers, or acquire interpersonal skills. NEETs expressed an interest in:

- Programs and softwares
- Social media
- Marketing
- Medical knowledge
- Organisation
- Basic administrative softwares
- International law
- Political sciences

## Knowledge about eco-business and eco-entrepreneurship

- Results showed that the terms used are still relatively unfamiliar to young people.
- They tried to define it, but not successfully, or by limiting this term to the notion of environment.

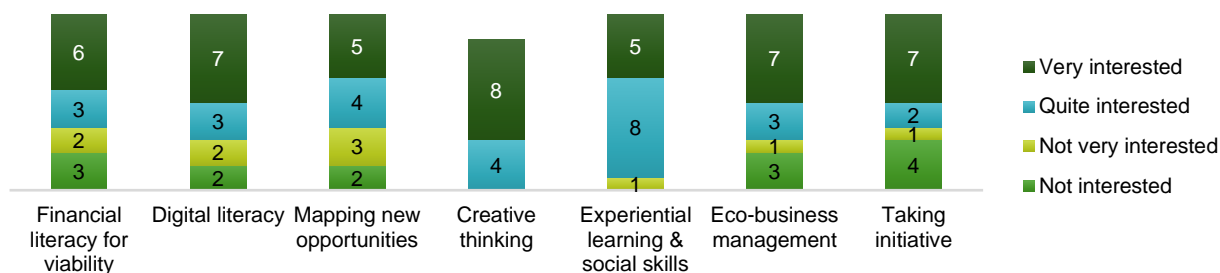
## Opinion on opportunities connected to eco-based skills

- Some said they weren't sure whether having these skills would make it easier to find a job, but that from a personal point of view it would be interesting.
- Others said that they were not interested, or that these skills offered only limited opportunities.
- Some confused and limited this term of ecological skills with the notion of ecological practices.

## Interest on developing eco-based skills

- The majority of the young people interviewed said they were interested in acquiring eco-skills, without really knowing what they were. But they are convinced of the importance of working in a way that respects ecological values.
- For most of them, this mainly meant adopting less polluting and more sustainable practices.
- For others, the term was much more meaningful
- Another mentioned eco-skills training courses that she would like to follow (ecotourism, new technological practices in agriculture, etc.).

## Interest on training program with the goal of strengthening their job profile and topic choices



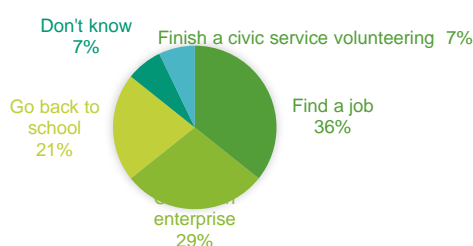
## Type of training: practical / theoretical / both

72% of young people prefer training that combines theory and practice.

## Suggestions and comments to the future training MOOCs

Fun, interactivity and experimentation take precedence over theory.

## NEETs interviewed plans for future

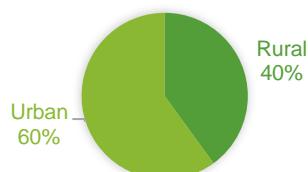


## 2.2.2. Accompanying persons / social and youth workers

Project coordinators  
10%

Social workers  
40%

Youth workers  
50%



### Profile

2 people were interviewed per country.  
8 women and 2 men.

### Workplace and roles

The people interviewed perform similar roles: supporting, helping and guiding people, including NEETs, whether in the field of education and employment, or on more specific subjects (mobility, environment, health, etc.).

For most of them, support is provided on an individual, personalised basis, to ensure the best possible response to each person's problems.

## Weaknesses and lack of skills identified by interviewed regarding to NEETs

- **Lack of direction or goals.** NEETs struggle to find a clear direction or goal, leading to a lack of motivation and self-confidence.
- **Little or no work experience.** Many NEETs lack practical experience, which prevents them from being competitive in the labour market. This lack of experience hampers their ability to find a job.
- **Skills gaps.** NEETs face deficits in both hard skills (specific technical or professional skills) and soft skills (interpersonal skills: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability ...)
- **Limited access to resources.** Some NEETs have disadvantaged backgrounds and limited access to resources such as career guidance, employment opportunities and support networks.
- **Lack of self-confidence and self-esteem.** NEETs often lack confidence in their abilities and underestimate their potential for success in the labour market.
- **Limited knowledge of job search strategies.** NEETs may lack knowledge of job search techniques, CV writing, job interviews and networking.
- **Mental health problems.** Some NEETs suffer from mental health problems such as anxiety or depression, which can affect their motivation and self-confidence.
- **Language and cultural barriers.** NEETs from vulnerable communities may face these barriers.



### Benefit of training program

- Allow participants to take breaks at any time, recognising their difficulty in committing themselves;
- Avoid excessive dependence on computers and favouring interaction with real life;
- Offer a balanced training programme: learning technical and non-technical skills, to build self-confidence and communication skills;
- Emphase digital skills training;
- Include basic job search training (CV writing, covering letters, searching for training and job, etc.).

### Knowledge on eco business

- The interviewees had not necessarily heard of the term “eco-business” before the interview.
- They were, more or less, able to define it, focusing in particular on the environmental aspect.

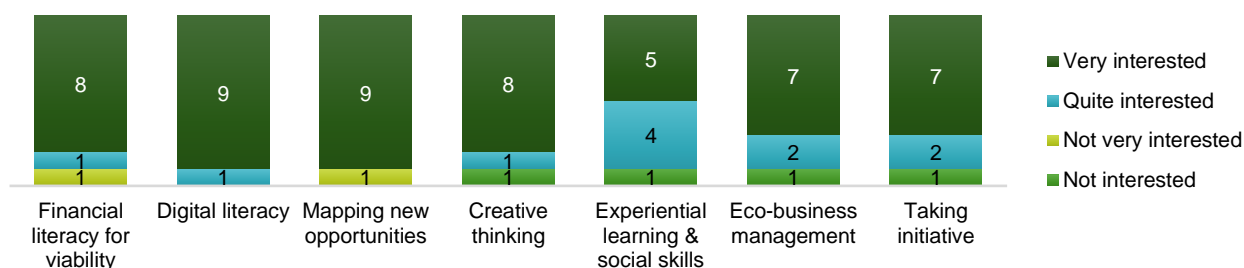
### Opportunities of eco business skills

- Acquiring eco-skills offers NEETs job prospects in emerging sectors. The shift towards a more sustainable economy is leading to a growing demand for professionals with eco-skills. NEETs with expertise in environmentally friendly sectors are well placed to meet this demand and secure employment opportunities. They have a competitive advantage on the labour market.
- Eco-skills enable NEETs to contribute to a more sustainable society. By promoting sustainability and reducing their impact on the environment, NEETs can play a part in building a better future for the planet.

### Requests from NEETs and attractiveness for eco-entrepreneurial training

- 6 respondents could potentially be of interest to them because young people are generally sensitive to the environmental cause.
- 4 respondents had received requests in this area, mainly concerning entrepreneurship and, then, sustainable and ecological practices.

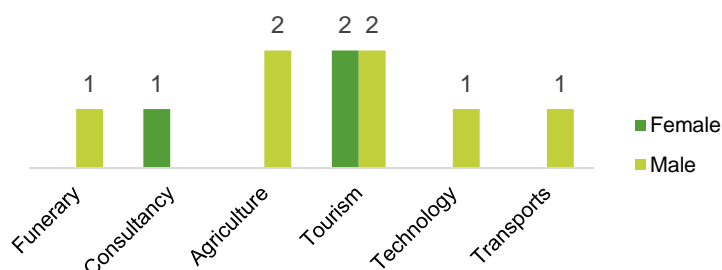
### Eco-entrepreneurial training program: topics



### Assessment on their NEETs digital skills

- 3 people answered this question, the others having no opinion on the subject.
- The average score obtained was 3.4/6 for NEETs' digital skills.

### 2.2.3. Eco-entrepreneurs



Two people were interviewed per country: 3 women and 7 men. The respondents have between 5 and 14 years' experience in their field.

The fields of activity are varied, with eco-tourism being the most represented.

### Vision / definition of eco-entrepreneurship

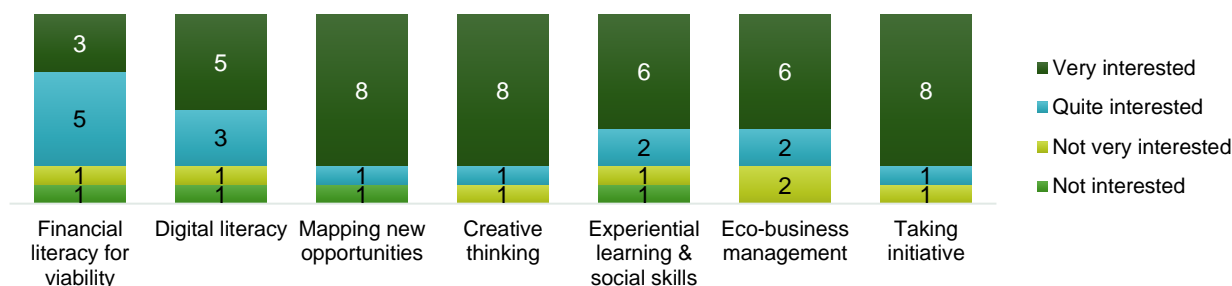
- Focus on the environment: all perspectives emphasise the importance of environmental protection and sustainability as a central aspect of eco-entrepreneurship.
- Business innovation: eco-entrepreneurship is seen as a way of adopting new approaches and sustainable solutions to environmental challenges.

- **Social responsibility:** eco-entrepreneurship cannot be separated from social entrepreneurship, as both involve the creation of businesses that have a positive impact on society, promote well-being and tackle social problems.
- **Balancing profit and sustainability:** the need for eco-entrepreneurs to strike a balance between economic viability, environmental preservation and the long-term sustainability of their businesses.
- **Behavioural change:** eco-entrepreneurship is seen as an opportunity to inspire behavioural change in individuals and organisations.
- **Personal development:** eco-entrepreneurship involves choosing customers and partners that align with the eco-entrepreneur's values.

### The challenges encountered and how to overcome them

- **Financial constraints:** identifying financing options, being resourceful in seeking financial support, dealing with the additional costs associated with sustainable practices, finding innovative solutions that respect both ecological values and profitability.
- **Awareness and demand:** making efforts to educate and raise awareness among the general public, creating market demand for sustainable solutions.
- **Need for systemic change:** Engaging with a range of actors, services and institutions to promote sustainability.
- **Political and regulatory obstacles:** Keeping abreast of existing regulations, advocating policy changes, working on the legal framework for sustainable initiatives.
- **Personal and professional development:** developing skills, changing attitudes, adapting.

### Eco-entrepreneurial training program: topics



### Types of supports for the creation of the eco-business

- Support from friends and family
- Incubators, experts, consultants
- Psychological follow-up
- Networking, collaboration, support from local and experts
- Training and coaching
- Financing (local authorities, foundations, crowdfunding...)

### Training and education pathway

- The majority of the interviewees said that, in addition to their initial studies, **they had taken part in training courses specialising in their area of business.**
- Most of them **had also taken part in training in managerial skills.**

### Eco-entrepreneurs: gaps and needs about information to have / to know

- **Financial and technical support and expertise,**
- **Training** (project management, sustainability model, green marketing, measuring environmental impact, legal framework and regulations, etc.),
- **Green transition policy,**
- **Network platforms** (allowing to connect eco-entrepreneurs, potential investors, relevant stakeholders..., at local, national and European level...).



### 3. Recommendations for an ecopreneurial competence framework



#### 3.1. Work Package “Training MOOC for Eco-Skills”

##### 3.1.1. Initial objectives

###### Theoretical session

- Include useful information about the realities of the labour market, the skills required to find a job and the importance of eco-entrepreneurship in business
- Provide young NEETs with valuable knowledge that will increase their chances of employability

###### Practical session

- Expose young people to activities related to the environment and sustainability, presented in the form of interactive multimedia resources
- Enable participants to put their newly acquired skills into practice, with a focus on sustainable rural entrepreneurship
- Improve the target group's entrepreneurial skills while strengthening their ecological awareness

###### Assessment

- Include fun quizzes to assess the skills and knowledge acquired through theory and practice, in order to monitor their progress

##### 3.1.2. Platform recommendations

- Enable access to education and information for all (language barriers, so-called vulnerable groups, people with disabilities, people who are far from employment, people who have dropped out of the education system)
- Design and provide technical information intelligible to all
- Adapt information to cover learning difficulties
- Provide access to Open Educational Resources (OER)

##### 3.1.3. Method recommendations

###### MOOCs have to

- Combine theory and practice
- Be fun and interactive (videos, quizzes, case studies, online discussions, practical exercises, discussion forums, etc.), and achievable from home
- Be divided into modules, or small learning units, to facilitate navigation and learner progress (pace and availability of learners)

##### 3.1.4. Content recommendations

- Taking initiatives
- Eco-business management
- Experiential learning
- Creative thinking
- Mapping new opportunities
- Digital literacy
- Financial education for sustainability

###### Include the needs identified by eco-entrepreneurs in their own training

- Identify support (financial, technical, expertise...) and how to apply for it;
- Teach project management, risk management, community involvement, sustainability in the business model, green marketing, impact measurement, the legal framework and regulations, how to raise funds...
- Identify network platforms (to connect eco-entrepreneurs, potential investors, relevant stakeholders at local, national and European level...)
- Support young people as they enter the field of eco-entrepreneurship



## 3.2. Work package “Train the trainer “

### 3.2.1. Method recommendations

- Several 1-hour seminars will be organised in each of the project's partner countries. This will make it easier for social workers, youth workers and mentors to take part, as it is difficult to devote several days to training.
- At the end of the seminars, will draw up a requirements document for the trainers. This document will contain all the information gathered during the previous phases of the WP, as well as comments and instructions.

### 3.2.2. Content recommendations

The training must:

- Include theory and practice
- Enable trainers to have a good understanding of the field of eco-entrepreneurship
- Enable trainers to provide the best possible support for NEETs (e.g. be able to offer and run turnkey workshops - individual or group - for NEETs, enabling them to develop soft skills in line with the eco-entrepreneurial skills reference framework);
- Provide information on entrepreneurship in general (the help and support available in each country for setting up a business);
- Enable the exchange of good practice and meetings between youth workers/social workers and eco-entrepreneurs;
- Provide information on existing networks to help young people enter the field of eco-activity and eco-entrepreneurship.



## 3.3. Work package “EcopreNEETs incubation”

### 3.3.1. Initial objectives

- Develop a solid framework that will support young NEETs in starting up their own business.
- Provide young NEETs with guidance, mentoring and coaching services to help them become active and competitive in the labour market

Partners will map improvements and document on the best practices implemented during the e-traineeships as part of the continuous involvement process.

### 3.3.2. Method recommendations

The setting up of e-training (action plan still to define)

- Develop some of the soft skills mentioned by NEETs requires face-to-face contact and experimentation in real-life conditions (autonomy, initiative, communication skills, teamwork, stress management, time management...)

The activities that demand the participation of the target group will be organised in venues with easy access, especially to people with disabilities.

The schedule and duration of the activities will be designed flexibly, while for those who cannot attend the activities will be the provision of online participation.

The setting up of online mentoring workshops with eco-entrepreneurs

- Results of interviews with eco-entrepreneurs have confirmed the need for actions to create networks, partnerships and peer support, which was missing in their pathway.
- Throughout the implementation of this work package, we will need to be vigilant to ensure that the links between NEETs and eco-entrepreneurs are really effective, that links are created and that networking really helps to open doors for young people.



For more information:  
<https://ecopreneets.erasmusplus.website/>



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“EcopreneNEETs: Boosting the eco-preneurial skills of NEETs”

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