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DIVERSITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING IN ETF PARTNER COUNTRIES

Working paper

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INTRODUCTION

This working paper presents statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) in 12 ETF partner countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Kosovo[1], Moldova, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine. Hereinafter, the term “ETF partner countries” refers exclusively to these 12 countries. This working paper has been elaborated in the framework of ETF research project on skills mismatches in the partner countries (2025-2026).

Monitoring NEETs is crucial to ensure a seamless transition from school to work for young adults and to highlight the risks associated with being neither employed nor enrolled in education or training. When young adults are disconnected from education and the labour market, it poses significant risks for individuals and society in the long term. NEETs do not form a homogeneous group, as they face many potential employment barriers and come from diverse, vulnerable groups. Crafting effective policy measures to address these barriers requires a deeper understanding of their underlying causes.

Since 2010, the concept of NEETs has been extensively applied to shape youth-focused policies across the Member States of the European Union and beyond. Building on the NEETs concept and profile, the European Union decided in 2013 to put forward comprehensive policy schemes under the label ‘Youth Guarantee’ (European Union, 2013), and in response to the deep impact of Covid-19 pandemic on youth employment opportunities, the Youth Guarantee has been reinforced (European Union, 2020a). In 2018, North Macedonia explored the merits of integrated Youth Guarantee policy making for labour market or education integration, and was the first non-EU country to test, adopt and mainstream policies and programmes mirroring Youth Guarantee implementation principles. As part of the flagship no. 10 of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (European Union, 2020b), countries from the region developed Youth Guarantee implementation plans and piloted implementation in selected municipalities, with mainstreaming of such approaches at national level expected in 2027-2028. Youth Guarantee lessons and results resonated worldwide, and the European Union, including with the contribution of the European Training Foundation, promotes Youth Guarantee as a policy solution that might be adapted to various socio-economic contexts in the Enlargement countries, including Moldova and Ukraine, EU neighbourhood and beyond[2].

The analysis in this paper applies a descriptive statistical approach to examine the situation of NEETs in the ETF partner countries, using data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The NEET population is identified on the basis of labour market status and educational enrolment and further disaggregated into sub-groups following the classification proposed by Mascherini and Ledermaier in *Exploring the Diversity of NEETs* (Eurofound, 2016). In addition to mapping the characteristics and composition of NEETs, the paper also presents selected labour market indicators—such as the share of young people out of the labour force, youth employment rate, and unemployment rate—to situate the NEET phenomenon within the broader context of youth labour market outcomes. This descriptive approach does not aim to establish causal relationships, but rather to provide a structured and comparable overview of the scale, diversity, and socio-demographic profile of NEETs in the ETF partner countries.

Since its introduction, the NEET concept has become a powerful tool for understanding the vulnerabilities of young people in labour market participation and social inclusion. As perhaps the most effective measure of youth disadvantage, the NEET indicator includes subgroups such as women and young people with low education levels—groups often marginalised under traditional labels of "inactivity" or “out of labour force”—in the policy discussion. Furthermore, the NEET indicator has

[1] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
[2] For example the Pact for the Mediterranean priority on Youth Guarantee under the Pillar on People (European Union, 2026) and EU funded regional project on Youth - NEETs; as well as sharing of experience and exploring youth integrated approaches in Central Asia DARYA – Dialogue and action for resourceful youth in Central Asia | ETF and Thailand From Europe to Asia: Youth Guarantee model to tackle NEET challenge in Thailand | ETF.

reshaped policy goals in the youth sector and has become an essential element within the EU's core economic and social monitoring frameworks (Eurofound, 2016).

NEET rates and sub-populations, presented in this paper, are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In some cases, we accessed LFS microdata directly or from publicly available sources, such as in Armenia, Georgia, Serbia, Türkiye, and Egypt. In other cases, we used a remote data processing approach, providing SPSS or STATA scripts to national statistical offices, which then ran these scripts on their own LFS microdata (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Ukraine, Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro and Moldova). The statistical analysis covers NEET rates from 2020 to 2023. Given the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's employment prospects and their participation in education and training, these data should be interpreted with caution. The figures for 2020 and 2021 are likely to reflect an exceptional and atypical situation, with trends gradually stabilising as the effects of the pandemic have worn off.

In Chapter 1 of this report, we conduct a cross-country analysis to examine the development of NEET rates from 2020 to 2023 in the ETF partner countries included in this report. In Chapter 2, we examine the socio-economic conditions and the various categories of NEETs within each country in greater detail. In Chapter 3, we conclude by summarising key findings and providing a comparative analysis of NEET categories for 2023.

CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF NEET RATES IN ETF PARTNER COUNTRIES

The analysis of NEET rates covers the period from 2020 to 2023 for most countries[3]. Table 1 explains the terminology that is used in this report.

Table 1. Cross-country results: Key concepts

Concept	Definition
ETF partner countries	Unless otherwise specified, this term only refers to those ETF partner countries that are included in this analysis (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine).
Countries in South Eastern Europe and Türkiye (SEET)	Includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye.
Eastern Partnership countries (EaP)	Among the Eastern Partnership countries, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are part of this review.
NEET rate (age 15-29)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15-29 who meet the following two conditions: first, they were not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the labour force survey. Data is expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and sex. Individuals who did not answer the question on participation in education or training are excluded from the calculation.
NEET rates of low-educated persons	NEET with no education level or ISCED levels 0-2
NEET rates of intermediate non-VET educated persons	NEET with ISCED levels 3-4 (general education levels)
NEET rates of intermediate VET-educated persons	NEET with ISCED levels 3-4 (vocational education levels)
NEET rate of high educated persons	NEET with ISCED levels 5-8

Source: Own elaboration

NEET Rates in the ETF partner countries, 2020–2023

NEET rates among young people (15–29) in ETF partner countries remain a challenge, but encouraging progress has been between 2020 and 2023. The pandemic exacerbated—but did not solely cause—structural challenges young people encounter in their transition to the labour market or education and training. While several countries, including Georgia, Türkiye, Montenegro, Armenia, and Serbia, achieved notable reductions, others recorded modest progress. As of 2023, most partner countries still report NEET rates above 20%, with particularly critical levels in Egypt (32.1%) and Kosovo (37.9%).

The NEET rates (age 15–29) across ETF partner countries in 2020 were very high, partly or largely because the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education, training, and labour market entry for many young people. High NEET rates were not solely the result of the pandemic; COVID-19 exacerbated

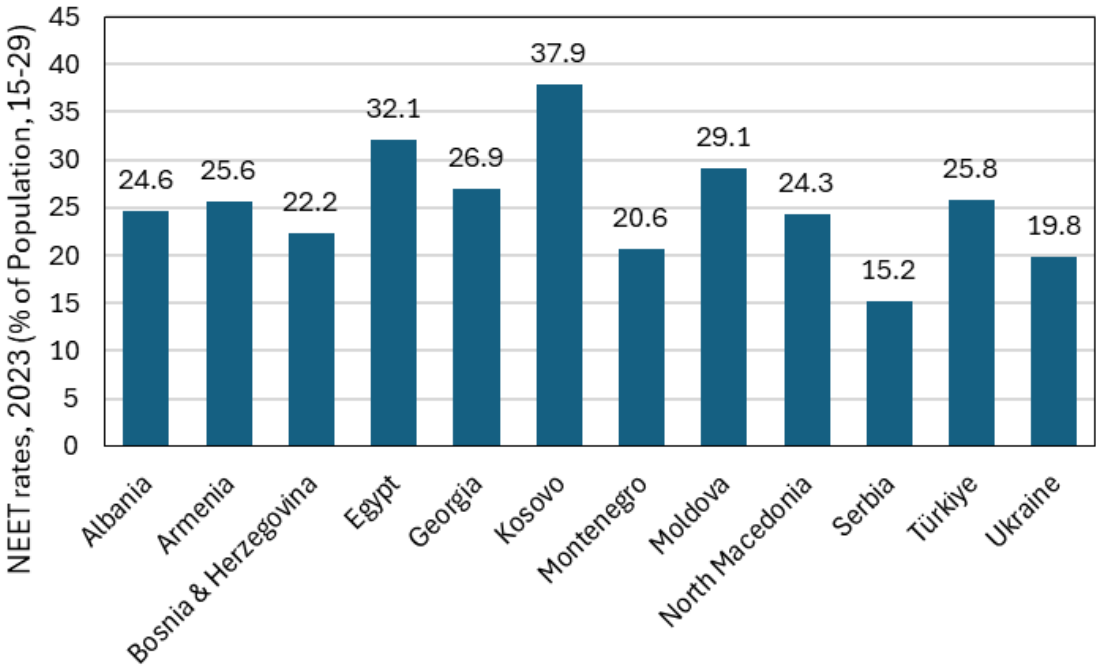
[3] Due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, LFS data are available only for 2020 and 2021 for Ukraine.

structural challenges that were already present, including labour market informality, weak school-to-work transitions, limited institutional services and policies, regional and gender disparities, and other demographic and social factors. While these structural challenges—some more influential than others—lie behind the persistently high NEET rates in the 12 ETF partner countries, a general trajectory of recovery and decline in the percentage of NEETs can be observed during the period 2020–2023 (for the most recent data, see Figure 1 below; for time series, seeTable 16 in the Annex). The speed and extent of improvement vary between countries.

One of the main goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan is to reduce the NEET rate among the 15–29 age group to 9% by 2030. Meeting this target remains a significant challenge for the ETF partner countries. As of 2023, apart from Serbia—which has the lowest NEET rate at 15.2%, though still a policy concern—the rates across other ETF partner countries remain considerably high, above 20%. The situation is of critical concern in particular countries, such as Egypt (32.1%) and Kosovo (37.9%).

From 2020 to 2023, NEET rates (ages 15–29) followed some common patterns, yet varied across ETF partner countries. While all countries experienced progress in reducing NEET rates—with the exception of Ukraine, where the situation is unknown due to the war but likely deteriorated—Georgia recorded the most substantial decrease, of more than 8 p.p[4]. Other countries with similar improvements in access to employment and education were Türkiye and Montenegro (around 6 p.p each), as well as Armenia and Serbia (around 5 p.p each). By contrast, some countries achieved modest reductions in NEET rates: North Macedonia and Kosovo recorded decreases of 2.3 p.p and 2.6 p.p respectively, while Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved a decrease of 3.3 p.p and 3.7 p.p respectively.

Figure 1. NEET rates in ETF partner countries, 2023 (% of population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology. NEET rates for Ukraine refer to 2021.

[4] p.p. refers to “percentage points” and denotes the absolute change between two percentages, not a relative percentage change

NEET by Gender

Social, cultural, and economic contexts shape opportunities and barriers differently, with women frequently facing distinct challenges such as caregiving responsibilities, limited access to specific job markets, and prevailing social expectations. In 2023, NEET rates among young women were higher than those among young men in nearly all countries covered by this report, except Bosnia and Herzegovina (Figure 2, Table 17 in Annex versus. Figure 3, Table 18 in Annex). This confirms the persistence of gender gaps in both labour market participation and access to education. The size of the gap varied considerably: while it was negligible in Bosnia and Herzegovina (0 p.p.) and small in Montenegro (0.8 p.p.), it ranged between 2 p.p. and 12 p.p. in most other countries and reached particularly high levels in Türkiye (20.9 p.p.) and especially Egypt (35.6 p.p.).

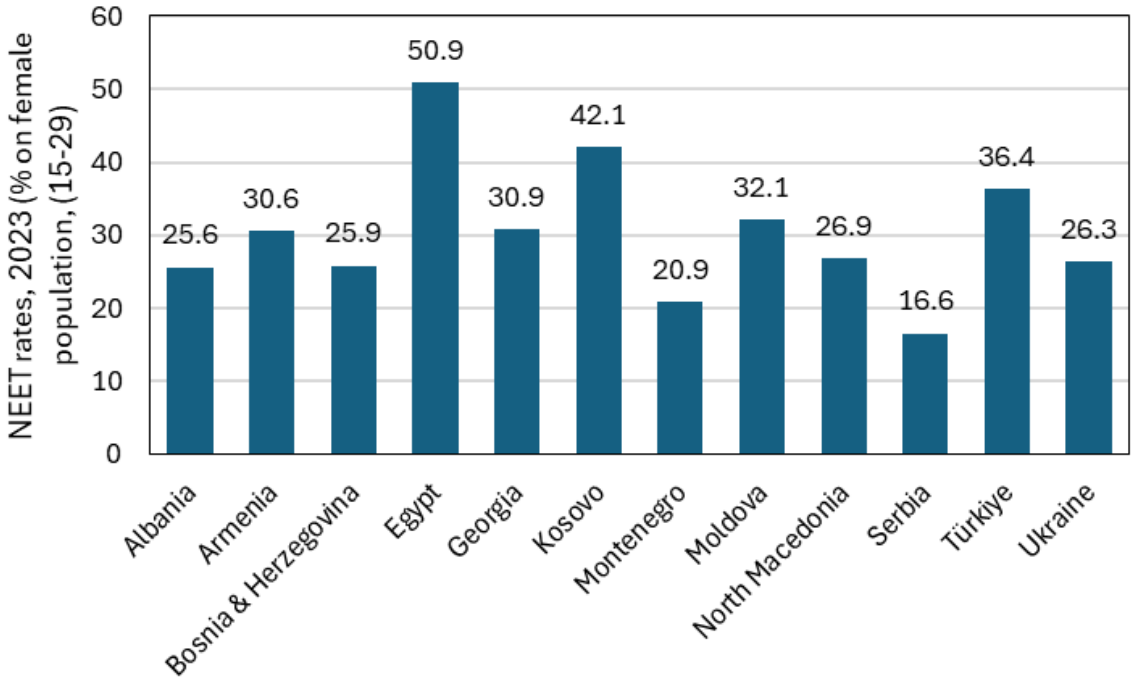
> Several ETF partner countries saw progress in reducing female NEET rates between 2020 and 2023. Notable declines were recorded in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Türkiye, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Egypt. North Macedonia exhibited a mixed trend, while Kosovo and Egypt continued to report the highest rates, albeit with some improvement.

Within the SEET region, some countries showed more progress in reducing female NEET rates. Türkiye and Montenegro recorded the largest improvements, with declines of around 6-6.5 p.p, ranking among the strongest reductions across the ETF partner countries. By contrast, North Macedonia and Kosovo experienced only modest decreases, of 2.5 p.p and 1 p.p respectively. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia recorded reductions of 4.2-5.1 p.p, which, while substantial in absolute terms, here can be described as ‘intermediate’ in comparison with the larger declines observed in Türkiye and Montenegro. Despite substantial progress in Türkiye, the situation in 2023 remained critical for women in both Kosovo (42.1%) and Türkiye (36.5%).

Among the Eastern Partnership countries, Georgia recorded the sharpest decline in female NEET rates—not only within the region but also across all countries examined in this report—falling by 7.6 p.p (from 38.4% in 2020 to 30.9% in 2023). Armenia and Moldova also saw reductions of 4.9 p.p and 4.2 p.p, though female NEET levels remained high (30.5–32%). In Ukraine, the female NEET rate held steady at around 26.2% in 2020–2021; while no data are available after 2021, the situation is likely to have worsened.

In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt made consistent progress, with the female NEET rate declining from 56.2% to 50.9% between 2020 and 2023. Nevertheless, Egypt continues to register the highest female NEET levels among all ETF partner countries, reflecting persistent structural barriers to women’s labour market participation.

Figure 2. NEET rates of women in ETF partner countries, 2023 (% on female population, 15-29)



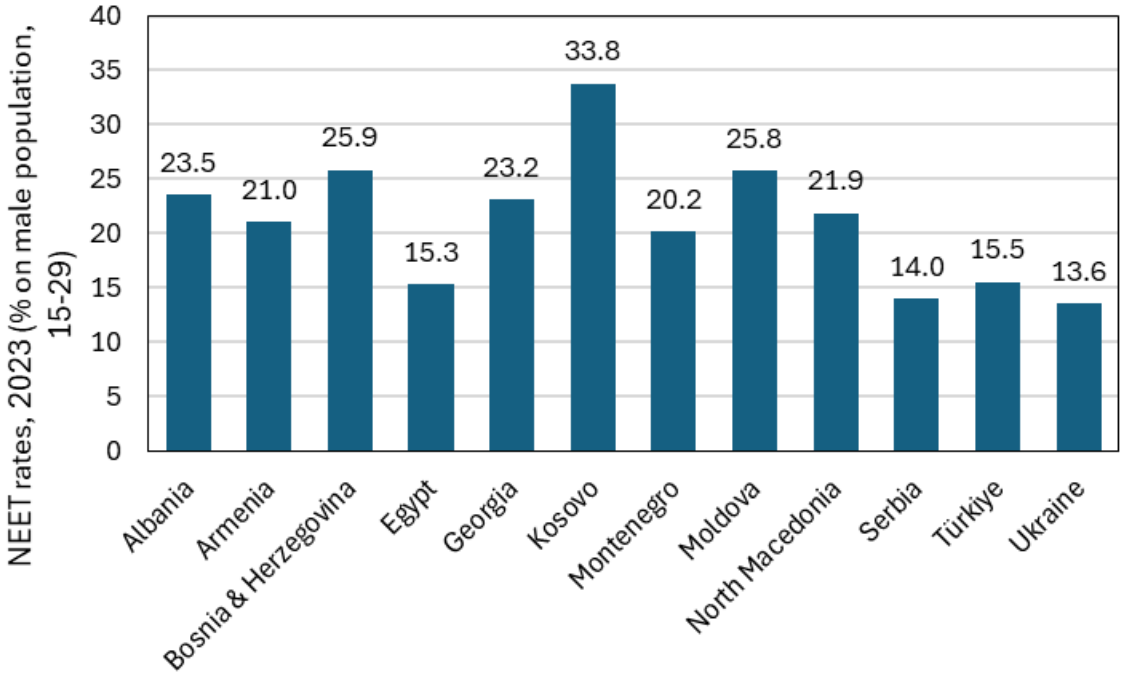
Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology. NEET rates for Ukraine refer to 2021.

Across countries, the data reveal that male NEET rates have generally declined throughout the period represented in the data, although levels and progress vary significantly. Countries like Serbia, Türkiye, and Georgia showed reductions, while Kosovo continued facing persistently high rates.

Compared with women, young men experienced more positive developments (Figure 3 and Table 18 in Annex). Across ETF partner countries (except Ukraine), male NEET rates declined between 2020 and 2023, suggesting improved labour market integration or educational participation. Georgia stands out with the sharpest reduction (-8.9 p.p), although its male NEET rate remained relatively high at 23.2% in 2023. Serbia with 14% and Türkiye with 15.5%, reported the lowest male NEET levels in 2023, following steady declines since 2020. Egypt also recorded one of the lowest male NEET rates (15.3%), but at the same time exhibiting the widest gender gap (35.6 p.p.).

Ukraine would have been among the strongest performers with male NEET rates around 13.6–14.2% in 2020–2021, but no later data are available. Several countries -including Kosovo, Armenia, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia- experienced consistent declines of 4–5 p.p., although Kosovo still registered the highest male NEET rate in 2023 (33.8%). By contrast, North Macedonia, Albania, and Egypt recorded only limited improvements, with reductions of about 2.2 p.p. The developments that took place during the period under analysis clearly show that progress is possible, but its pace and scale of improvement vary widely across countries. While male NEET rates declined more consistently than female rates, large disparities remain across countries, and gender gaps persist.

Figure 3. NEET rates of men in ETF partner countries, 2023 (% on the male population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology. NEET rates for Ukraine refer to 2021.

NEET by Educational attainment

Education plays a critical role in shaping labour market outcomes and opportunities, which is also reflected in NEET rates. Understanding distinctions across educational levels - such as low, intermediate VET (vocational education and training), intermediate non-VET (or intermediate general education), and higher education - is essential to identifying trends and challenges that influence youth engagement in employment, education, or training.

Individuals with lower education levels may face heightened risks of labour market exclusion due to limited skills, fewer job prospects, and reduced access to higher-quality employment. In contrast, intermediate education presents distinct differences: non-VET pathways may lack job-specific training, while VET education provides skills tailored to the labour market, potentially easing transitions into employment. Meanwhile, individuals with high education levels often benefit from broader opportunities, though underemployment or skill mismatches may persist. Thus, the variation in NEET rates across these educational tiers reflects both structural barriers and the effectiveness of educational systems in facilitating youth transitions to work and continued learning.

In 2023, across the ETF partner countries under review, NEET rates were particularly high among young people with an intermediate-VET background. In almost all countries—except Egypt and Albania—those with low levels of education represented the smallest share of NEETs. In most countries, NEETs with intermediate general education represented the second-lowest share, following the low-educated group.

> Overall, while some countries—such as Georgia, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Egypt—demonstrated encouraging reductions in NEET rates among **low-educated youth**, others, including Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia, and Türkiye, continued to face persistent or rising challenges.

NEET rates among young people with lower levels of education showed mixed trends across ETF partner countries (compare Figure 4 below and Table 19 in Annex). While some countries have made

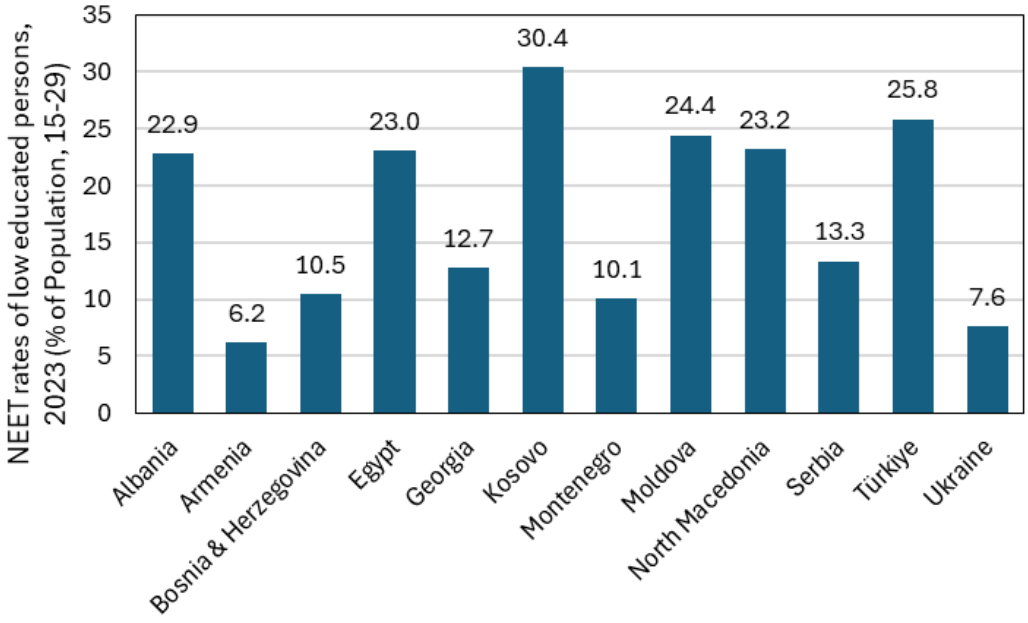
progress in reducing the rate of young low-educated individuals not in employment, education, or training, others face persistently high or rising rates, pointing to structural challenges in integrating this group into labour markets or education systems.

Progress varies considerably across the SEET region. In 2023, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina recorded the lowest NEET rates among the low-educated, at around 10% (only Armenia, outside the region, had a lower rate, at 6.2%). In contrast, Kosovo is the country with the highest NEET rates (30.4%) among all 12 partner countries, following a continuous increase during the past 3–4 years (2020–2023). Albania, North Macedonia, and Türkiye presented considerably high rates, ranging between 22.9% and 25.8%. There were diverging trajectories behind the outcomes in the SEET countries: while Kosovo and North Macedonia experienced increases (an increase of 3.6 p.p. and 4.4 p.p., respectively), the other SEET countries saw reductions, particularly Türkiye, where the rate fell by 6 p.p. North Macedonia's developments are more complex: after an initial decline from 18.8% in 2020 to 15.0% in 2022, the rate rebounded in 2023, partly due to methodological revisions in the LFS[5].

In 2023, in the Eastern Partnership countries and across all ETF partner countries, Armenia recorded the lowest rate of low-educated NEETs (6.2%). Georgia's NEET rate at 12.7%, was double Armenia's level, but the country stood out for its sharp and continuous reduction of 8.5 p.p. from 21.3% in 2020. Despite a decrease of 3.6 p.p., Moldova's NEET rate remains considerably high (24.4%), similar to several other ETF partner countries. Ukraine had one of the lowest rates in 2021 (7.6%), close to Armenia's, but conditions have since deteriorated, suggesting an upward shift.

In Egypt, the NEET rate among the low-educated was 23% in 2023. Despite this relatively high level, the country achieved a notable and sustainable reduction of 7.3 p.p. during the period under analysis.

Figure 4. NEET rates of low-educated persons in ETF partner countries, 2023 (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology. NEET rates for Ukraine refer to 2021.

[5] The break in the LFS methodology in North Macedonia does not fully explain its sharp increase, as the 2023 revision appears to have primarily affected the distribution of intermediate VET and intermediate non-VET education levels. From 2022 to 2023, the number of observations (unweighted number of NEET 15-29 participating in the LFS of North Macedonia according to our calculations) for the low education level changed from 2,421 to 2,525, while the number of observations for intermediate non-VET levels decreased from 3,944 to 2,365 with the number of observations with intermediate VET levels increased very sharply from 75 to 1,005 observations. This is possibly due to a redefinition of educational levels, but it might also be caused by a different sampling method.

NEET rates among youth with **intermediate non-VET/general education** showed mixed trends across ETF partner countries from 2020 to 2023. While Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Georgia recorded clear improvements, countries like Kosovo, Türkiye, Albania, and Armenia continued to face high or fluctuating rates. Methodological changes and varying national VET system structures require cautious interpretation, especially in countries like North Macedonia.

When interpreting NEET rates of those with non-VET and VET education levels, it is important to bear in mind both the country context, i.e., how significant is the VET system in the specific ETF partner country[6], as well as methodological changes between years, both possibly causing fluctuations that are not related to, e.g., national policy measures or economic effects. In the following sections, we will highlight instances where trends should be interpreted with caution. NEET rates among individuals with intermediate general education (Figure 5 below and Table 20 in the Annex) present a varied picture across ETF partner countries, highlighting both promising improvements and ongoing challenges in integrating this group into employment or (continuing) education.

In the SEET region, the situation and developments are diverse. In 2023, Serbia recorded the lowest level of NEET rate among young people with intermediate general education (6.7%) — not only in the SEET region but across all ETF partner countries. Bosnia and Herzegovina also reported a relatively low level, at 12.0%. Although this is almost twice the rate of Serbia, the country achieved continuous progress, with a reduction of 5.1 p.p. over the period under analysis. By contrast, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Türkiye reported considerably higher rates, ranging from 25.5% to 29.1%. Kosovo represents the greatest concern: its NEET rate reached 39.0% in 2023, the highest across all ETF partner countries. After falling from 38.8% in 2020 to 32.9% in 2021, the rate rebounded, indicating persistent barriers to labour market entry or continued education for this group.

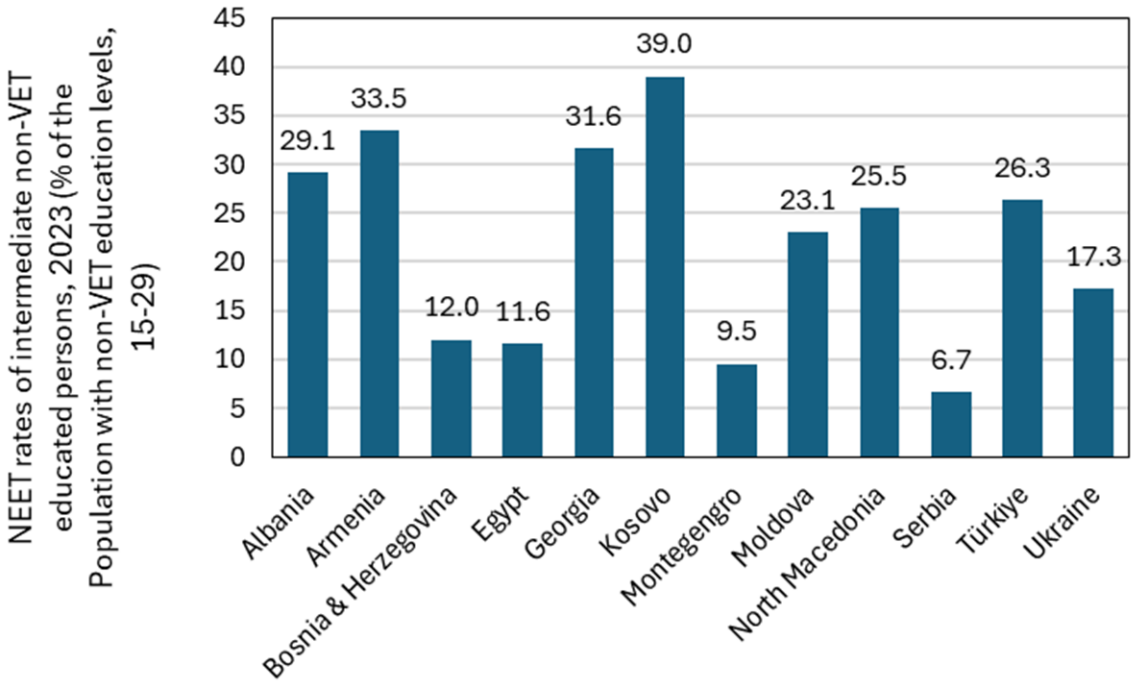
North Macedonia's NEET rate decreased by 3 p.p. during the reference period. However, these changes should be interpreted very carefully for two reasons: firstly, the number of observations from 2020 to 2023 was extremely low[7]; and secondly, methodological revisions in the LFS increased the sample size for this group more than 13-fold between 2022 and 2023 (see footnote 4). In Albania and Türkiye, rates also declined by 2.5–3 p.p., while Montenegro recorded the sharpest reduction in the region (–7.6 p.p.), despite still showing a high level in 2023. Kosovo represents the greatest concern: its NEET rate reached 39.0% in 2023, the highest across all ETF partner countries. After falling from 38.8% in 2020 to 32.9% in 2021, the rate rebounded, indicating persistent barriers to labour market entry or continued education for this group.

In the Eastern Partnership region, Georgia experienced the most notable improvement, with its NEET rate declining by 8.5 p.p. between 2020 and 2023. Still, at 31.6% in 2023, it remained among the highest rates across the ETF partner countries. Armenia also experienced a small and continuous decline, though its rate in 2023 was still very high (33.5%). Moldova had a stable NEET rate with small changes between 22.2% (2020) and 23.1% (2023). Ukraine's most recent data, from 2021, indicated a rate of 17.3%. This was comparatively low at the time, but the situation has likely changed substantially.

Egypt reported relatively low NEET rates compared to other countries, falling from 12.3% in 2020 to 11.6% in 2023, despite a temporary increase in 2022. In fact, the NEET rate for this group in Egypt was much lower than for other categories of youth, suggesting that young people with intermediate general education are comparatively better integrated into the labour market or education system.

[6] The number of NEET with intermediate non-VET levels in the LFS is significantly higher than the number of NEET with intermediate VET education levels in the countries of Georgia, North Macedonia, and Ukraine, while it is the other way around in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. This does not necessarily mean that the risk for being NEET is higher for specific education levels in those countries but might simply reflect the national education level distribution/the country context.
[7] Calculations for NEET rates of youth with intermediate non-VET education are based on less than 80 individuals for each year in the North Macedonian LFS. In comparison, calculations for NEETs with intermediate VET education are based on data of around 4,000 individuals.

Figure 5. NEET rates of intermediate non-VET educated persons in ETF partner countries 2023[8]



(% of the Population with non-VET education levels, 15-29)
Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology. NEET rates for Ukraine refer to 2021.

NEET rates among youth with **intermediate vocational education (VET)** varied widely across ETF partner countries from 2020 to 2023 and were generally higher than among those with general education. While Serbia, Türkiye, Albania, and Montenegro showed notable declines, Kosovo, Georgia, Armenia, and Egypt continued to report high rates. Moldova stood with increasing NEET rates, and methodological changes affected comparability in some cases, notably in North Macedonia.

NEET rates among individuals with intermediate vocational education (VET) showed divergent developments across ETF partner countries (Figure 6 below and Table 21 in the Annex). Serbia is the country with the lowest NEET rate across ETF partner countries in 2023, which at 18.6% can be still considered a concern In general, young people with intermediate VET qualifications faced higher NEET rates than those with general secondary education, highlighting structural mismatches between vocational training and labour market demand in many countries (compare Figure 5 and Figure 6). Only in Albania NEET rate for the category of youth in VET was 5.5 p.p. lower than youth in general education, and for North Macedonia and Turkey the difference between them was less than 1 p.p.

In the SEET region, the situation varies a lot. In 2023, while Serbia and Albania show the lowest NEET rates in the region, 18.6% and 23.6% respectively, since 2020 these countries followed a continuous decline of 6.5 p.p. for Serbia and a decline with fluctuations of 4.8 p.p. for Albania. North Macedonia experienced high fluctuations, beginning at 16.2% in 2020, peaking at 32.5% in 2022, and then falling again to 24.7% in 2023. This sharp decrease of 8.5 p.p from 2020 to 2023, however, should be interpreted with caution due to substantial methodological revisions in 2023 that affected education classification in the LFS (see also footnotes 4 and 5). Kosovo reported persistently high NEET rates among VET-educated youth, rising from 49.7% in 2020 to 52.0% in 2022, before slightly declining to 48.0% in 2023, still the highest in the region. Türkiye and Montenegro both achieved reductions of 7.6

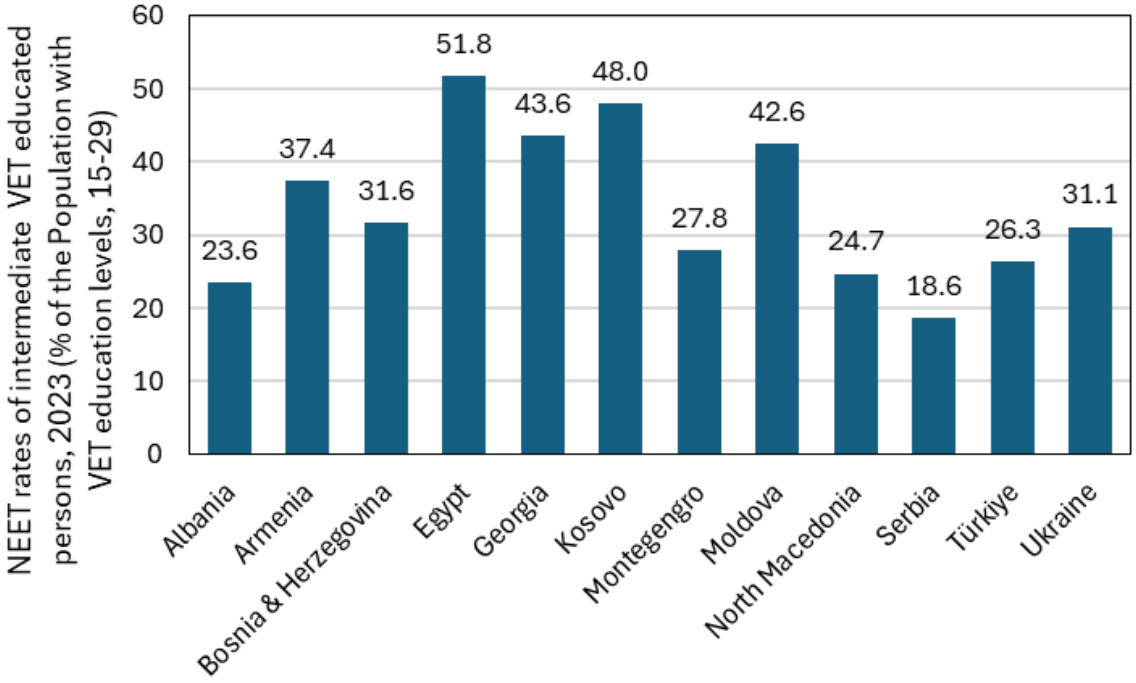
[8] Due to data limitations for Ukraine, we utilized the most recent available data—2021 for Ukraine.

p.p. since 2020, though through different trajectories: Türkiye followed a steady downward path, while Montenegro's decline was interrupted by a temporary increase in 2021. Nonetheless, rates remain high at 26.3% and 27.8%, respectively. Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved a smoother reduction of 2.5 p.p. over the same period, but its NEET rate remains among the highest across the region.

In the Eastern Partnership countries, Georgia consistently reported the highest NEET rates in this group, although they have declined consistently by 9.1 p.p., from 52.6% in 2020 to 43.6% in 2023. Moldova shows a similar pattern, experiencing an 8 p.p. decline since 2020 and with a very high NEET rate (42.6%) in 2023. Armenia is the ETF partner country with the most notable progress in reducing NEET rates of youth with VET education, 11.3 p.p. change since 2020, but the figures remain elevated at 37.4% in 2023. Ukraine, with data available only for 2020–2021, reported relatively high and rising rates—from 29.4% in 2020 to 31.1% in 2021. Overall, despite progress, all Eastern Partnership countries continue to face significant challenges in integrating VET-educated youth into labour markets.

Across ETF partner countries, Egypt reported the highest NEET rates for this group. Although there was some decline, from 54.9% in 2020 to 51.8% in 2023, the level remains extremely high.

Figure 6. NEET rates of intermediate VET educated persons in ETF partner countries 2023 (% of Population with intermediate VET education levels, 15-29)



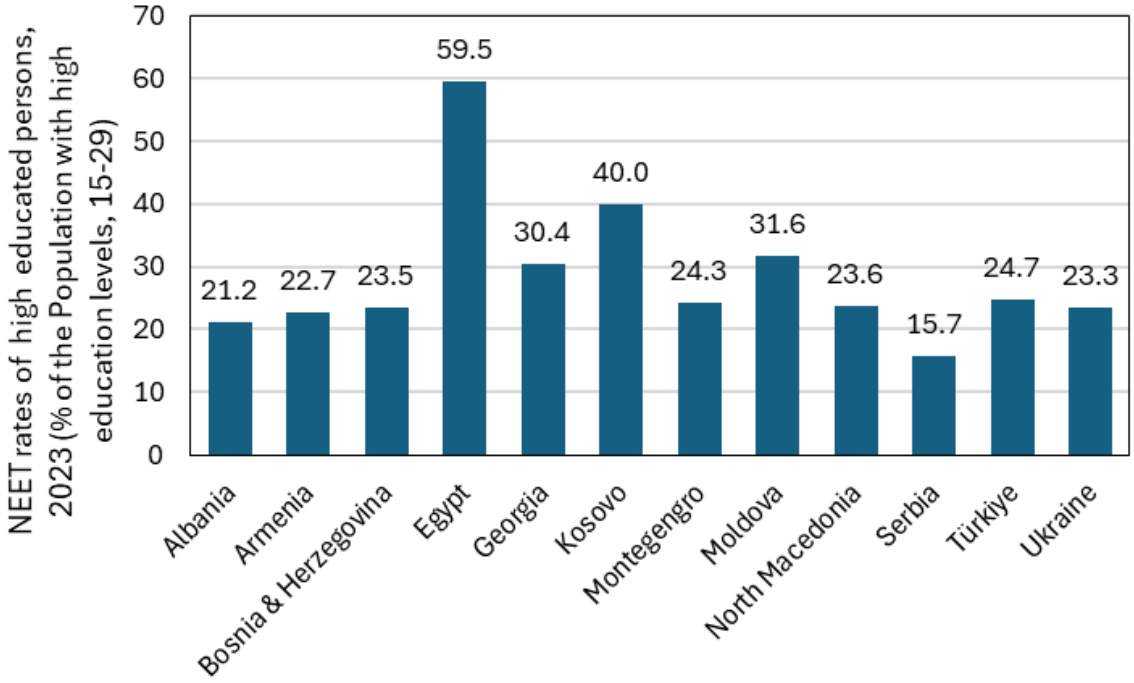
Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology. The number of observations for North Macedonia (intermediate VET educated) in the years 2020-2022 is too small (below 100) and is therefore not representative. Please also see footnotes 2-4. NEET rates for Ukraine refer to 2021.

NEET rates among **highly educated** youth varied widely across ETF partner countries from 2020 to 2023. While most countries saw declining rates, levels remained high in several cases. Notable progress was made in Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Türkiye, and Armenia. However, persistently high rates were observed in Egypt, Kosovo, Moldova, and Georgia, reflecting ongoing mismatches between higher education and labour market demand.

NEET rates among highly educated young people (Figure 7 and Table 22 in the Annex) display substantial variation across ETF partner countries, shaped by different labour market dynamics, the

size of tertiary-educated youth cohorts, and the robustness of underlying data. Although higher education is generally associated with better employment outcomes, NEET rates among tertiary graduates remain high in many ETF partner countries. Apart from Serbia with NEET rate of 15.7% 2023, all the other countries recorded rates above 20%. Egypt was an extreme case with NEET rates almost 60%, signalling a huge limitations and mismatches in graduate employment opportunities. Unfortunately, the country has reflected similar pattern in the 2-3 years preceding 2023, suggesting a structural challenge.

Figure 7. NEET rate of high educated persons in ETF partner countries 2023 (% of the Population with high education levels, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology. NEET rates for Ukraine refer to 2021.

All countries in the SEET region experienced a decrease in the NEET rates among highly educated youth between 2020 and 2023. Bosnia and Herzegovina registered the smallest reduction (1.9 p.p.), while Albania, Serbia, and Türkiye achieved more substantial declines of between 6.3 p.p. and 8.2 p.p. North Macedonia, Kosovo, and especially Montenegro recorded even larger decreases, exceeding 11 p.p. Despite this progress, Kosovo continues to face the most challenging situation in the SEET region (40% in 2023). In 2023, most SEET countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Türkiye) recorded NEET rates within a narrow range of 23.5% to 24.7%. As highlighted in the previous paragraph, Serbia consistently reported the lowest NEET rates among tertiary-educated youth across all ETF partner countries.

Albania's NEET rate among highly educated youth, at 21.2%, was the lowest compared to other educational groups in the country. A similar pattern was observed in Türkiye, where highly educated youth recorded a lower NEET rate compared to peers with other levels of education. For all the other ETF partner countries, NEET rate for highly educated youth remained higher than for at least one of the other educational groups.

Across the Eastern Partnership countries, Armenia recorded the highest drop during the period under analysis. Its NEET rate stood at 22.7% in 2023, which can be considered a concern but still relatively low compared to the other ETF partner countries. Despite improvements over the years, NEET rates of highly educated in Georgia and Moldova stood at high levels, 30.4% and 31.6% respectively.

Ukraine reported relatively stable NEET rates, from 23.2% in 2020 to 23.5% in 2021. However, the war suggests a likely deterioration in the years ahead.

CHAPTER 2. THE DIVERSITY OF NEETS IN ETF PARTNER COUNTRIES

In the following sections, we focus on the diversity of NEETs within the heterogeneous ETF partner countries. For each country, we provide an overview of its socio-economic context. An overview of the key concepts used to analyse the countries of interest is given in Table 2 below. A cross-country depiction of those indicators is included in the Annex of this report (see Table 23 and Figures 32 to 37).

This is followed by an analysis of each country's NEET sub-groups from two angles: as a proportion of the overall NEET population and the total population. This dual approach provides a better understanding of the composition of NEET groups within individual countries. The objective is to gain a better understanding of how NEET rates vary by country and over time.

NEET sub-groups are presented in Table 3 below; they are composed of young individuals re-entering the workforce, short- or long-term unemployed NEETs, NEETs with an illness or disability, with family or caregiving responsibilities, young people who are neither employed nor in education due to personal reasons, discouraged NEETs who think that no work is available, and NEETs that face social or economic barriers that cannot be identified further (category "other"). Further details on how these concepts are constructed from the national Labour Force Survey microdata are given in Tables 4 to 15 in the Annex. For policymakers, recognising which categories comprise the largest shares and observing trends over time is crucial to effectively address barriers that prevent youth from finding employment or participating in education and training.

We further distinguish these subgroups of NEET, for example, by gender and educational level. Due to the small size of some subgroups within NEET, further breakdowns may not be statistically representative, particularly in ETF member countries with small populations. In the following, we will, therefore, only carefully address breakdowns for bigger subgroups of NEETs.

Not all LFS questionnaires of ETF member countries follow the same methodological approach and are therefore not as comparable as, for example, the analysis of NEET sub-groups among EU member states. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021-2023), Serbia, and Ukraine (2020-2021), the "other" category represented a substantial share, which may reflect limitations in how these national LFS identify reasons for being out of the labour force. For example, suppose a survey does not systematically ask all NEETs about their reasons for not working or studying. In that case, individuals may default into the "Other" category, obscuring the true nature of their barriers. Therefore, the comparability of country results is limited. Finally, data points in national time series may not be comparable due to methodological changes (e.g., in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in 2021) and were also influenced by external factors, notably the COVID pandemic in 2020/2021.

Table 2. Country context: Key concepts (ETF KIESE indicators)

Indicator	Definition
Relative size of the youth population	This is the ratio of the youth population (aged 15–24) to the working-age population (typically aged 15–64, 15–74, or 15+).
Educational attainment of the total population (age 20-29)	Usually measured for the highest educational programme completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification.
(Youth) unemployment rate	The unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force refers to the total number of people who are either employed or unemployed. Unemployed persons comprise those aged 15–64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were

Indicator	Definition
	available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four weeks ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months). Youth unemployment rate typically refers to the age group 15-29.
(Young) persons out of the labour force	The inactivity/out-of-labour-force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all persons who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed. Young persons out of the labour force typically refer to the age group 15-29.
(Youth) employment rate	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. Youth employment rate typically refers to the age group 15-29.
Employment rate of recent graduates (age group 20-34, ISCED levels 3-8)	The employment rate of recent graduates is estimated for persons aged 20–34 who fulfil the following conditions: first, being employed, according to the ILO definition; second, having attained ISCED levels 3-8 as the highest level of education; third, not having received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey; and fourth, having completed their highest educational attainment one, two or three years before the survey.
Early leavers from education and training	Early leaving from education and training is defined as the percentage of the population aged 18–24 with at least lower secondary education who were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 and 3C short (i.e., programmes with a duration of less than 2 years) for data up to 2013 and to ISCED 2011 levels 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards.

Source: ETF, Education, skills and employment: Trends and developments 2025 | ETF.

Table 3. Sub-groups of NEETs

Sub-group	Definition
Re-entrants	This category encompasses young people who will soon re-enter employment, education, or training and will begin or resume accumulating human capital through formal channels. They are individuals who have already been hired or enrolled in an educational or training program.
Short-term unemployed	This category comprises all unemployed young people seeking work and available to start within two weeks, who have been unemployed for less than a year. A short period of unemployment during the transition from school to work can be considered normal, and the level of vulnerability among people in this category can be expected to be moderate.
Long-term unemployed	This category comprises all unemployed young people seeking work and available to start within two weeks, as well as those who have been unemployed for more than a year. People in this category are at high risk of disengagement and social exclusion. Long-term disengagement harms young people's employability, their human capital, and their future employment outcomes; in some cases, the damage can last for the rest of their lives.
Illness or disability	This category includes all young people who are neither seeking employment nor available to start a job within two weeks due to illness or disability. This group includes those who require additional social support, as illness or disability prevents them from engaging in paid work.
Family/care responsibilities	This group includes individuals who are not seeking work or are unavailable to start a new job because they are caring for children or incapacitated adults or have other less specific family responsibilities. Young people in this group are a mix of the vulnerable and non-vulnerable; some are unable to participate in the labour market because they cannot

Sub-group	Definition
	afford to pay for care for their child or adult family member, while others voluntarily withdraw from the labour market or education to take on family responsibilities.
Personal reasons	Young people with personal reasons (according to the LFS) for not wanting, not seeking, or not being available for work.
Discouraged workers	This group comprises all young people who have stopped looking for work because they believe there are no job opportunities available to them. They are mostly vulnerable young people at high risk of social exclusion who are very likely to experience poor employment outcomes throughout their working lives and are at high risk of lifelong disengagement.
Other	This group contains all NEETs whose reasons for being NEET do not fall into any of the previous six categories. This group is a statistical residual category, comprising individuals who did not provide a reason for their NEET status. It is likely to be an extremely heterogeneous mix that includes people at all extremes of the spectrum of vulnerability: the most vulnerable, the hard-to-reach, those at risk of being deeply alienated, the most privileged, and those who are holding out for a specific opportunity or who are following alternative paths, such as careers in the arts, that have little formal presence in the labour market or education.

Source: Adapted from Eurofound, 2016 and 2024 (Mascherini & Ledermaier 2016 and Sándor et al. 2024).

Albania

Albania has one of the youngest working-age populations among the ETF countries. Its youth are significantly better educated than the overall population, and their unemployment rate is considerably lower. However, the NEET rate as a share of the total population remained relatively unchanged between 2020 and 2023. The largest group among NEETs—both in relation to the total population and within the NEET category itself—consists of the long-term unemployed. The NEET population in Albania is predominantly medium-skilled and female; however, detailed subgroup analysis reveals shifting patterns—particularly a declining share of women among re-entrants and a growing concentration of low-educated individuals. Meanwhile, gender and education disparities persist across discouraged and long-term unemployed youth.

In 2023, the youth population aged 15-29 accounted for nearly one-third (32.2%) of Albania's working-age population (aged 15-64). This places Albania among the youngest' countries within the group of ETF countries covered in this report, therefore relying to a greater part on a younger workforce (see Table 23 in the Annex). Data from the same year indicate that Albania's youth population (aged 20–29) was significantly better educated than the overall working-age population. Among young people, 34% had completed higher education, compared with only 18% of the total working-age population. A further 47% of youth had attained medium education levels, versus 35% among the working-age population. Conversely, the proportion of low-educated individuals was substantially smaller among youth (18%) than in the total working-age population (47%) (see Figure 32 in the Annex).

Despite this, young people in Albania continue to face notable disadvantages in the labour market. In 2023, the youth unemployment rate (aged 15–29) was 22.2%, more than twice the overall unemployment rate (15+) of 10.7%. Albania has one of the largest gaps between the working-age unemployment rate and the youth unemployment rate of the ETF partner countries covered in this report (see Figure 33 in the Annex).

The youth employment rate stood at 44.2%, well below the working-age employment rate of 57.2% (Figure 35). Combined with a high youth unemployment rate, this highlights the significant challenges young people face in securing employment. Indeed, 43.0% of youth were outside the labour force,

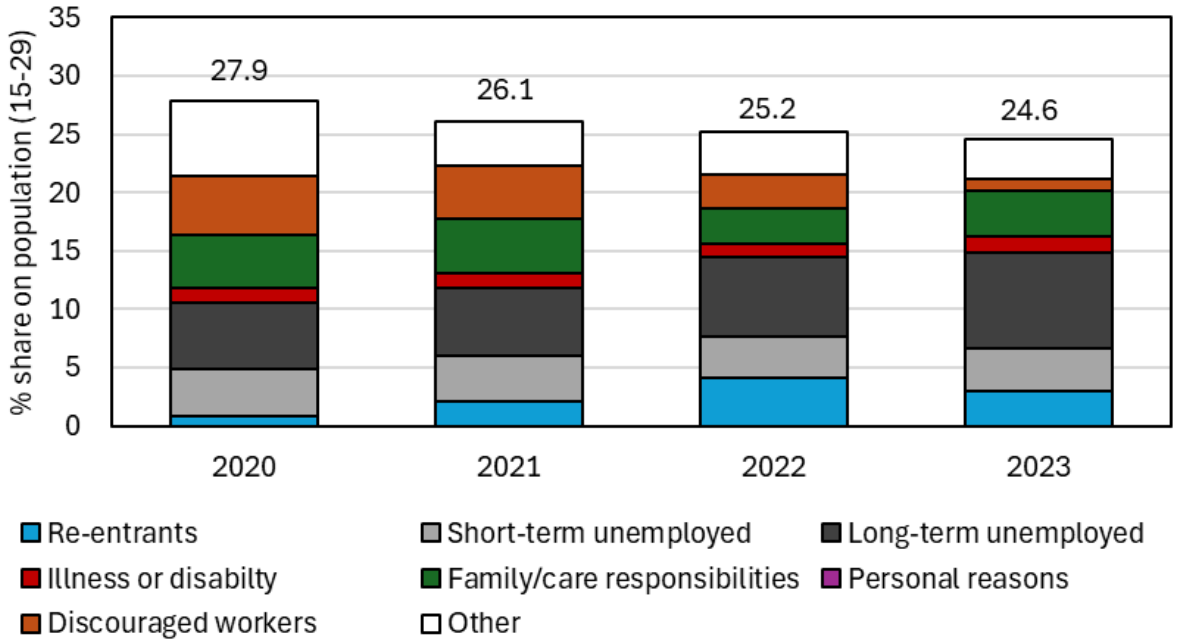
compared to 35.9% of the total working-age population, pointing to a higher degree of labour market detachment among younger cohorts (Figure 34 in the Annex). On a more positive note, the employment rate of recent graduates was notably higher (65.1%) than that of the general youth population or the total working population. This suggests that educational attainment continued to offer a clear advantage in entering the labour market (Figure 36). Nonetheless, early school leaving remains a pressing issue in Albania. At 13.9%, the rate of early leavers from education and training was among the highest across the countries included in this report, raising concerns about the inclusivity and retention of the education system (Figure 37).

NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 8): Between 2020 and 2023, the NEET rate in Albania declined moderately from 27.9% to 24.6%. In 2023, long-term unemployed NEETs accounted for 8.3% of the total youth population, representing the highest percentage across the various NEET sub-groups. In fact, the share of long-term unemployed NEETs has risen steadily over the period, by around 2.6 p.p. Most other sub-groups (re-entrants, short-term unemployed, family responsibilities, and other) each represented 3%-4% of the youth population. Re-entrants followed a similar upward trend to the long-term unemployed. Conversely, discouraged workers and "other NEETs" drove the overall decline in NEET rates, with their shares falling by 4 p.p. and 3.1 p.p. respectively.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 9): Data from the 2023 Albanian LFS show that within the NEET population the largest category of NEETs aged 15–29 were the long-term unemployed (33.7%), followed by those NEETs due to family responsibilities (15.6%) and the short-term unemployed (14.7%). Re-entrants accounted for 12.2% and those unavailable due to illness or disability, 5.7%. Around 4.4% of NEETs are discouraged workers while the remaining 13.8% are "other NEETs". Considering the figures for discouraged workers, the short- and long-term unemployed and re-entrants, the data suggest that on average, around 65% of NEETs belong to the NEET group because of labour market-driven factors. The remaining 35% includes the category of "other NEETs" and NEET for more social-policy related reasons, such as family responsibilities, illness or disability. Looking at the data during the period 2020-2023, while the long-term unemployed have consistently represented the largest share and increased over the year, discouraged workers have shrink with a similar speed. The share of short-term unemployed NEETs remained stable at 14–15%. Stability was also observed for NEETs due to illness or disability, and NEETs due to family responsibilities, though at different levels.

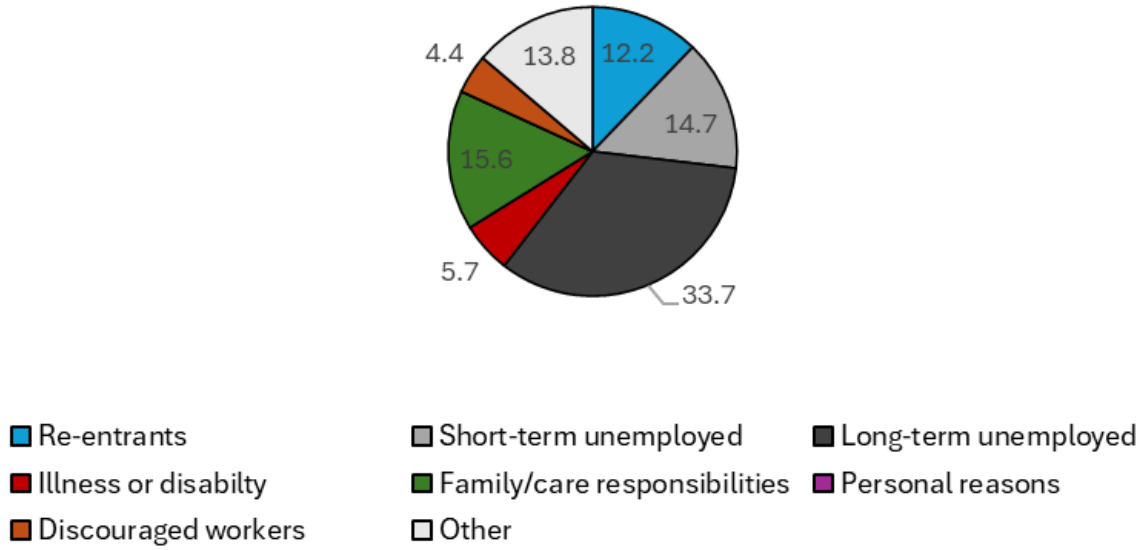
Within the NEET population, a gender breakdown shows that the majority are female (54.2%). By education level, most NEETs are medium-skilled (35.9%). Looking at specific sub-categories, re-entrants were composed of 53.0% women and 40.3% individuals with low educational attainment. However, over time, the proportion of women has declined, while the share of those with low education has increased. In 2023, among discouraged NEETs 51.8% were female, and 49.7% had an intermediate level of education (non-VET). Among the long-term unemployed NEETs, 59.4% were male, and 39.1% had an intermediate level of education (non-VET).

Figure 8. Categorisation of NEET, Albania (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices.

Figure 9. Structure of NEET in 2023, Albania (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices.

Armenia

Although most young people in Armenia attain at least a medium level of education, and early school leaving is rare, their participation in the labour market remains limited, recording the lowest youth participation rate among ETF countries. Consequently, both the overall youth employment rate and the employment rate of recent graduates are very low. This points to a clear disconnect between educational attainment and labour market outcomes for Armenian youth. The early school dropout rate is among the lowest in the region. Among NEETs, the largest share—both in relation to the total population and within the NEET category—is due to family or caregiving responsibilities. This group has experienced only a slight decline over time. In Armenia, there are notable gender imbalances across NEET sub-groups, with men overrepresented in most inactivity and unemployment categories.

In 2023, Armenia's youth aged 15–29 accounted for 28.1% of its working-age population (age 15–64). This figure is slightly below the average across the countries included in this report, indicating a moderately sized youth group within the working-age demographic (compare Table 23 in the Annex). As in many other ETF partner countries, Armenia's youth are generally better educated than the total population. Among people aged 20–29, 35% had completed higher education compared with 27% of the working-age population (15+), while only 3% of youth had low education versus 8% among the broader population. The majority of both groups—62% of youth and 65% of the working-age population—held medium-level qualifications (see Figure 32 in the Annex).

Despite this positive educational profile, labour market outcomes for Armenian youth remain challenging. The youth unemployment rate (15–29) stood at 21.3% in 2023, considerably higher than the overall unemployment rate of 12.4%, pointing to persistent entry barriers into the labour market (Figure 33). Moreover, 51.5% of young people were outside the labour force, compared to 43.6% of the general population (15+), which is one of the largest gaps compared to other ETF partner countries (Figure 34). This lower engagement contributed towards a youth employment rate of only 38.2%, roughly 11 p.p. lower than the general employment rate of 49.4% (Figure 35).

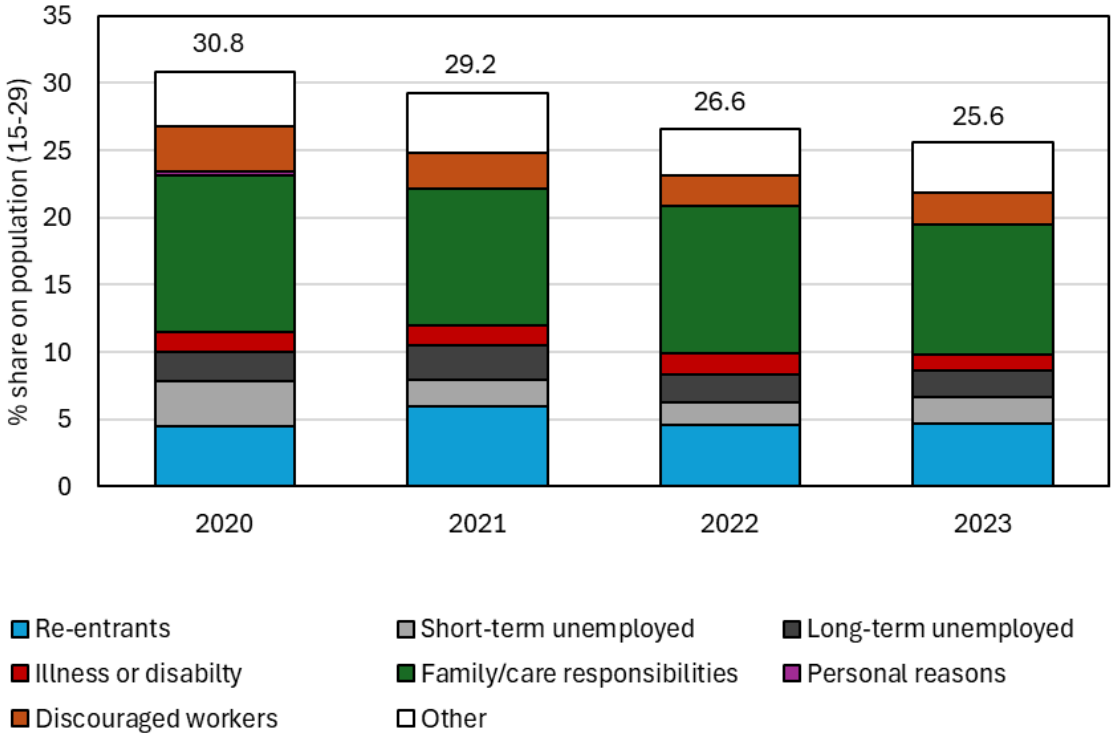
The transition from education to work also appears more difficult in Armenia than in many ETF partner countries. The employment rate of recent graduates stood at 49.2% in 2023. While this was higher than the average employment rate of youth, it remains notably below the levels observed in other countries covered in this report (Figure 36). On a more positive note, Armenia reported one of the lowest early school leaving rates among the ETF countries—just 2.2% in 2023—indicating consistent educational retention and completion (Figure 37).

NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 10): Between 2020 and 2023, the NEET rate in Armenia experienced a continuous decline from 30.8% to 25.6%. This change of 5.2 p.p. was mainly driven by a reduction in young people citing family or care responsibilities and by fewer short-term unemployed. In 2023, NEETs due to family responsibilities still represented the largest group (9.7% of the total youth population), while the short-term unemployed accounted for 1.9%, down from 3.3% in 2020. The shares of discouraged youth (2.3%) and the long-term unemployed (around 2%) were relatively small, at less than half the proportion of re-entrants to the labour market, which reached 4.7% in 2023. The share of NEETs for personal reasons was almost inexistent, and for the other two sub-groups, NEETs due to illness or disability and "other NEETs", the shares were stable during the period under analysis, at about 1.2% and 3.7% respectively.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 11): Within the NEET population itself, the largest sub-group in 2023 were those with family or care responsibilities (37.8%), followed by re-entrants (18.5%). Discouraged youth (9.1%) accounted for around one-tenth of NEETs, while short-term and long-term unemployed had similar shares (7.6%) in 2023 despite different evolutions in the past. Between 2020 and 2023, the percentage of short-term unemployed decreased by 3.2 p.p., whereas long-term unemployed share increased slightly by 0.7 p.p. The sub-group of re-entrants is the category that experienced the largest growth, rising by around 4 p.p. since 2020. Overall, discouraged workers, the short- and long-term unemployed and re-entrants, made up on average

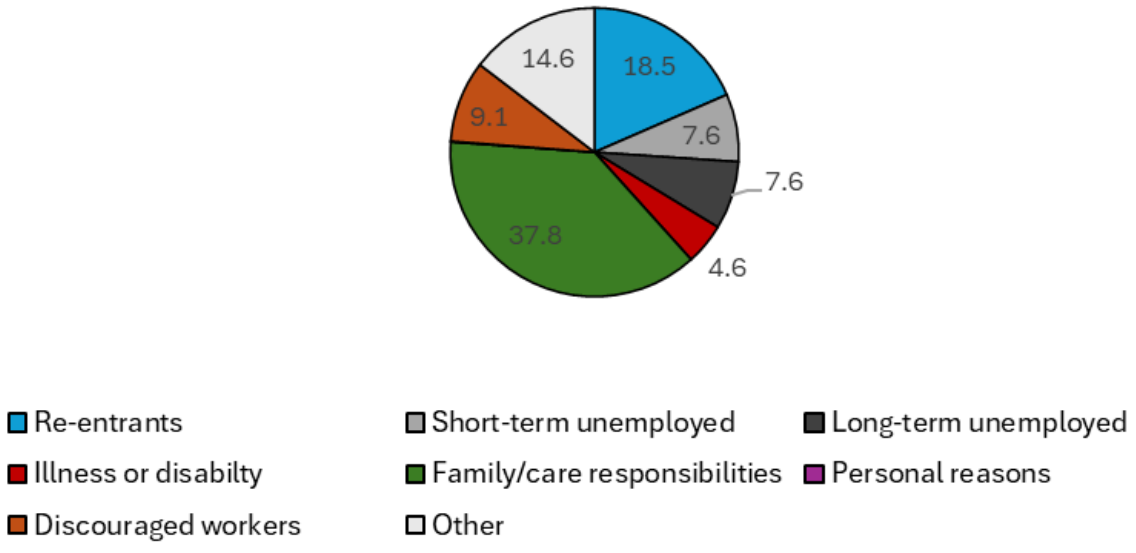
around 43% of NEETs, indicating that almost half are driven by labour market factors. In contrast, more than 65% of NEETs are linked to social-policy-related reasons or fall into the “other NEETs” category. Between 2020 and 2023, the percentage of short-term unemployed decreased by 3.2 p.p., whereas long-term unemployed share increased slightly by 0.7 p.p.

Figure 10. Categorisation of NEET, Armenia (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Figure 11. Structure of NEET in 2023, Armenia (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Within the NEET population, breaking down the largest NEET sub-group—family or care responsibilities—shows that in 2023, the majority were women (61.0%), and 54.8% of all NEET with family or care responsibilities had an intermediate-general level of education. Gender disparities were also particularly pronounced across other categories: 73.6% of short-term unemployed NEETs were male, as were 77.2% of those citing illness or disability, and 80.8% of those who were NEET due to personal reasons. In contrast, 95.0% of re-entrants were female. Across all NEET categories, 52.0% had an intermediate-general level of education, followed by 24.3% with a high level of education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina has the smallest youth population among all ETF countries. Although young people are generally better educated than the overall population, their unemployment rate remains higher than the national average—a trend observed across all ETF countries. The relatively low rate of early school leavers suggests some success in keeping youth engaged in education. Among NEETs, the largest shares—both in relation to the total population and within the NEET category—are short-term unemployed and discouraged youth. This group has declined over time, while most other NEET categories have remained largely unchanged. The NEET subgroup with the highest share of low-skilled persons was the NEET with illness or disability.

In 2023, the youth population aged 15–29 accounted for 24.2% of Bosnia and Herzegovina's working-age population (age 15–64). This places the country among those with the smallest proportion of youth across the ETF partner countries covered in the report (see Table 23 in the Annex). Despite this smaller share, youth (aged 20–29) in Bosnia and Herzegovina were better educated than the overall working-age population. Withing the group of young people, 16.1% had completed higher education, compared with 13.3% of the total population (aged 15–74). A large majority (76.9%) of youth had attained medium education levels, compared with 56.8% of the working-age population. Conversely, only 7.0% of youth had low education levels, far below the 29.9% recorded among the overall population (see Figure 32 in the Annex).

Despite youth being better educated than the average population, young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina face persistent disadvantages in the labour market. In 2023, youth unemployment rate for individuals aged 15-29 was 23.1% (see Figure 33 in the Annex), almost 10 p.p. higher than overall unemployment rate (aged 15-74). Another element of high concern is the youth employment rates at around 33.1% (see Figure 35 in the Annex). Often, this high rate of youth unemployment combined with a low rate of employment signal significant structural problems (i.e., lack of jobs, mismatched skills, discouraged youth, etc.) with significant barriers to entry the labour market. A further 57.0% of youth were outside the labour force, only slightly higher than the average population inactivity rate of 52.3% (see Figure 34 in the Annex).

On a more positive note, the employment rate of recent graduates was much higher than employment rate for youth and working age population, recording 60.4% in 2023. Data provided in Figure 36 in the annex suggest that immediately graduating and leaving the education system provides advantage in accessing the labour market. Additionally, a 4.2% of early leavers from education and training (see Figure 37 in the Annex) is considered a low level well below the international levels of concern. This suggests that Bosnia and Herzegovina has been more successful in preventing youth from leaving school too early.

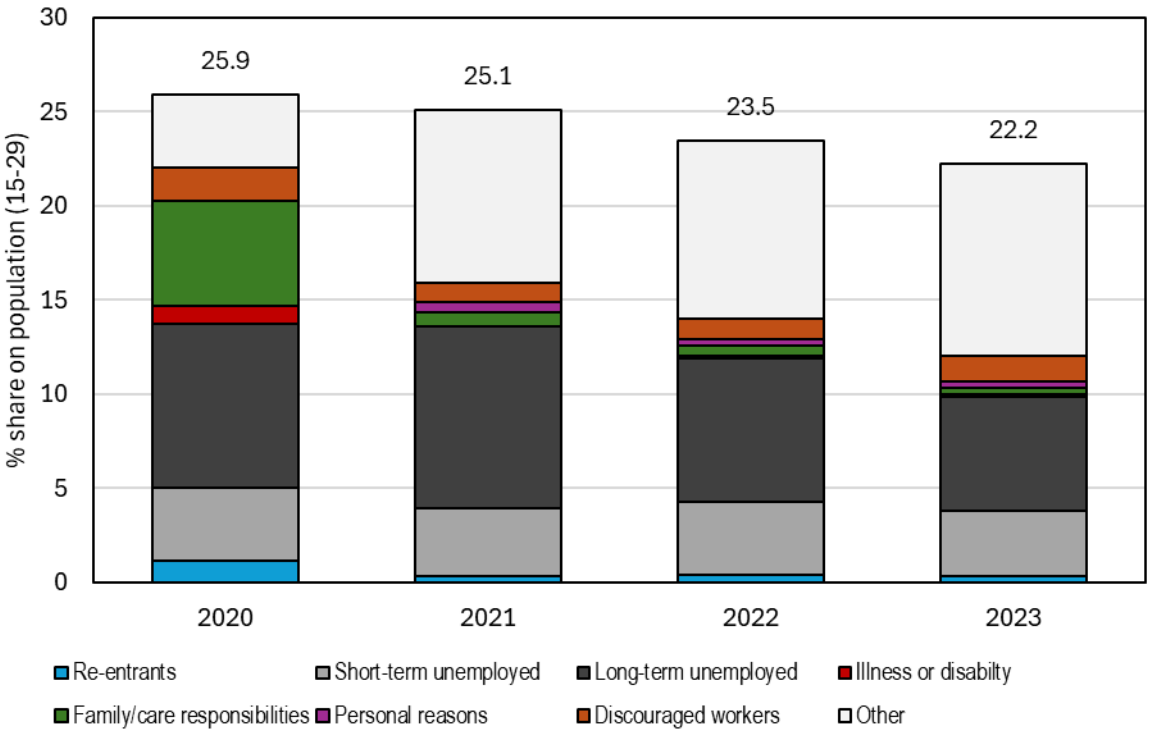
NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 12): Between 2020 and 2023, the NEET rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina declined gradually from 25.9% to 22.2%. This overall progress was driven mainly by a sharp reduction in NEETs due to family or care responsibilities, which fell from 5.6% of the youth population in 2020 to just 0.4% in 2023. Some reduction was observed among the long-term unemployed (2.7 p.p.), despite this sub-group of NEETs continued to represent a considerable percentage of youth population in 2023 (6%). At the same time, the share of discouraged workers and short-term unemployed NEETs remained relatively stable. The decline in traditional

NEET categories was offset by a striking increase in the “other” category, which rose from 3.9% in 2020 to 10.2% in 2023, pointing to greater complexity in youth inactivity or challenges in accurately capturing reasons for disengagement. In 2023, NEETs due to illness or disability, those citing personal reasons, and re-entrants made up the smallest shares of the youth population, each accounting for less than 0.3%.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 13): In 2023, within NEETs population, “other” NEETs represent the largest sub-group, which made up nearly half (46.0%) of all NEETs. Long-term unemployed and short-term unemployed represented the other main groups of concern, accounting for 27.1% and 15.6%. While discouraged workers accounted for 6.1% of all NEETs in 2023, the remaining sub-groups (re-entrants, NEETs due to illness or disability, NEETs for personal reasons and NEETs for family/care responsibilities) together represented just 5%.

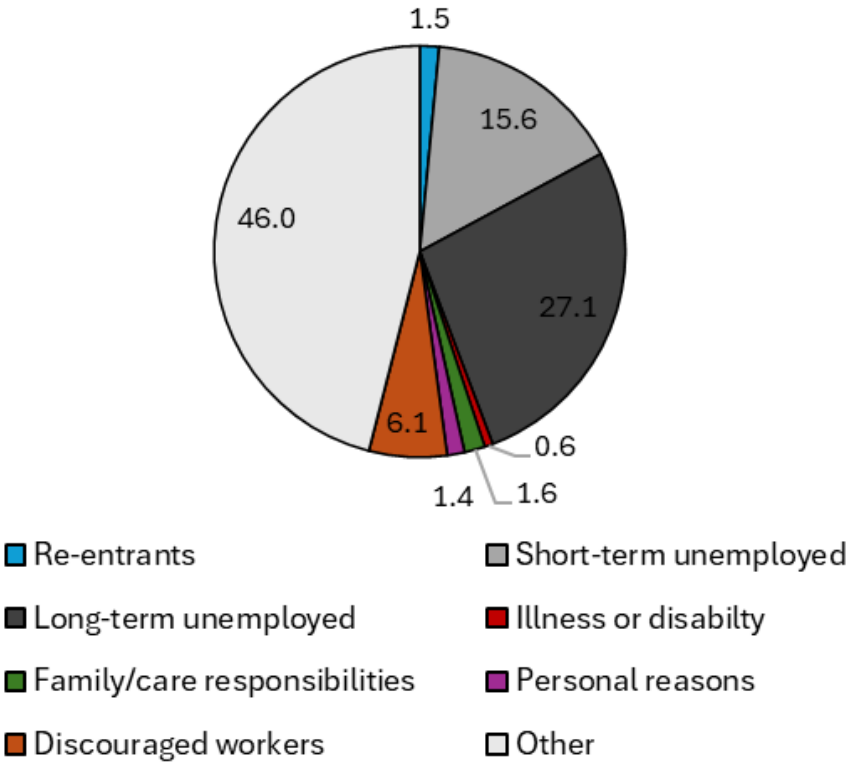
As it is clear from Figure 13, the composition of the NEET population underwent notable shifts between 2020 and 2023. NEETs due to family and care responsibilities declined dramatically, from 21.6% in 2020 to just 1.6% in 2023. Over the same years, long-term unemployed experienced a shrink in the share of NEETs (around 6.6. p.p.). Re-entrants fell to low levels (1.5%), while short-term unemployed remained stable at 14.3-15.6%. The reduction in NEET sub-groups was largely compensated from the considerable and continuous increase in the share of the “other” NEETs, which rose from 15.1% in 2020 to 46% in 2023).

Figure 12. Categorisation of NEET, Bosnia and Herzegovina (% of population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Figure 13. Structure of NEET in 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Within the NEET population in 2023, the two largest NEET sub-groups were the "other" NEET (see Figure 13), and the long-term unemployed NEET, which showed distinct gender distributions. Among the long-term unemployed, the majority were male, accounting for 56.9%. In contrast, the "other" group comprised 68.1% women. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 73.8% of all NEETs have medium educational levels (ISCED 2011, levels 3-4). The NEET subgroup with the highest share of low-skilled persons were the NEET with Illness or Disability (23.3% had education levels according to ISCED 2011 level 1 or 2 in 2023, compared to 14.2% on average over all NEETs), while the sub-group with the highest share of highly educated persons are the Re-entrants (39.4% with high education levels – ISCED 2011 5-8, compared to 12.0% on average over all NEETs). However, both groups were very small (only[9] 1.5% of all NEETs, respectively).

[9] 0.6% of all NEETs roughly corresponds to 65 observations, meaning that 65 persons who participated in the national LFS fell into this category. Thus, deductions about the educational composition of this subgroup are based on the observations of only 65 persons. In comparison, more than 2,700 persons fell into the category of long-term unemployed NEETs, providing a much more robust sample for drawing conclusions about educational composition.

Egypt

Egypt has the highest share of youth in the population among all ETF countries. What sets Egypt apart is the high proportion of low-skilled individuals in the total population, while only a small share holds high-level educational qualifications. Despite a relatively low youth unemployment rate, youth participation in the labour market is comparatively limited. Among NEETs, more than half—both in relation to the total population and within the NEET group—are inactive due to family or caregiving responsibilities. In comparison to other ETF countries, re-entrants and the long-term unemployed were primarily highly educated.

In 2023, the youth population aged 15–29 accounted for 40.2% of Egypt's working-age population (age 15–64). This is the highest shares across the ETF partner countries covered in the report and a clear indication of the country's dependence on a very young workforce (see Table 23 in the Annex).

Data on educational attainment levels of the population highlight a considerable skills gap. In 2022, nearly half of the total population aged 15 + were classified as low-skilled, while only 14% possessed high educational qualifications and 38% had completed medium-level education. Disaggregated data by age group were not available in the ETF KIESE database, limiting comparisons between youth and broader age range population (see Figure 32 in the Annex).

While the relatively low youth unemployment rate (16.7%) compared with many ETF partner countries (Figure 33) might appear encouraging, it should be treated with caution. In reality, young people in Egypt face considerable challenges in accessing the labour market. The youth employment rate stood at just 26.2% in 2023, far below the 39.7% recorded for the overall working-age population (Figure 35). This gap is largely explained by very high inactivity: 68.5% of youth were outside the labour force, compared to 57.2% of the total working-age population (Figure 34). Since the unemployment rate only reflects those who are actively seeking work, the large share of inactive youth makes the rate appear lower than the true extent of the challenge. These figures show that unemployment alone does not capture the scale of youth labour market detachment in Egypt.

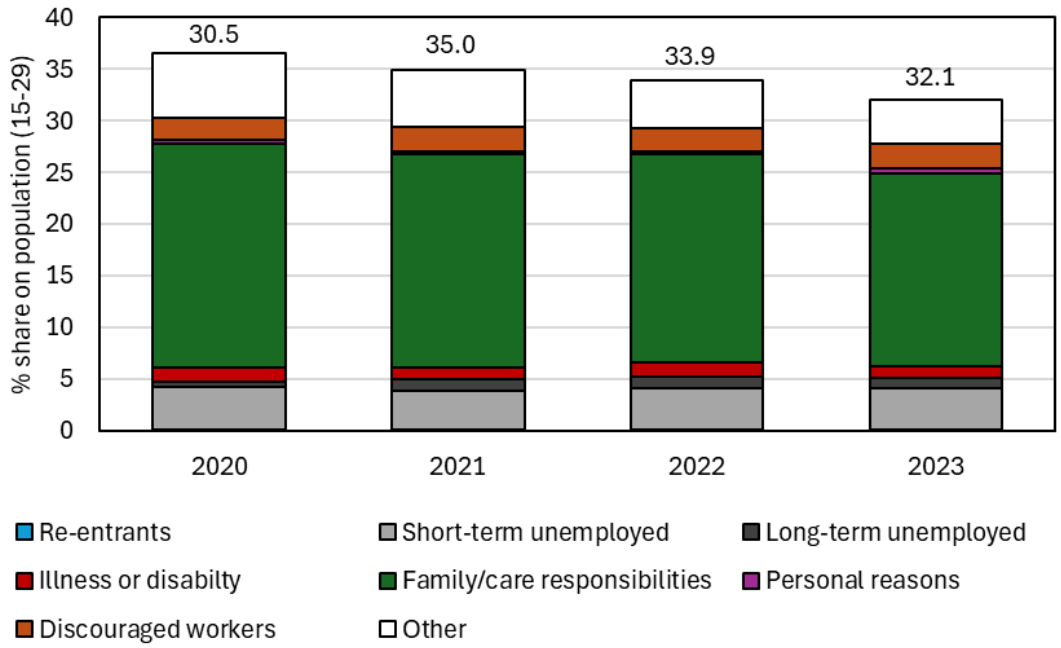
NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 14): Between 2020 and 2023, the share of NEETs among young people rose by 1.6 p.p., indicating that youth disengagement remains a persistent challenge. With more than 30% of young people classified as NEET, the scale of the issue poses a serious challenge for education and labour market systems. During these years the share of different NEET sub-groups recorded limited structural change. The largest declines were observed among NEETs due to family or care responsibilities, which fell from 21.7% to 18.6%. The "other" category also decreased from 6.2% to 4.2%. Conversely the shares of short-term unemployed (4%), long-term unemployed (1%), re-entrants (0.1%), NEETs due to illness or disability (1%), NEETs for personal reasons (0.5%), and discouraged workers (2%) remained relatively stable throughout the period.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 15): Within NEETs population, NEETs for family/care responsibilities represented the largest sub-group, which made up more than half of all NEETs. Despite a slight decrease of their shares, this category of NEETs accounted for 58% of all NEETs in 2023. The next important shares were the category of "Other" NEETs (13.6% in 2023) and short term unemployed (12.5% in 2023), followed by discouraged NEETs (7.4%). overall, labour market–related factors (unemployment and discouragement) accounted for around one-quarter of NEETs, while social or personal factors (family responsibilities, illness/disability, or "other") explained the remaining three-quarters. Compared to earlier years, the structure of NEETs in Egypt showed only minor changes, with most categories remaining largely consistent from 2020 to 2023.

Gender differences within the NEET population are particularly striking. A closer look at the largest NEET category—family or care responsibilities—reveals that all individuals in this group are women (100%), and 48.5% within this subgroup had a low level of education. This sets Egypt apart from most other ETF countries, where this category is typically dominated by individuals with an intermediate-

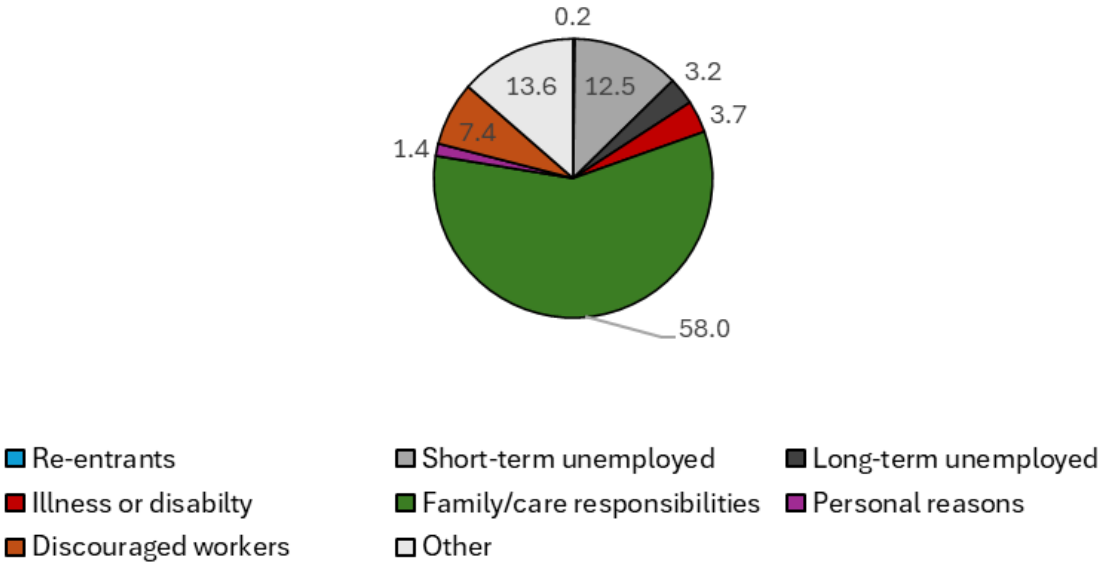
general level of education. Gender disparities were similarly pronounced in other NEET sub-groups: 98.2% of those citing personal reasons were female (with 31.9% of all members of this group having been highly educated), and 74.5% of discouraged NEET were also female (40.2% of them highly educated). In contrast, men dominated categories such as the “other” NEETs (82.3%), NEETs due to illness or disability (67.8%), and the short-term unemployed (60.6%). Educational attainment also distinguishes Egypt from most of the other ETF partner countries across nearly all NEET categories. While intermediate education was more common elsewhere, Egypt showed a different pattern. In particular, re-entrants and the long-term unemployed were primarily highly educated, accounting for 62.2% and 59.2% of each group, respectively.

Figure 14. Categorisation of NEET, Egypt (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Figure 15. Structure of NEET in 2023, Egypt (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Georgia

Georgia has a relatively small but still significant youth share within its working-age population. Unlike in some neighbouring countries, the education levels of youth closely mirror those of the general population, suggesting limited generational educational progress. While overall unemployment rates are high, young people are particularly affected, facing significant challenges in accessing employment. However, the NEET rate has steadily declined in recent years, mainly due to fewer discouraged youth and improvements in labour market engagement. Despite this progress, structural barriers persist, especially for young women, who are often excluded from work due to family and care responsibilities.

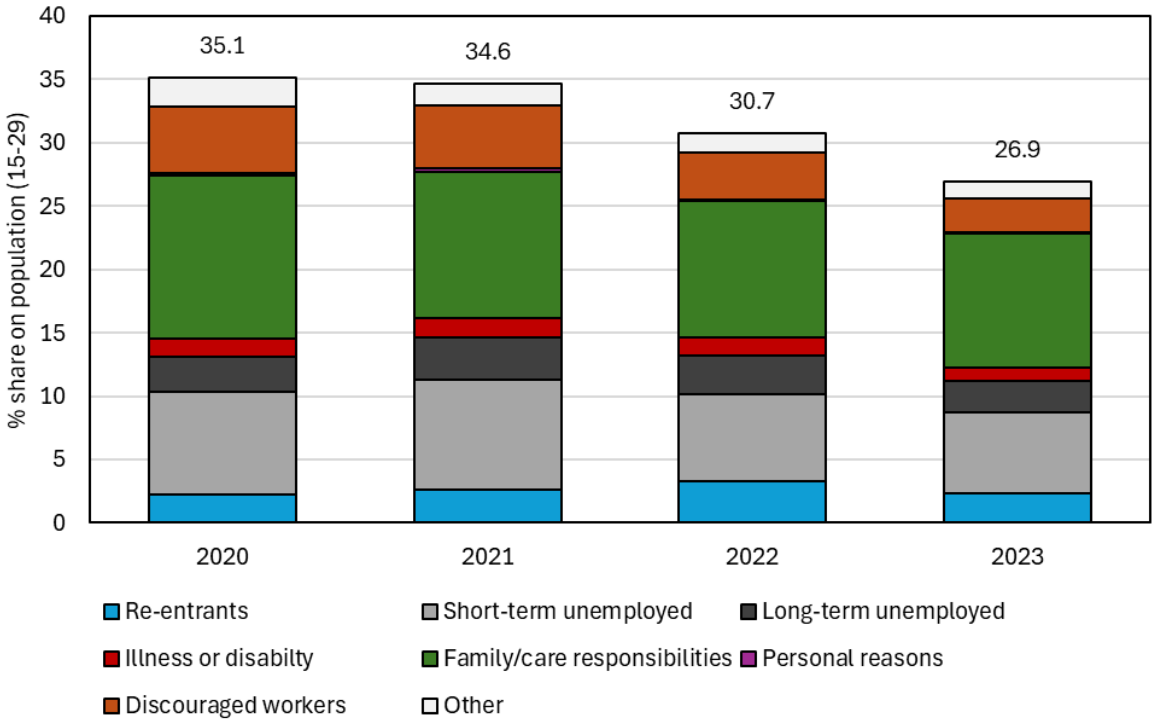
In 2023, the share of youth aged 15–29 in Georgia's working-age population (age 15–64) stood at 27.4%. This reflected a smaller youth proportion compared to several other ETF partner countries, though still higher than in countries such as Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina (see Table 23 in the Annex). The distribution of young people across various education levels resembled that of the overall working-age population (Figure 32 in the Annex).

Young people in Georgia continue to face pronounced disadvantages in the labour market. In 2023, the youth unemployment rate (aged 15–29) was 26.7%, much higher than the unemployment rate for the working-age population (16.4%). This places Georgia among the ETF partner countries with the highest unemployment levels (Figure 33), especially referring to youth. The youth employment rate stood at 33.3% in 2023, about 10 p.p. lower than the working-age employment rate (Figure 35). Youth labour market detachment was also more pronounced: 54.6% of young people were outside the labour force, compared to 46.7% of the total working-age population (Figure 34).

Meanwhile, transition from education to work remains difficult. The employment rate of recent graduates (54.8%) lagged that of several ETF partner countries (Figure 36). At 5.3%, Georgia's early school leaving rate among 18–24-year-olds is relatively low in international terms, remaining well below the EU benchmark of 9% (Figure 37). This suggests that education policies could be effective in supporting school retention among young people.

NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 16): the share of NEETs among youth followed a continuous decline between 2020 and 2023, from 35.1% to 26.9%. This decrease of 8 p.p. reflects improved engagement in education, training, or employment driven mainly by reductions in discouraged workers, NEETs due to family/care responsibilities and short-term unemployed. Each of these three categories experienced a continuous decrease by around 1.7-2.7% over the period, suggesting progress in youth labour market integration. Other smaller sub-groups, such as those citing illness or disability, re-entrants, or personal reasons, remained relatively stable. However, persistent challenges remain; NEETs related to family responsibilities and short-term unemployment continue to account for significant shares of the total youth population.

Figure 16. Categorisation of NEET, Georgia (% of Population, 15-29)



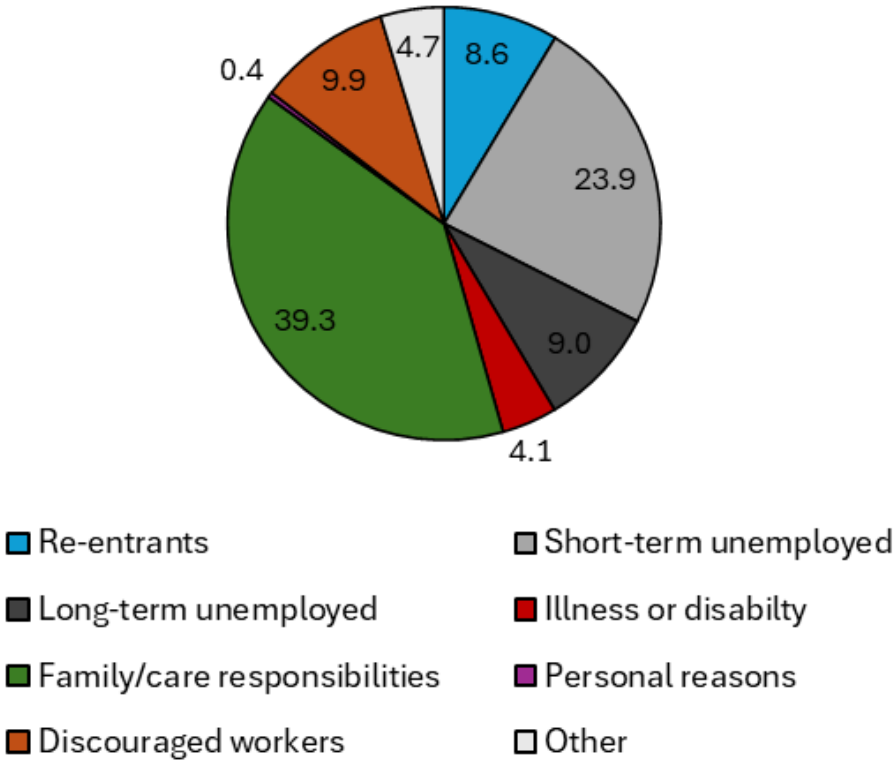
Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 17): Looking at NEET sub-groups within the NEET population shows that young people with family or care responsibilities consistently made up the largest category. Their share rose from 36.5% in 2020 to 39.3% in 2023, highlighting the significant and persistent role of unpaid care—particularly among young women—in limiting youth labour force participation. Short-term unemployed NEETs also remained high, accounting for 23.9% in 2023. Re-entrants, long-term unemployed and discouraged workers presented similar shares, by around 9-10%, but following different trajectories between 2020 and 2023: while re-entrants and long-term unemployed increased, with jumps in 2022, discouraged workers fell sharply from 15.2% to 9.9%.

NEETs due to illness or disability remained stable at 4.1% in 2023; a similar share was observed for "other" NEETs after gradual declines. Within NEET categories, 'Personal reasons' was the least represented. accounting for 0.4% of all NEETs in 2023, a proportion that has remained broadly consistent in the preceding 3–4 years. Overall, approximately half of NEETs are driven by labour market factors (discouragement, unemployment, re-entry), while the other half— mainly relying on NEETs due to family or care responsibilities—are shaped by social and policy-related barriers.

Within the NEET population, gender and education breakdowns underline important structural barriers and inequalities. In 2023, men represented 44.4% of all NEETs. Among short-term unemployed NEETs, men dominated (70.0%), while NEETs with family or care responsibilities were overwhelmingly women (91.8%). By education, most NEET groups were medium-skilled (averaging 66.1% across all NEETs in 2023). An exception was the group of NEETs due to illness or disability, where the majority had low education (68.3%).

Figure 17. Structure of NEET in 2023, Georgia (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Kosovo

Kosovo has one of the largest shares of youth within its working-age population, with young people notably better educated than the general population, particularly at the intermediate level. Youth unemployment remains higher than the overall rate, and inactivity levels for both youth and adults are among the highest in the ETF region, reflecting significant labour market challenges. While the overall NEET rate declined between 2020 and 2022, it increased slightly in 2023, driven largely by a rise in NEETs with unclassified reasons and persistent discouraged youth. Family and care responsibilities, predominantly affecting medium-qualified young women, remain a key barrier, alongside long- and short-term unemployment, which mainly impact men. These patterns highlight ongoing structural challenges in youth labour market integration despite some recent improvements.

In 2023, young people aged 15–29 comprised 36.1% of Kosovo's working-age population (aged 15–64). This placed Kosovo among the countries with a comparatively larger youth segment within their working-age demographic (see Table 23 in the Annex). Meanwhile, 9.6% of youth aged 20-29 had a low level of education, whereas the share was 37%, almost four times higher for the overall population aged 15+ (see Figure 32 in the Annex). A similar, but reversed gap, characterised people with medium level of education: 68% of young people declared an intermediate level of education, 21 p.p. more than the share of total population aged 15+. Approximately 22% of youth hold high level of education, compared with 16% of the total population. Thus, moving from one generation to another, the structure of educational attainment in Kosovo is skewed in favour of youth.

Youth in Kosovo continue to face labour market challenges. Like other ETF partner countries, youth unemployment rates were higher than those among the total population. In 2023, the youth

unemployment rate for age group 15-29 reached 17.2% compared with 10.8% for the working-age group 15+ (see Figure 33 in the Annex). This was accompanied by very high out of labour force shares, for both youth and working-age population. With youth inactivity at 68.6% versus 64.9% for the overall working-age population (Figure 34 in the Annex), people detachment from the labour market is a huge concern for the country. Employment rates were very low, a critical sign of the existing problems in the labour markets and job opportunities. The difference between youth and total employment rates was relatively small, with 26.0% and 31.3%, respectively (see Figure 35 in the Annex). Data on the employment rate of recent graduates, which could provide further insight into employment opportunities for young people, were not available in the ETF KIESE database. The percentage of early school leavers stood at 7.7%, placing the country in the mid-range when compared to the other ETF partner countries (see Figure 37 in the Annex).

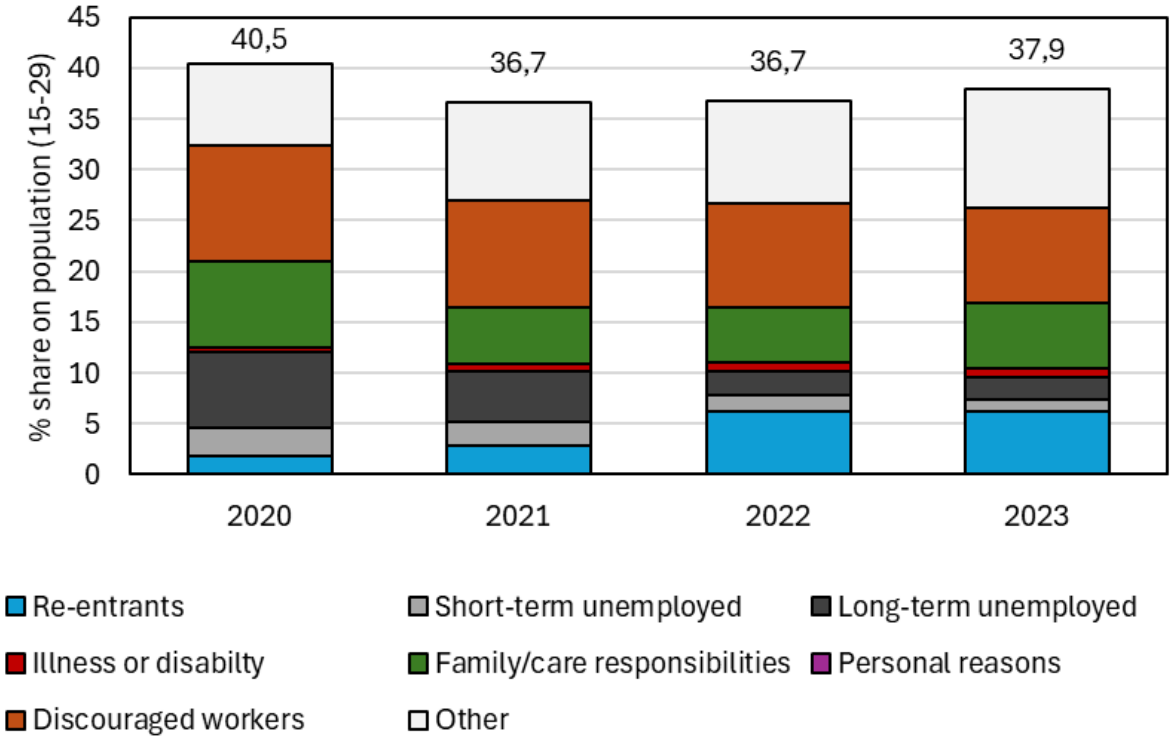
NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 18): Kosovo's overall NEET rate declined from 40.5% in 2020 to 36.7% in 2021-2022, before slightly increasing again to 37.9% in 2023. The share of "other" NEETs increased over time and in 2023 accounted for 11.6% of the total youth population, representing the highest percentage among all NEET categories. Other NEET sub-groups with considerable presentation were discouraged workers reported at 9.5% of youth population in 2023, as well as re-entrants and NEETs due to family responsibilities, each accounting for around 6-6.5%. The share of long-term unemployed decreased between 2020 and 2023 with more than 5 p.p., representing the category with the biggest changes across the various NEET sub-groups. The other types of NEETs (short-term unemployed, NEETs due to illness or disability, and NEETs for personal reasons) accounted for relatively marginal shares, each representing around 1% or less of youth in 2023.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 19): Data on the internal composition of NEET population aged 15-29 in Kosovo show that in 2023, the largest category of NEETs were "other" NEETs (30.6%), followed by discouraged workers (25%), those NEETs due to family responsibilities (16.8%) and re-entrants (16.2%). Long-term unemployed accounted for around 6% of the NEET population, while the remaining categories each represented less than 3% of NEETs. The subgroup of long-term unemployment NEETs experienced the sharpest decline between 2020 and 2023, with a decrease of more than 12 p.p.

In 2023, around half of NEETs belonged to NEETs linked to labour market-driven factors (discouraged workers, the short- and long-term unemployed and re-entrants). The "other" NEETs is a sub-group that has steadily increased over the years, with a 10.7 p.p. growth between 2020 and 2023. This category represents a grey area, encompassing young people with unclassified reasons for disengagement and creates limitations in a better understanding of NEETs nature. It may include individuals engaged in informal work, experiencing migration-related delays, or simply falling into gaps in data classification.

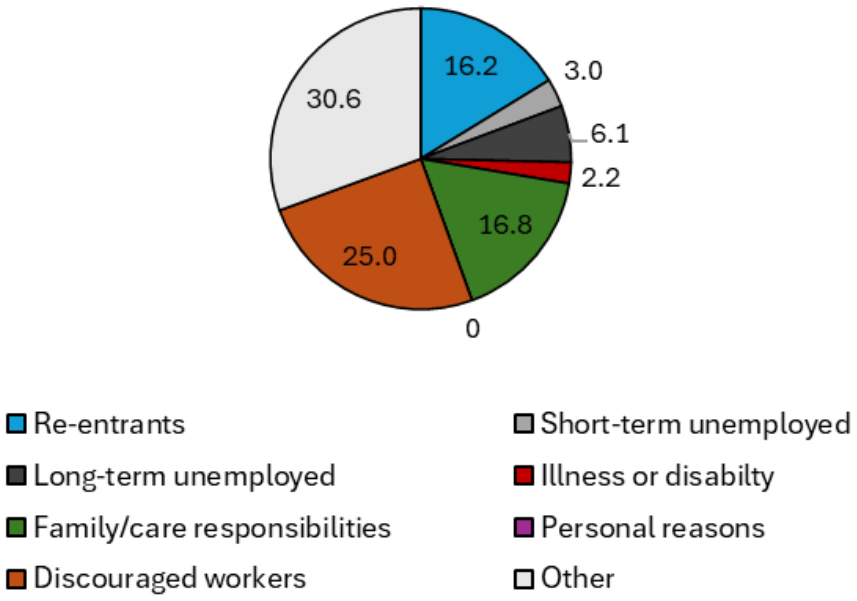
Within the NEET population, a further breakdown of various sub-groups provides a detailed picture of who the NEETs are in each category. Over the four years, the NEETs with family and care responsibilities were almost exclusively female (89.3% in 2023). In 2023, the majority of family-related NEETs hold medium level qualifications (61.0%). Conversely, among the long-term unemployed and short-term unemployed, the majority were men (65.5% and 55.5%, respectively). To a lesser share, discouraged NEETs were also predominantly male (56.0%).

Figure 18. Categorisation of NEET, Kosovo (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Figure 19. Structure of NEET in 2023, Kosovo (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Moldova

In 2023, Moldova's youth had one of the smallest shares among ETF countries. While youth unemployment was remarkably low, a high share of young people remained out of the labour force, indicating structural barriers to labour market integration. Moldova also had the second-highest rate of early school leavers after Türkiye, indicating challenges in education retention. The NEET rate was stable at around 33% in recent years. Most NEETs fell under the "other" category due to small survey samples, making it difficult to draw clear conclusions about NEET composition.

In 2023, Moldova's youth population aged 15–29 represented 25.4% of its working-age population (age 15–64). This indicates a relatively smaller share of youth compared to several ETF partner countries, and more generally, it is a characteristic of ageing societies rather than younger ones (see Table 23 in the Annex). The educational attainment in Moldova resembles that of most other ETF countries, with younger cohorts generally achieving higher education levels when compared to the overall population (Figure 32 in the Annex).

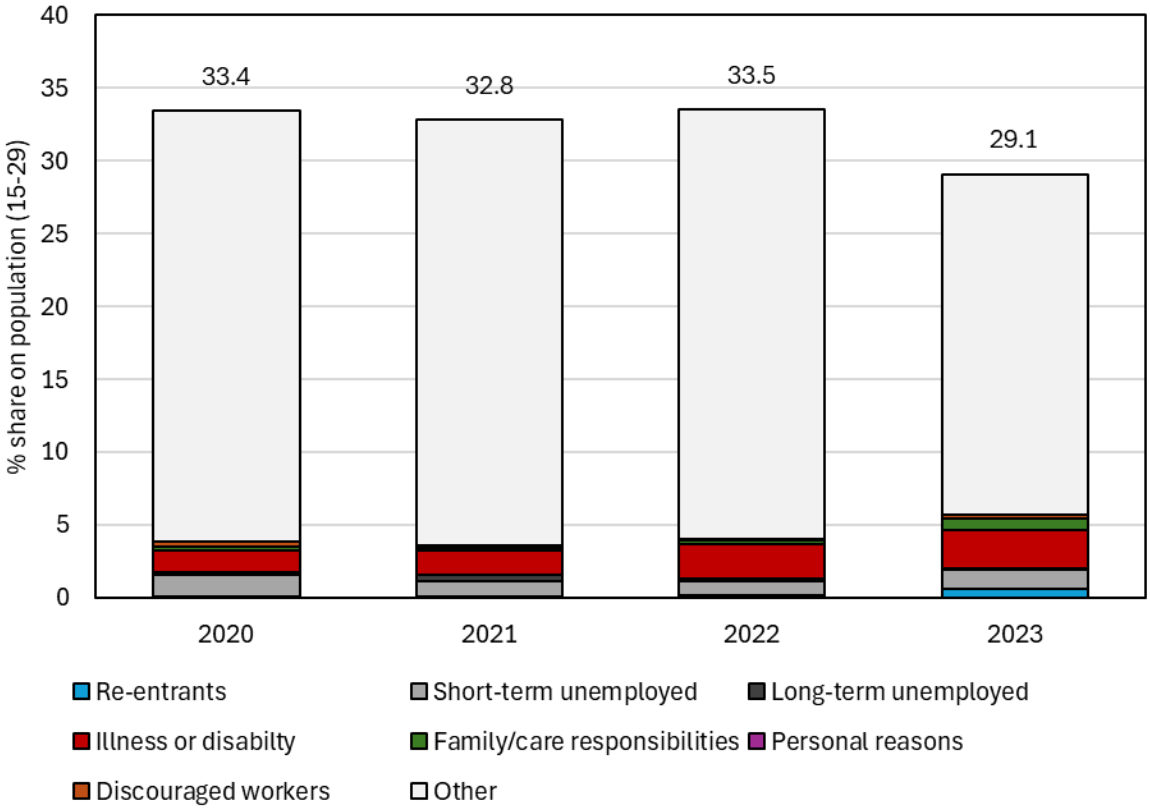
The overall unemployment rate (4.6% in 2023) and the youth unemployment rate (7.5%) in Moldova are very similar and at the same time are the lowest across ETF partner countries (Figure 33 in the Annex). However, the low unemployment rate does not mean that young people in Moldova are well-employed; rather, it reveals problems of hidden unemployment, high migration, and disappointment in finding a job. This is also emphasised by the high inactivity rate of young people aged 15-29 (66.9% in 2023, see Figure 34).

The gap between the youth employment rate and the overall employment rate is relatively high, indicating that youth are less likely to be in employment. Despite youth employment rate (30.6% in 2023) being broadly in line with those of other ETF partner countries, this gap of 12.5 p.p. is the highest in its region (Figure 35 in the Annex). Moreover, Moldova records a high rate of early school leavers, 17.5% in 2023, indicating the existence of persistent challenges in student retention (Figure 37 in the Annex). For the employment rate of recent graduates, no data is available.

NEET sub-groups (Figure 20 and Figure 21): The NEET rate remained stable at around 33% between from 2020 to 2022, before declining to 29.1% in 2023[10]. Further disaggregation of NEET categories is not advisable due to the very limited number of responses in the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Almost all responses fell into the "Other" category (see Figure 20). For example, in 2023, out of 3,322 people in the NEET group aged 15-24, only 62 reported being short-term unemployed, and 5 reported being long-term unemployed. Nevertheless, slight increases were observed in several categories between 2020 and 2023, including illness or disability (1.6% to 2.7%), re-entrants (0.1% to 0.6%), and family or care responsibilities (0.2% to 0.7%) (see Figure 20).

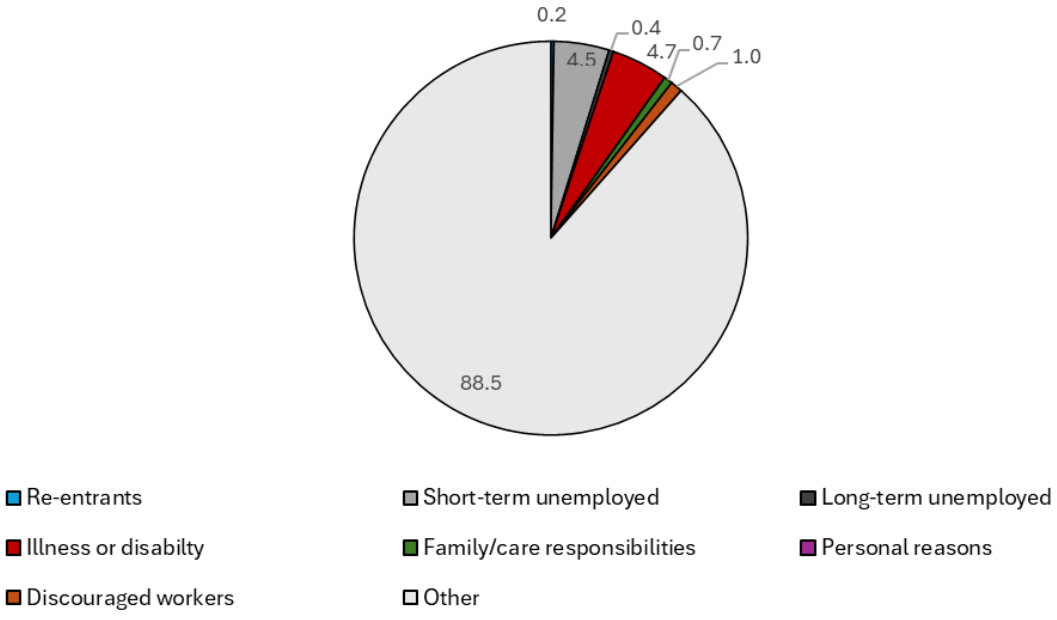
[10] NEET data in this report do not correspond to the official NSO data (around 17% in 2020-2022 and 13.8% in 2023). This is probably due to a change in the population accounting methodology since 2019. The LFS results from the NSO of Moldova are estimated using the number of usually resident population. Usually, resident population is the total number of persons holding the citizenship of the Republic of Moldova, citizenship of other states and stateless persons, who, on the reference date, have the usual residence on the territory of the country. A total population figure is computed annually, starting from the last available census results, each year adding births, subtracting deaths data and added the migratory balance. For further details, please see Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova, editions 2002-2024. (2024). National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. https://statistica.gov.md/en/statistical-yearbook-of-the-republic-of-moldova-9877_59482.html.

Figure 20. Categorisation of NEET, Moldova (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Figure 21. Structure of NEET in 2023, Moldova (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Montenegro

Montenegro has a mid-range youth population share among ETF countries and shows a relatively strong educational profile among youth. Despite a comparatively high youth unemployment rate, overall employment outcomes—especially for youth and recent graduates—are among the best in the ETF region, suggesting an effective school-to-work transition. The NEET rate has steadily declined since 2020, primarily due to reductions in long-term unemployment and family-related inactivity, particularly among women. The composition of NEET sub-groups in Montenegro reveals clear gender and educational patterns, with men predominating in long-term unemployment, women being overrepresented in family-related inactivity, and re-entrants largely holding medium to high educational levels.

In 2023, young people aged 15–29 represented 28.6% of Montenegro's working-age population (age 15–64). This places Montenegro in the middle range among ETF partner countries in terms of youth population share (see Table 23 in the Annex). Educational attainment among youth aged 20-29 is higher compared to the overall working age population (15+). 29% of youth hold a high level of education, slightly higher than 25% of the overall working age population. The gap in education attainment is higher when looking at the medium-level qualifications: 67% of youth hold a medium-level qualification, around 9 p.p. higher than the working age population. Conversely, a large share of adult population (18%) has a low level of qualification compared to 4% of youth (Figure 32 in the Annex).

Still, the youth population aged 15-29 faces some challenges present in the labour market. In 2023, the unemployment rate (see Figure 33 in the Annex) among young people was 21.2%, much higher than the overall unemployment rate of 13.1% for the working-age population (15+). At the same time, 40.6% of youth were detached from the labour market (see Figure 34). While this indicates a considerable amount of unused labour potential, it remains the lowest among ETF partner countries. The share of overall working age outside labour market is about 5% lower than that of youth.

In 2023, Montenegro exhibited moderate levels of employment rates. Among youth, 46.8% were employed, while the overall employment rate of working age population was 55.6%. Although the need for further improvement, these employment rates were among the highest across the ETF partner countries (see Figure 35 in the Annex). Furthermore, the immediate transition from education to employment appears relatively smooth, with 63.4% of recent graduates securing jobs, one the highest rates across ETF partner countries (Figure 36 in the Annex). The country has also succeeded in keeping early school leaving rates low (6.8%), reflecting effective education retention policies (Figure 37 in the Annex).

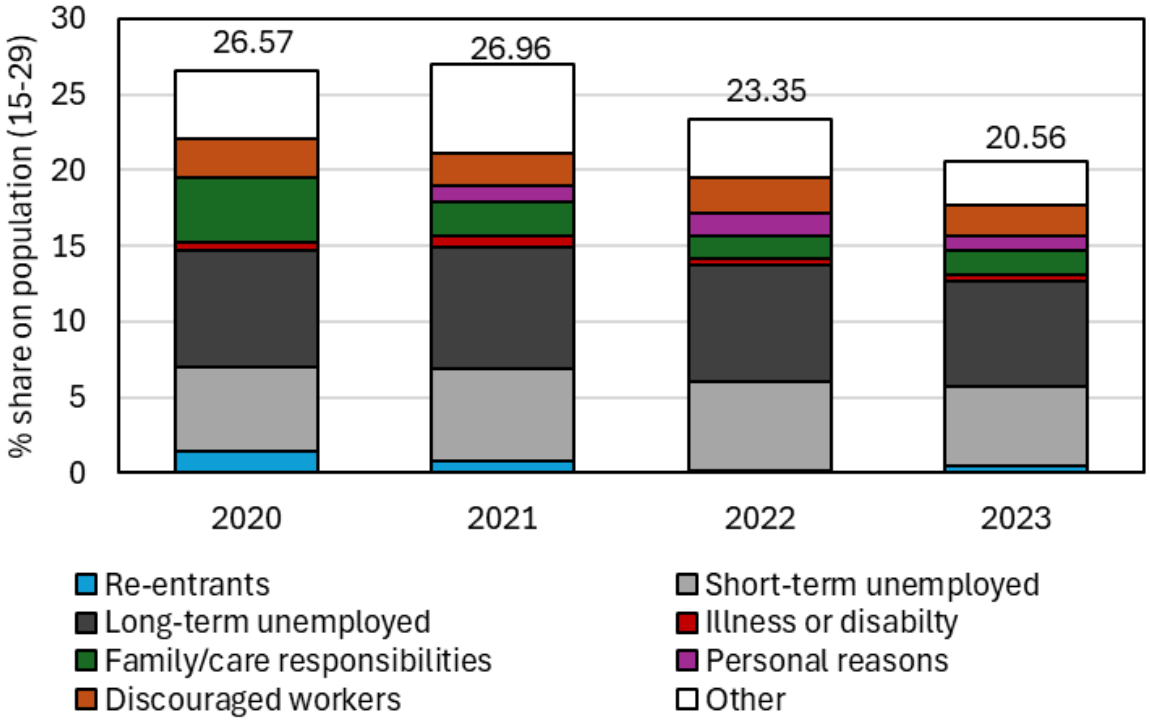
NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 22): Between 2020 and 2023, the NEET rate declined from 26.6% to 20.6%, marking one of the most noticeable reductions among ETF countries. This overall decline is reflected in almost all NEET sub-categories. The largest contributor, long-term unemployed NEETs, fell slightly from 7.7% in 2020 to 7.0% in 2023. The second largest share, short-term unemployed NEETs, remained relatively stable and reached 5.2% in 2023. While re-entrants and NEETs due to illness or disability represented 0.4% of youth population, other sub-groups (NEETs for personal reasons, NEETs due to family responsibilities and discouraged workers) ranged between 1-2%. The share of youth citing NEETs due to family or care responsibilities recorded the largest declines, halving from 4.3% to 1.6% in 2023. A consistent downward trend was also observed in the "other" category, which fell from 4.5% in 2020 to 2.9% in 2023, possibly indicating improved classification or reduced prevalence of less-defined reasons.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 23): LFS data provides further insight into the internal structure of the NEET population in Montenegro over the same period. Long-term unemployment remained the largest NEET sub-group throughout, increasing from 28.8% of all NEETs in 2020 to 33.9% in 2023. Other sub-groups with a considerable weight among NEETs were short-term unemployed and discouraged workers, counting for 25.5% and 9.8% respectively in 2023. While

short-term unemployed increased continuously over the period, the share of discouraged workers remained more stable. Considering the figures for discouraged workers, the short- and long-term unemployed and re-entrants, the data suggest that on average, more than 70% of NEETs belong to the NEET group because of labour market-driven factors. Re-entrants—those who were expected to rejoin education or employment soon—reduced through the years and made up 2.2% of NEETs in 2023. Less than 30% of NEETs includes the category of "other NEETs" and NEET for more social-policy related reasons, such as family responsibilities, illness or disability. The "other" category showed some fluctuation, yet remained a significant share of the NEET population, representing almost 15% of NEETs in 2023. The category of family or care responsibilities declined sharply with more than 8 p.p. between 2020 and 2023. NEETs due to personal reason and especially the sub-group of NEETs due to illness or disability accounted for marginal shares.

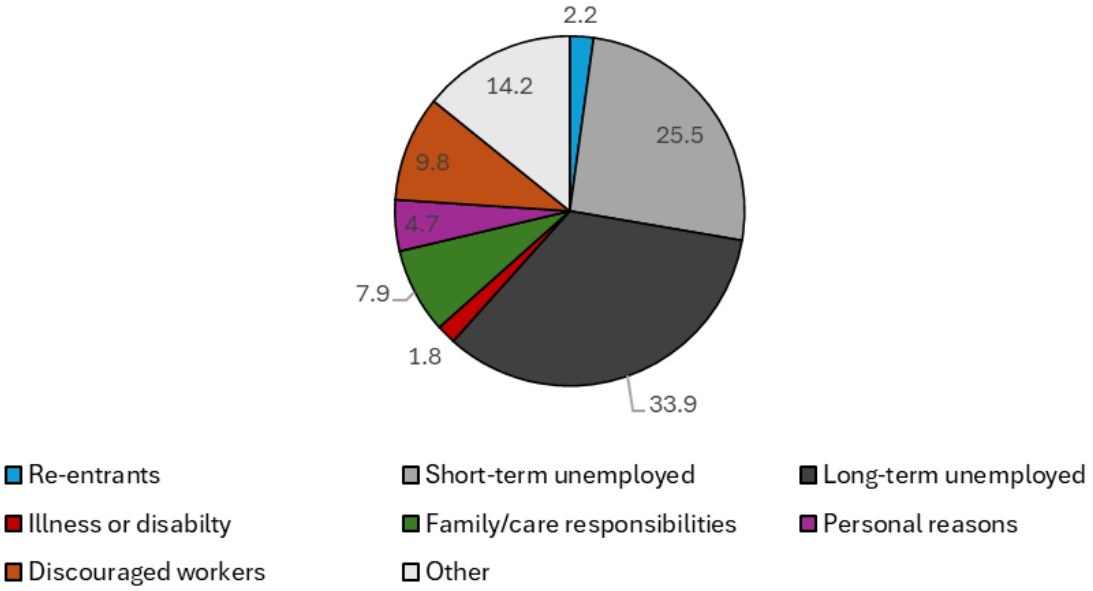
While Montenegro has achieved one of the strongest declines in NEET rates among ETF partner countries, long-term unemployment remains the predominant driver of NEET status. A closer look at this sub-group of NEETs reveals that 52.5% were male, and more than half of the long-term unemployment (57.0%) had an intermediate (VET) education in 2023. Within this category, 25.8% were highly educated, and 7.8% had intermediate (non-VET) education levels. By contrast, around 90% of NEETs due to family or care responsibilities were female. Re-entrants represented a category with a relatively good level of education: 81% of them had high level of education.

Figure 22. Categorisation of NEET, Montenegro (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Figure 23. Structure of NEET in 2023, Montenegro (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

North Macedonia

North Macedonia has a relatively low youth share within its working-age population, and the difference in educational attainment between youth and the general population is less pronounced than in many ETF countries. Despite low early school dropout rates and promising employment outcomes for recent graduates, a high share of youth hold low education levels, pointing to untapped potential for upskilling. Youth face significant challenges in the labour market, with a wide gap between youth and general unemployment rates, and a substantial portion remaining outside the labour force. While the NEET rate declined in the early 2020s, a recent slight increase highlights lingering structural issues, especially for young women, who are disproportionately affected by family and care responsibilities.

In 2023, youth aged 15–29 comprised 27.0% of the working-age population (aged 15–64) in North Macedonia. This places the country among those with a relatively low share of youth population, indicating a demographic profile more typical of aging societies (see Table 23 in the Annex). As in other ETF partner countries, low educational attainment is more common among the overall population (15+) than among youth aged 20–29. In 2023, 17.1% of youth had a low level of education—about 12.5 p.p. lower than the overall population (Figure 32 in the Annex). By contrast, youth were much more likely to have completed medium level of education: 65% of young people compared with 50% of the overall population, a gap of around 15 p.p. At the higher end of the education spectrum, differences were smaller: 18% of youth had attained higher education, only 2.5 p.p. below the overall population.

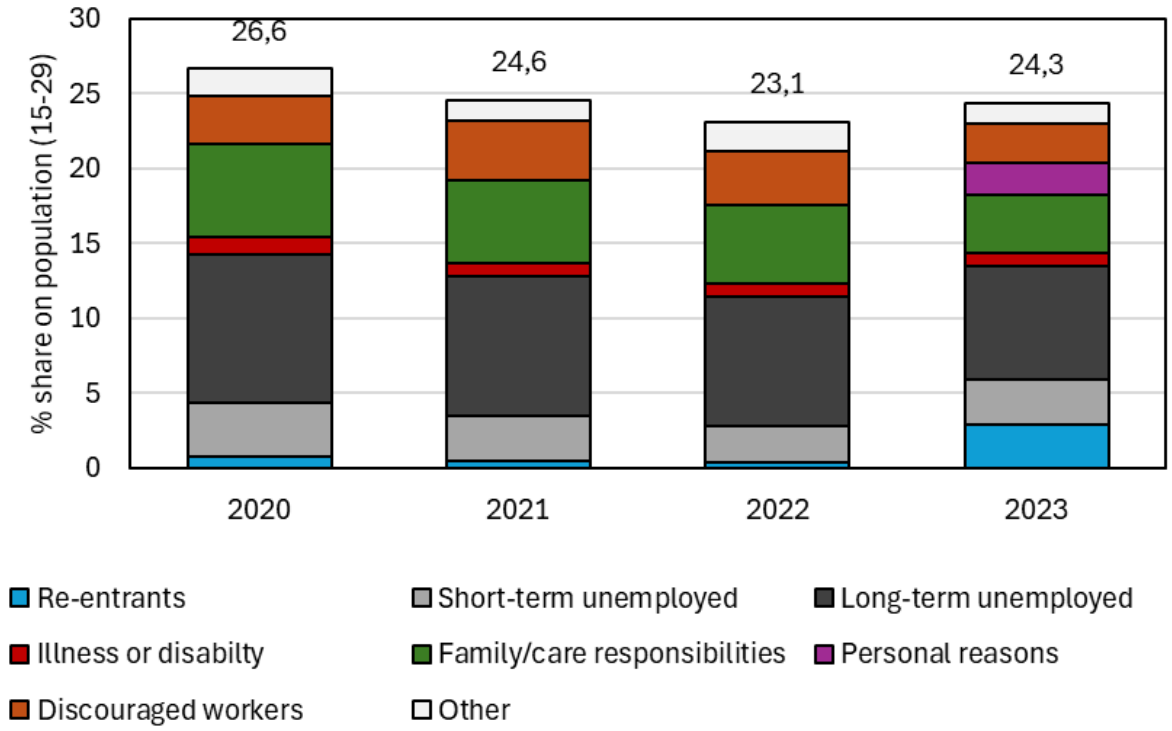
Young people in North Macedonia face pronounced disadvantages in the labour market. The youth unemployment rate stood at 24.9% in 2023, nearly double the overall unemployment rate of 13.1% (Figure 33 in the Annex). The share of persons who were out of the labour force remains high: 55.2% of young people were outside the labour force, compared to 47.6% of the total working-age population (Figure 34 in the Annex). This is accompanied with a relatively low youth employment rate, at 33.6% compared with 45.3% for the general population (Figure 35 in the Annex).

Similar to the other ETF partner countries, North Macedonia shows a strong benefit from qualification, given that the employment rate of recent graduates was approximately 17 p.p. higher (62.3%, see

Figure 36) than the average employment rate of the population aged 15 +. Early dropout rate from education was one of the lowest among the ETF partner countries, as shown in Figure 37 in the Annex (3.7%), suggesting strong foundations for upskilling youth in North Macedonia.

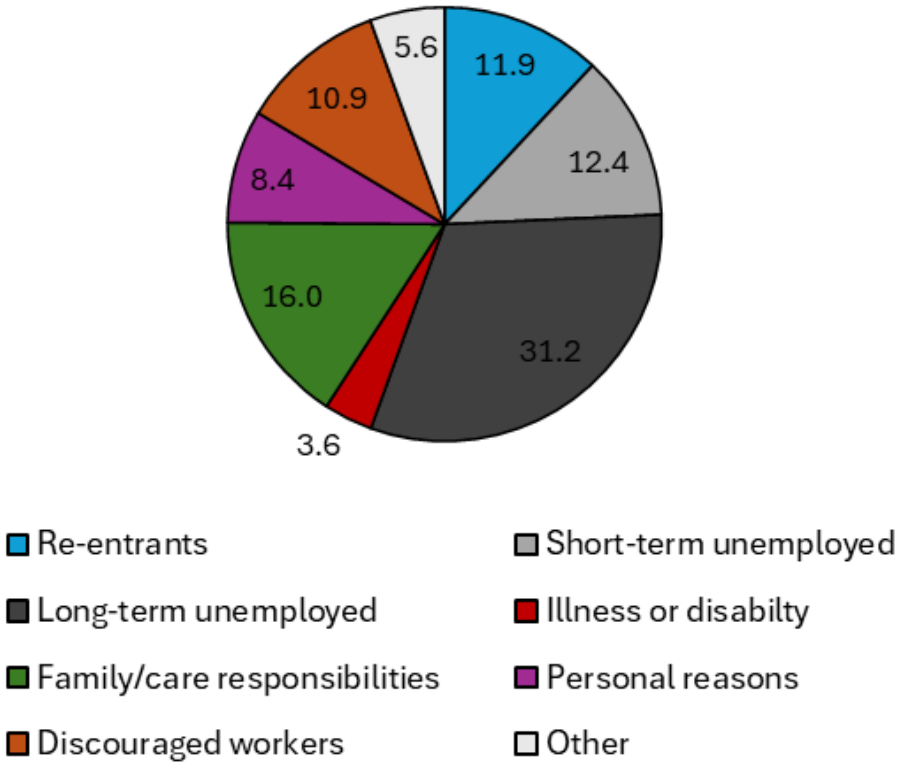
NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 24): NEET rates declined from 2020 to 2022 but registered a slight increase in 2023, reaching 24.3%. Between 2020 and 2023 the NEETs rate decreased by 2.3 p.p. This reduction was mainly driven by a drop in long-term unemployment (from 9.9% to 7.6%) and NEETs due to family or care responsibilities (from 6.3% to 3.9%). Despite decreases in most of the NEET subgroups between 2020 and 2023, the shares of re-entrants and NEETs for personal reasons both increased by 2.1%, offsetting some of the reductions. In 2023, long-term unemployed still represented the largest group (7.6% of the total youth population), followed by NEETs due to family and care responsibilities. While most of the other subgroups (re-entrants, short term unemployed, NEETs for personal reasons and discouraged workers) varied between 2% and 3%, NEETs due to illness or disability and "other" NEETs each accounted for around 1-1.5%.

Figure 24. Categorisation of NEET, North Macedonia (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

Figure 25. Structure of NEET in 2023, North Macedonia (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 25): The internal composition of the NEET population in 2023 highlights pronounced structural barriers. The two largest NEET sub-groups in North Macedonia were the long-term unemployed, accounting for 31.2% of all NEETs, and young people with family or care responsibilities, making up 16.0%. Other NEET categories—such as re-entrants, short term unemployed and discouraged workers- reached 11-12% each. Overall, discouraged workers, the short- and long-term unemployed and re-entrants, made up on average around 66% of NEETs, indicating that almost two-thirds are driven by labour market factors. Between 2020 and 2023, the share of re-entrants and NEETs for personal reason increased by around 8.5-9 p.p. In contrast, all other categories underwent a decrease, especially NEETs due to family or care responsibilities (7.5 p.p. decrease) and long-term unemployed (5.9 p.p. decrease).

In 2023, the two largest sub-groups of NEETs in North Macedonia were long-term unemployed, representing 31.2% of NEETs, and those with family or care responsibilities, reaching 16.0% of NEETs. A further breakdown of these two sub-groups reveals considerable gender disparities. While the share of women on all NEETs in 2023 was 53.9%, they were largely overrepresented in the group of NEETs with family or care responsibilities (94.4%) but underrepresented in the group of long-term unemployed NEETs (36.7%). Additionally, NEETs with family and care responsibilities were more often low-skilled (47.9% in 2023), compared to other sub-groups, such as long-term unemployed (20,8%).

Serbia

In 2023, youth made up a relatively low share of Serbia's working-age population. Young people are generally better educated than the overall population, with significantly fewer low-educated youth and a higher share holding medium-level qualifications. Despite these advantages, youth unemployment remains notably higher than the general rate, and half of the youth population is out of the labour force, reflecting ongoing challenges in labour market integration. Employment rates for youth lag behind those of the overall population, but are comparatively strong for recent graduates, indicating better prospects for those with a completed education. The NEET rate has declined in recent years, primarily due to decreases in short-term and long-term unemployment, as well as family-related inactivity. Meanwhile, other categories, such as discouraged youth and illness, have remained relatively stable. The largest NEET sub-groups are short-term unemployed—predominantly men with medium education.

In 2023, young people aged 15–29 represented 25.2% of Serbia's working-age population (age 15–64). This is one of the lowest youth shares among the ETF partner countries (see Table 23 in the Annex). Similarly to other countries, youth aged 20-29 were better educated than the total working-age population in Serbia (see Figure 32 in the Annex). The percentage of youth with low level of education was much lower than that of total working-age population (7.7% compared to 22.6% in 2023). In contrast, 72.5% of youth had attained a medium level of education, compared with 55.2% of working age population. Both youth and total working age population had similar rates of people with high level of education, at approximately 20-22%,

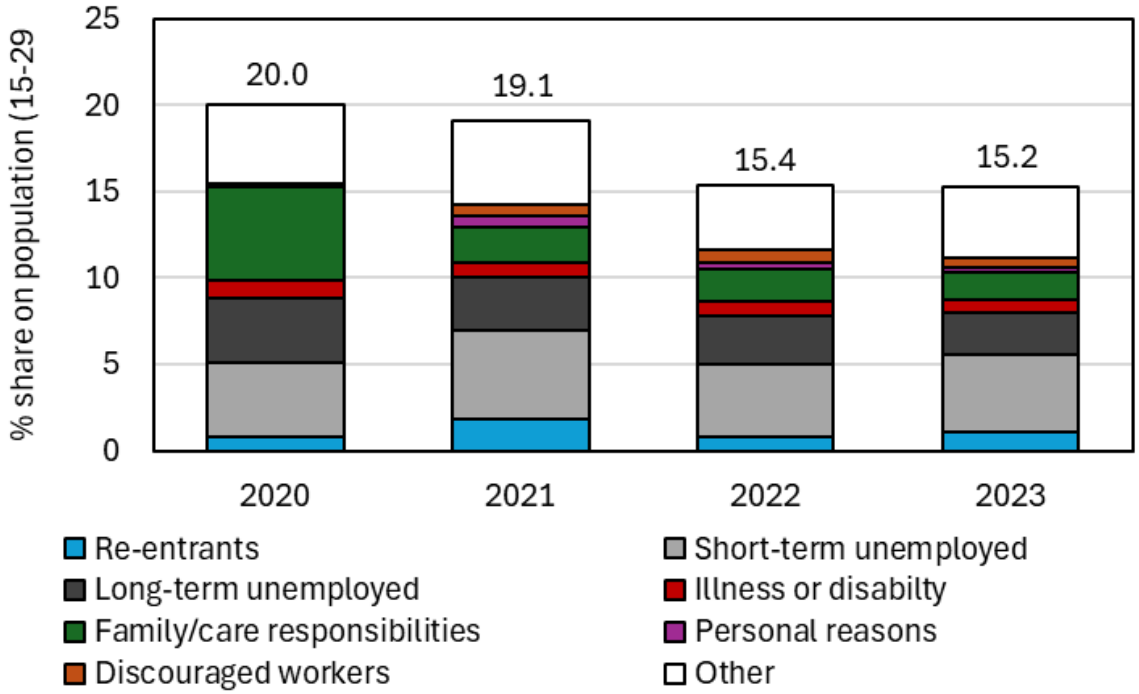
Young people in Serbia face different challenges in the labour market. In 2023, the youth unemployment rate for individuals aged 15-29 was 18.5%, nearly double the total unemployment rate of 9.5% for the working age population 15-74 (see Figure 33 in the Annex). Despite representing one of the lowest percentages compared to other countries, the share of young people outside the labour force was high, at 50.7%. For the total population, the share of persons out of the labour force was 6 p.p. lower, at around 44.6% (see Figure 34 in the Annex). In the same year, the total employment rate was 50.2%, while the youth employment rate was around 10 p.p. lower (see Figure 35 in the Annex).

On a more positive note, employment rate of recent graduates is much higher than that of either youth in general or the overall working age population (see Figure 36 in the Annex). At around 64%, this indicates favourable employment opportunities for young people who have recently graduated and are seeking to position themselves in the labour market. In the same year, the early school leaving rate stood at 5.8% (see Figure 37 in the Annex), below the EU targets.

In conclusion, the situation in Serbia was similar to that of other SEET countries: youth generally attain higher education levels than the overall population yet remain more likely to be unemployed. However, employment opportunities appear more favourable for recent graduates entering the labour market.

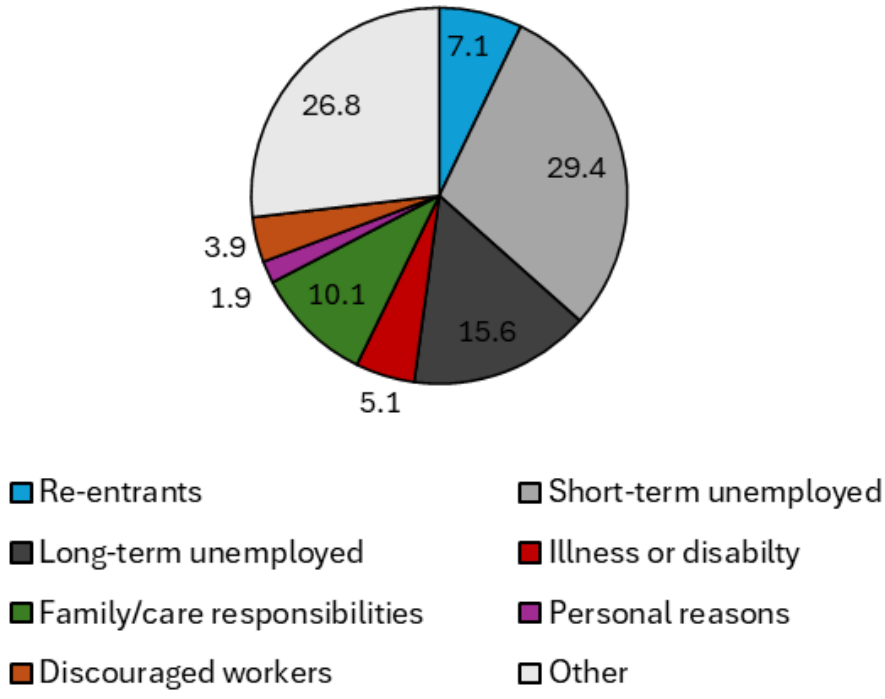
NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 26): In 2021, a methodological break occurred in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) time series in Serbia, rendering comparisons between 2020 and 2021-2023 unreliable. Nevertheless, between 2021 and 2023 the NEET rate fell from 19.1% to 15.2%. All sub-groups either recorded reductions or remained relatively stable during these years. The overall decline in NEETs was mainly driven by reductions in the shares of the re-entrants and "other" NEETs (each falling by 0.8 p.p.), the long-term unemployed (reducing by 0.7 p.p.), short-term unemployed and NEETs due to family responsibilities (each down by 0.6 p.p.). In 2023, long-term unemployed NEETs accounted for 4.5% of the total youth population, representing the highest percentage across the various NEET sub-groups. A similar proportion of the total youth population, 4.1%, accounted for "other" NEETs.

Figure 26. Categorisation of NEET, Serbia (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices.

Figure 27. Structure of NEET in 2023, Serbia (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 27): LFS data 2023 show that within the NEET population the largest category of NEETs aged 15–29 were the short-term unemployed (29.4%), followed by the "other" category (26.8%) and long-term unemployed (15.6%). Considering the figures,

on average around 56% of all NEETs refers to NEETs linked to labour market-driven factors. The remaining 46% includes a considerable number of "other" NEETs (26.8% of all NEETs) and NEET for more social-policy related factors (19.2% of NEETs).

In 2023, within the NEET population, a further breakdown of short-term unemployed shows that the majority are men (60.6%). In terms of education, 13.9% of short-term unemployed have a low level of education, which is below the average across all NEETs (26.1%).

Long-term unemployed NEETs were less likely to be registered at a Public Employment Service (PES)[11] (51.5%) than long-term unemployed NEETs (69.1% were registered with PES in 2023). The "other" group in Serbia largely reflects the averages among all NEET: slightly more than half have had no work experience in 2023 (50.6% in 2023, compared to 50.9% among all NEETs), slightly less than half were registered at a PES (46.8% - compared to a share of 51.4% of NEETs on average), and the majority held intermediate education levels (ISCED 2011 3-4, 55.3% - compared to 60.0% on average over all NEETs).

Türkiye

Türkiye has one of the largest youth shares among ETF countries, with a strong generational shift toward higher educational attainment. Youth unemployment is lower than in most comparator countries, and employment rates—especially for recent graduates—are among the highest, indicating relatively effective transitions from education to work. However, Türkiye faces a significant challenge with early school leaving, recording the highest dropout rates in the ETF region. The NEET rate has declined slightly over recent years, primarily due to reductions in family or care responsibilities and short-term unemployment, although long-term unemployment remains persistent. Gendered roles strongly influence NEET status, with women overwhelmingly represented among those inactive due to family or care duties, while men dominate short-term unemployment. Unlike many of the other countries, Türkiye's NEET population is characterised by a large share of both low- and highly educated youth, reflecting diverse barriers to labour market participation.

In 2023, the youth population aged 15–29 represented 33.5% of Türkiye's working-age population (age 15–64), classifying it one of the ETF partner countries with the highest presence and reliance on the younger cohort (see Figure 23 in the Annex). With youth shares above 30% of the working-age population, Türkiye is typically seen as a country with a young workforce, suggesting the labour markets and social policies will strongly rely on youth population. Additionally, Türkiye has shown a strong generational shift in educational attainment. Among those aged 20–29, only 26% had a low level of education, compared to 57% of the total population aged 15+. At the same time, 40% of young adults had achieved a medium level of education, while 33% had a high level of education, signalling a relatively well-qualified younger population (Figure 32 in the Annex).

In 2023, Türkiye's youth unemployment rate stood at 15.5%, which was among the lowest across the ETF partner countries, except for Moldova[12] reporting a lower figure. Meanwhile, unemployment rate for total working age population (15+) was 6.1 p.p. lower compared to youth unemployment rate (see Figure 33 in the Annex). Additionally, a considerable amount of youth population was outside the labour market. Between 45% and 47% of both young cohort and total working-age population were detached from the labour markets in Türkiye (Figure 34 in the Annex). Despite inactivity rates above 40% are quite common among ETF partner countries, still the situation remains critical and in the case of Türkiye data suggests structural barriers for all, not only youth.

With a moderate youth employment rate at 46.4% (Figure 35 in the Annex), which is similar to the overall working-age population, the country shows that efforts have so far translated into some progress in improving youth labour market participation. Data on employment rate of recent graduates

[11] Serbia is one of the few countries where the breakdown "registered at a local PES" yielded meaningful results, as this information was available for all NEETs in the Labour Force Survey.
[12] Ukraine's most recent available data show that the youth employment rate stood at 13.1% in 2021. Given the profound labour market disruptions caused by the ongoing war, this figure is likely to have deteriorated since then.

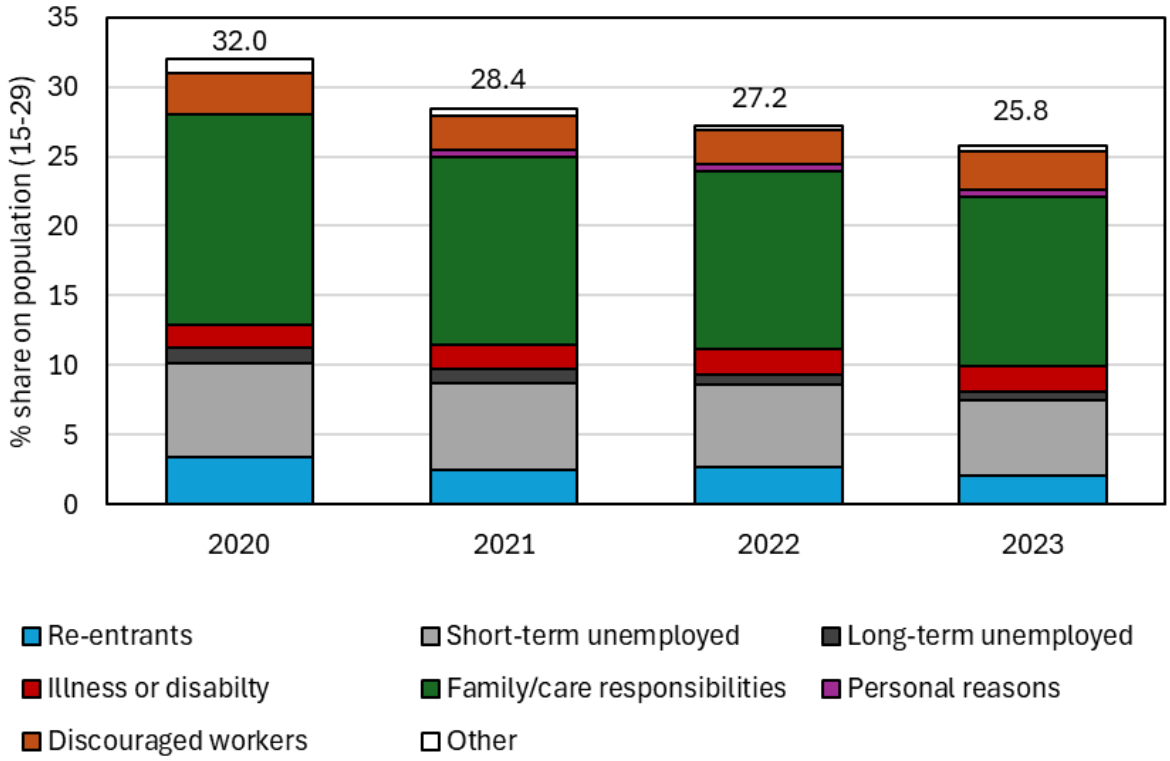
(Figure 36 in the Annex) shows a better position for young graduates who want to join the labour market. Türkiye is among the ETF partner countries with the highest employment rate of recent graduates, at 64.7%, underlining the value of educational attainment in accessing employment. One of the most pressing challenges for youth in Türkiye's lies in early school leaving. At 19.6%, Türkiye recorded the highest rate of early school leavers among ETF partner countries (Figure 37 in the Annex), raising concerns about the inclusiveness and retention capacity of the education system.

NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 28): Türkiye's overall NEET experienced a continues decline from 32% in 2020 to 25.8% in 2023. NEETs due to family or care responsibilities accounted for 12.1% of the total youth population in 2023, representing the highest percentage across the various NEET sub-groups. The share of this category decreased with approximately 3 p.p. compared to 2020. The short-term unemployed and re-entrants also declined during this period and represented the other two main sub-groups within total youth, reaching 2.1% and 5.4% respectively. The discouraged NEET fluctuated slightly between 2.9% and 2.4%, accounting for 2.8% in 2023. Meanwhile, NEETs due to illness or disability increased over the years, reaching approximately 2% of the youth population. The other sub-groups ("other" NEETs, long-term unemployed, and NEETs for personal reasons) presented marginal shares of youth, at around 0.5% in 2023.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 29): LFS data in Türkiye show that during the period 2020-2023, within the NEET population the largest category of NEETs aged 15–29 were NEETs due to family or care responsibilities (at around 47%), followed by the short-term NEETs (21-22%). Both shares remained relatively stable over the years. The fact that NEETs due to family or care responsibilities represent nearly half of the NEET population, highlights the structural importance of gendered roles in shaping youth labour market participation.

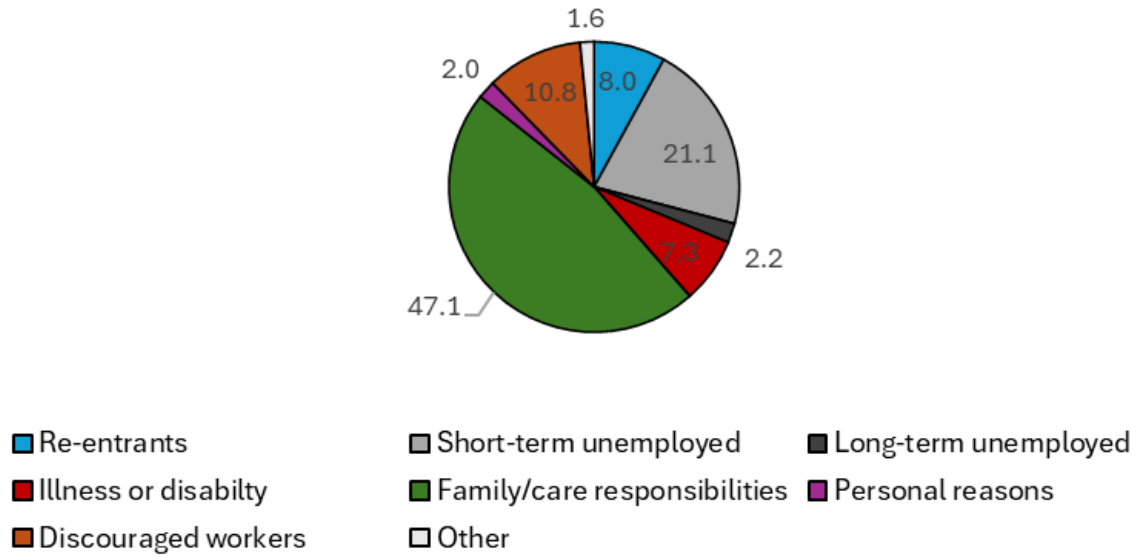
The re-entrants declined from 11% in 2020 to 8% in 2023, suggesting relatively fewer young people were transitioning back into education or training. The discouraged NEET fluctuated slightly but rose to 10.8% in 2023. NEETs due to illness or disability increased gradually from 5.1% in 2020 to 7.3% in 2023. As for the other categories (long-term unemployed NEETs, NEETs for personal reasons and "other NEETs), they remained small shares, each accounting for less than 2.2% in 2023.

Figure 28. Categorisation of NEET, Türkiye (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices.

Figure 29. Structure of NEET in 2023, Türkiye (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

A closer look at the largest category of NEETs in 2023— NEETs due to family or care responsibilities—reveals that more than 9 in 10 individuals are women (92%) and the level of the education for this category of NEETs is predominantly low level (59.1%). Short-term unemployed is the second largest sub-group of NEETs. A gender breakdown of short-term unemployed NEETs

shows that the majority are male (59.2%), although the share of man has decreased between 2020 and 2023. Among the long-term unemployed, almost all individuals (94.2%) were men.

Ukraine

In 2023, Ukraine had the lowest youth share among ETF countries, likely influenced by the ongoing conflict and emigration. Data from 2021[13] shows that Ukrainian youth are exceptionally well-educated compared to the other ETF countries, with a very low proportion holding only low educational qualifications. Youth unemployment was relatively low, and labour market integration appeared strong, with a smaller gap between youth and total employment rates than in other ETF countries. The largest NEET subgroup consists of young women with family and care responsibilities, while low-skilled youth make up only a small fraction of the NEET population, highlighting the prominence of caregiving as a barrier to labour market participation.

In 2023, 22.1% of Ukraine's working-age population (age 15–64) represented youth population aged 15–29 (see Table 23 in the Annex). This is the lowest youth share among all ETF countries. While the ongoing war has had a major impact on many aspects of the country's socio-economic life, the share of youth had already been following a similar trend before the war[14]. Unfortunately, as data collection has not been possible since the war began, the following labour market and education indicators refer to 2021.

In 2021, only a very small share of young people aged 20-29 had low educational levels, only 2.6% compared to an average of 9.6% for adult population aged 15-70. At the same year, the majority of youth (50.9%) was highly educated, compared with 44.9% of adult population. This made Ukraine an outlier among the ETF partner countries analysed in this report, as a particularly large share of youth population has attained high levels of formal education (Figure 32 in the Annex).

In 2021, LFS data reflected some relatively favourable and promising conditions of the labour market. Youth unemployment rate for age 15-29, was 13.1% (Figure 33 in the Annex), one of the lowest values among ETF partner countries. The gap between youth and unemployment of total population (age 15+) was relatively low, at 3.3 p.p. However, a high percentage of young people, 51% (Figure 34 in the Annex), were outside the labour force. The detachment of youth from labour markets was accompanied with youth employment rates at around 42.6% (Figure 35 in the Annex), signalling already limited opportunities. Employment rate for both youth and total population (49.3% for age 15+) was less problematic compared to other ETF partner countries, but still relatively a low rate compared to EU standards. No data were available for early school leavers or for the employment rate of recent graduates. The findings suggest that Ukraine demonstrated relatively strong labour market integration for both youth and the general population.

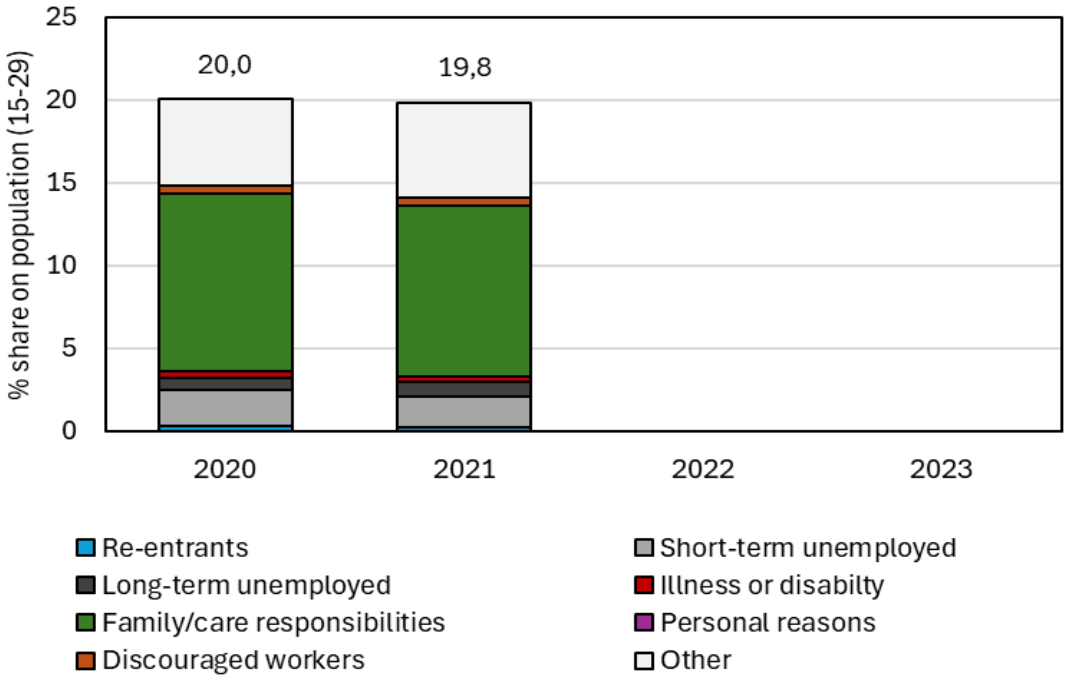
NEET sub-groups in the youth population aged 15-29 (Figure 30): LFS data is only available for two years, which limits the ability to identify trends. The biggest subgroup is those NEETs with caregiving responsibilities. The "other" category increased slightly from 5.2% to 5.7% in the total youth population.

NEET sub-groups within NEET population (Figure 31): The largest subgroup of NEETs in Ukraine in 2021 was NEETs with family and care responsibilities (52.1% of all NEETs in 2021 – compare Figure 31). This sub-group was largely comprised of women (87.2%, compared to a share of women of 64.7% on all NEET). The share of low-skilled NEETs among this sub-group was very insignificant (3.0% held education levels according to ISCED 2011 1-2 in 2021), but so was this share of those NEETs holding low education levels among all NEETs (7.4%). Among the "other" subgroup (28.6% of all NEETs in 2021), the share of low-skilled NEET was roughly twice as high (15.7% in 2021) when compared to the average. The sub-group with the highest share of low-skilled persons was the very

[13] Due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the latest available Labour Force Survey (LFS) data date from 2021.
[14] According to World Bank data, youth population aged 15-29 accounted for 22.9% of working-age population in 2020.

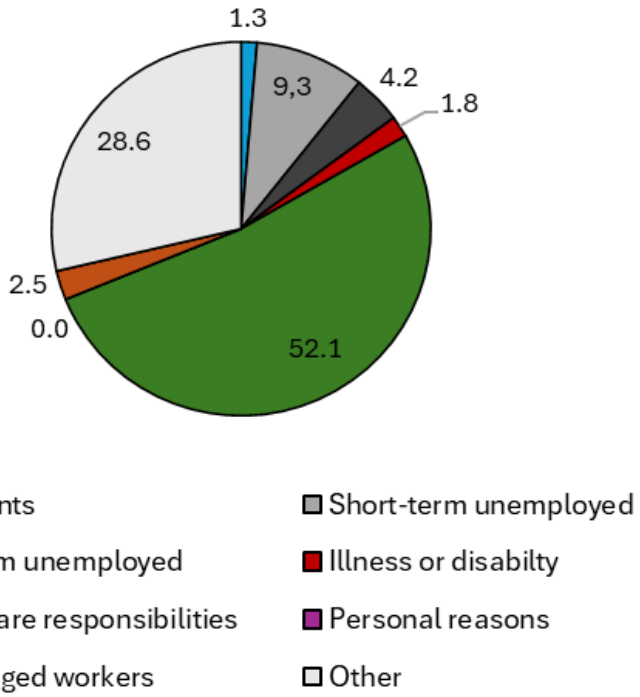
small group of those with illness or disabilities (1.8% of all NEET in 2021), where more than a third had a low education level in 2021 (38.6%).

Figure 30. Categorisation of NEET, Ukraine (% of Population, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices.

Figure 31. Structure of NEET in 2021, Ukraine (% on NEET, 15-29)



Source: Own calculations based on LFS microdata from national statistical offices

CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSIONS

The cross-sectional analysis reveals shared challenges, such as high NEET rates among specific educational or gender groups, as well as unique national issues, including conflict-related impacts in Ukraine, which also lead to limited data availability. While all countries exhibit positive trends in reducing NEET rates, persistent issues around long-term unemployment, caregiving responsibilities, discouraged workers, and labour market barriers for people with low education levels remain. Tailored policy interventions, targeted youth support services, and adaptable strategies informed by successful practices across countries are crucial for fostering further reductions in NEETs and achieving meaningful youth integration into employment, education, or training.

All countries face shared challenges—namely, long-term unemployment among male NEETs, family or caregiving duties that almost exclusively affect female NEETs, and a high level of discouraged NEETs; however, the relative prominence of these categories varies, reflecting distinct social and economic contexts. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia showed progress in reducing overall NEET rates, but structural barriers persist for key subgroups. Albania and Türkiye stand out with large and relatively well-educated youth populations, yet both face persistent labour market integration challenges: in Albania, stagnant NEET rates and shifting educational disparities; in Türkiye, the highest early school leaving rates and a NEET structure polarised between low- and high-educated youth. Armenia and Moldova struggle with weak school-to-work transitions despite moderate educational attainment, while Montenegro shows comparatively successful outcomes in graduate employment and NEET reduction. Egypt's large and low-skilled youth population remains marked by gendered inactivity. North Macedonia and Serbia demonstrate educational progress among their youth but continue to report high rates of inactivity and unemployment. Ukraine and Georgia demonstrate relatively strong labour market integration despite adversity and conflict in the case of Ukraine. Lastly, Kosovo combines a highly educated youth with persistently high inactivity and a complex NEET structure, underlining the need for targeted support and systemic reform. Across the ETF region, reducing NEET rates requires not only strengthening education-to-work transitions but also addressing deep-rooted gender disparities and socio-economic exclusion.

Tailored interventions designed to address common issues and country-specific challenges are crucial to achieving further reductions in NEET rates and promoting the meaningful integration of youth into education, training, or employment opportunities. Cross-country learning and adaptation of successful interventions, focusing on structural reforms and social support services, can further strengthen these efforts and promote effective solutions tailored to each context.

Limitations of the analysis of NEET in ETF partner countries

We broke down the already small populations of sub-categories of NEET by gender, registration with Public Employment Services (if disaggregated data available), nationality, work experience, education level, and age. This is possible when working with LFS microdata. However, these breakdowns potentially produce results that are unreliable due to small cell size. Moldova is a special case, where approximately 80% of the NEETs fall into the 'other' category, largely due to the small sample size and the limited number of respondents who indicated the reason for being NEET.

Additionally, ETF partner countries in general have a comparatively low share of non-nationals, making it impossible to analyse how the reasons for NEET status differ between nationals and non-nationals. Thus, further consolidation with National Statistical Offices on the reliability of these results is necessary before conclusions can be drawn from the results. This is even more pronounced in those ETF partner countries with small populations (e.g., North Macedonia), where the number of observations is low. Subsequently, analysis can delve deeper in countries like Egypt or Türkiye, where populations and, therefore, the LFS sample are significantly larger. Additionally, time series breaks

occur due to methodological changes within countries, such as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which further impact data consistency and comparability over time.

Labour Force Surveys can also not adequately depict the heterogeneity of the NEET population. While, from a statistical point of view, it is quite straightforward to capture those not in employment, education or training, the population of NEETs contains various subgroups with different characteristics and needs that are not captured by typical LFS questionnaires. For example, LFS typically do not capture the social background of those surveyed. This means, for example, that it is not possible to identify the share of NEETs who grew up in poverty or with difficult family backgrounds (Eurofound, 2016). Additionally, in many partner countries the NEET subgroup 'Other' (when questioned about reasons of being NEET) is quite prominent. To some extent, this may reflect limitations in how national LFS identify reasons for being out of the labour force. For example, suppose a survey does not systematically ask all NEETs about their reasons for not working or studying. In that case, individuals may default into the "Other" category, obscuring the true nature of their barriers.

Outlook

The current provision of developments over time and breakdowns by specific dimensions and reasons for the NEET status already pinpoint certain vulnerable groups. However, limitations in comparability of data and limited reliability of results, specifically when broken down by sub-categories of NEET and sub-groups of the population (by age, gender, education level, etc) might make it necessary to adapt the Eurofound methodology to adequately capture the (statistical) realities in ETF member countries that might not overlap well with pre-defined subcategories of NEETs that had been developed based on standardised LFS questionnaires.

This could be achieved by broadening the definitions of sub-categories of NEET or by applying a methodology more suited to identifying national patterns (for example, Latent Class Cluster Analysis (OECD, 2016). Given that these challenges can be addressed, a wider and systematic implementation of the concept in all ETF partner countries promises further understanding of the concept and the diversity of those youth who are considered NEET.

First testings of Youth Guarantee approaches in the Western Balkans revealed the need to complement LFS data with additional sources such as Survey on Income and Living Conditions, data registers of Public Employment Services, social services, education providers and other relevant institutions at central and local level, as well as more qualitative studies such as focus groups with young people who are at risk of becoming or already in the category of NEET.

ANNEX

Table 4. Classification of NEET categories in Bosnia-Herzegovina

1= Re-entrants	did not search for work, has found a job that starts in less than 3 months did not search for work, has found a job that starts in more than 3 months did not search for work, awaiting recall from work did not search for work, for education or training reasons did search for work, is not available for education or training reasons did not search for work, has found a job, but hasn't started working yet did not search for work, has found a job and has started working did not search for work, for education or training reasons did not search for work, awaiting recall to work did search for work, is not available for education or training reasons
2= Short-term unemployed	Searched job, was available, is short-term unemployed and NEET
3= Long-term unemployed	Searched job, was available, is long-term unemployed and NEET
4= Illness or disability	did not search for work, reason: own illness or disability did search for work, is not available for health reasons did search for work, is not available, reason: Illness or disability did not search for work, reason: own illness or disability
5= Family/ care responsibilities	did not search for work, reason: looking after children or incapacitated adults, elderly persons, etc. did search for work, is not available for personal or family reasons did search for work, is not available, reason: care responsibilities did not search for work, reason: care responsibilities
6= Personal reasons	did search for work, is not available, reason: other personal reasons did not search for work, reason: other personal reasons
7= Discouraged workers	did not search for work, reason: believe that no work is available did not search for work, reason: No suitable job is available
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 5. Classification of NEET categories in Georgia

1= Re-entrants	Did not seek employment + has already found a job Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Awaiting recall to work or own business Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: I am a student Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: I am a student Self-estimation status: Pupil/student
2= Short-term unemployed	Short-term unemployed: Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: less than 12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Long-term unemployed: Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: at least 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Illness or disability: Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Illness or disability: Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability Illness or disability: Self-estimation status: disabled for work
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Family/care responsibilities: Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Family/care responsibilities: Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: fulfilling domestic tasks Family/care responsibilities: Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: care responsibilities (for infants) Family/care responsibilities: Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: care responsibilities (for sick/disabled persons) Family/care responsibilities: Self-estimation status: Is fulfilling domestic tasks Family/care responsibilities: Self-estimation status: Is looking after a child or incapacitated adult
6= Personal reasons	Personal reasons: did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Not available because of absent Personal reasons: Self-estimation status: Is in military service
7= Discouraged workers	Discouraged workers: Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: belief there are no jobs around
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 6. Classification of NEET categories in North Macedonia

1= Re-entrants	Main reason for not looking for work: You are waiting to be invited to your previous employment Main reason for not looking for work: Seasonal type of work The person has already found employment Providing equipment, location, permits, and financial sources for self-employment The person is students/pupils
2= Short-term unemployed	Short-term unemployed
3= Long-term unemployed	Long-term unemployed
4= Illness or disability	Main reason for not looking for work: Illness/disability
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Family/care responsibilities
6= Personal reasons	Not applicable
7= Discouraged workers	The person thinks that there is no available job
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 7. Classification of NEET categories in Kosovo

1= Re-entrants	Did not seek employment + awaiting recall to work Did not seek employment + education or training Did not work + has already found a job Stopped working. Reason: education or training Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Person must complete education or training Main activity status: I am a pupil, student, further training, or unpaid work experience
2= Short-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + duration of unemployment: less than 12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work+ duration of unemployment: at least 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Stopped working + Reason: own illness or disability Main activity status: own illness or disability
5= Family/care responsibilities	Did not seek employment + Looking after children or incapacitated adults Did not seek employment + personal or family responsibilities Did seek employment + is not available for work + reason for not being available: personal or family responsibilities Stopped working + Reason: looking after children or incapacitated adults Stopped working + Reason: other personal or family responsibilities Main activity status: fulfilling domestic tasks
6= Personal reasons	
7= Discouraged workers	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking or a job: believe that no work is available
8= Others	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 8. Classification of NEET categories in Serbia

1= Re-entrants	Did not seek employment + has already found a job Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Awaiting recall to work Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: education or training Self-estimation status: Pupil/student Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: education or training
2= Short-term unemployed	Short-term unemployed: Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: <12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Long-term unemployed: Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: >= 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability Self-estimation status: own illness or disability
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Personal or family reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Personal or family reasons Self-estimation status: Is fulfilling domestic tasks
6= Personal reasons	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Personal reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: personal reasons
7= Discouraged workers	Discouraged workers: Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: belief there are no jobs around
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 9. Classification of NEET categories in Ukraine

1= Re-entrants	Did not seek employment + has already found a job (reason: has found a job that starts in less than 2 weeks) Did not seek employment + has already found a job (did not search for work, reason: has organised own business that starts in less than 2 weeks) Did not seek employment + has already found a job + awaiting recall to work Did not seek employment + I am a student Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: I am a student Did not need/want to work + Reason: I am a student
2= Short-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: less than 12 months Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: less than 12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: at least 12 months Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: at least 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability Did not need/want to work + Reason: own illness or disability
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did not need/want to work + Reason: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons)
6= Personal reasons	Did not need/want to work: personal reasons (or similar) Personal reasons: Did not need/want to work: personal reasons (or similar)
7= Discouraged workers	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: frustration in job search Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: belief there are no jobs around
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 10. Classification of NEET categories in Albania

1= Re-entrants	You were not working in the reference week but you have already found a new job/arranged for own business status is student Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Awaiting recall to work Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: education or training Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: education or training Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: person cannot leave present employment within two weeks due to period of
2= Short-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: <12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: >= 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability Self-estimation status: own illness or disability
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Personal or family reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Personal or family reasons Self-estimation status: Is fulfilling domestic tasks
6= Personal reasons	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: person must complete compulsory military service
7= Discouraged workers	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: belief that no work is available
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 11. Classification of NEET categories in Armenia

1= Re-entrants	Did not seek employment + has already found a job Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Awaiting recall to work or own business Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Waiting for the season work Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: I am a student Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: I am a student
2= Short-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: less than 12 months Tried to launch my own business + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: less than 12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: at least 12 months Tried to launch my own business + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: at least 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did seek employment + is not available for work: family responsibilities Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: care responsibilities (for infants) Did not seek employment+ Reason for not looking for a job: care responsibilities (for sick/disabled persons) Did not seek employment+ Reason for not looking for a job: Household chores / family circumstances (also marriage / pregnancy) Did not seek employment+ Reason for not looking for a job: Family / spouse does not allow
6= Personal reasons	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: personal reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: personal reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: personal reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: personal reasons
7= Discouraged workers	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Lack of jobs matching the person's skills / profession Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Do not know where and how to look for a job Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Lack of relevant skills / work experience Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Considered too young / too old to find a job Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Lack of jobs in the area Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: No hope to find a suitable job
8= Other	Other Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: other Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: other

Source: own depiction

Table 12. Classification of NEET categories in Montenegro

1= Re-entrants	Did not seek employment + has already found a job status is student Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Awaiting recall to work Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: education or training
2= Short-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: <12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: >= 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability Self-estimation status: own illness or disabilty
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: care responsibilities Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Personal or family reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Personal or family reasons Self-estimation status: Is fulfilling domestic tasks
6= Personal reasons	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Personal reasons Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: personal reasons
7= Discouraged workers	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: belief there are no jobs around
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 13. Classification of NEET categories in Egypt

1= Re-entrants	Main activity status is a waiting for recall or interviews
2= Short-term unemployed	Duration of unemployment: less than 12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Duration of unemployment: at least 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability The main activity status is disability or inability to work Person has disability status
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: homemaker/housewife The main activity status is homemaker/housewife or family responsibilities
6= Personal reasons	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Refusal by family Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: have income The main activity status is: Unable to issue work permission due to political circumstances, Not able to seek a job due to closure/curfew, In military service, Have income/revenue/means, In prison, Landlord
7= Discouraged workers	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Failed to find a suitable job, Lack of experience/qualifications, Lack of jobs matching personal skills or occupation, Lack of jobs with suitable wages, Considered too young or too old by prospective employers, Race/sex/religion discrimination, Do not know effective ways for job searching, Believed that no suitable job exists, No jobs are available, Tired of looking for work The main activity status is Discouraged
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 14. Classification of NEET categories in Türkiye

1= Re-entrants	Did not seek employment + has already found a job Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Working seasonally / Waiting recall from previous job Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: I am a student Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: education or training reasons Reason for not being in labour force is education or training Reason for not being in labour force is Working seasonally
2= Short-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: less than 12 months
3= Long-term unemployed	Did seek employment + is available for work + Duration of unemployment: at least 12 months
4= Illness or disability	Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: own illness or disability Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: own illness or disability Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Elderly (Not retired, but thinking old for working, 65 years and over) Reasons of not being in labour force: disabled, old or ill
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: fulfilling domestic tasks Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Other personal or family reasons Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: other family reasons Reasons for not being in labour force: Is fulfilling domestic tasks Reasons for not being in labour force: Other personal or family reasons
6= Personal reasons	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Other personal reasons did seek employment + is not available for work + Reason for not being available: Other personal reasons
7= Discouraged workers	Did not seek employment + Reason for not looking for a job: Made too much effort seeking before but could not found a job; Do not believe in finding a job appropriate for his/her skill/qualification; Thinking that he/she cannot find a job in the region where he/she lives. Reason for not looking for a job: not seeking a job but available to start, discouraged
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 15. Classification of NEET categories in Moldova

1= Re-entrants	Did not search for work and want to work, has found a job or started a business Did not search for work and want to work, awaiting recall from work or result of a vacancy contest or an interview Did not search for work and want to work, for education or training reasons Did not search for work and don`t want to work, for education or training reasons Did search for work, is not available for education or training reasons Did not search for work and don`t want to work, reason: off-season period Did search for work, is not available for off-season period
2= Short-term unemployed	Searched job, was available, is short-term unemployed and NEET
3= Long-term unemployed	Searched job, was available, is long-term unemployed and NEET
4= Illness or disability	Did not search for work and want to work, reason: own illness or disability Did not search for work and don`t want to work, reason: own illness or disability Did search for work, is not available for health reasons Self-estimation status: disabled for work
5= Family/ care responsibilities	Did not search for work and want to work, reason: looking after children or incapacitated adults, elderly persons, etc. Did not search for work and want to work, reason: other family reasons Did not search for work and don´t want to work, reason: looking after children or incapacitated adults, elderly persons, etc. Did not search for work and don´t want to work, reason: other family reasons Did search for work, is not available for care responsibilities (for children or adult persons) Did search for work, is not available for other family reasons
6= Personal reasons	Did search for work, is not available, reason: other personal reasons Did not search for work and want to work, reason: other personal reasons Did not search for work and don´t want to work, reason: other personal reasons
7= Discouraged workers	Did not search for work and want to work, reason: no suitable job is available Did not search for work and want to work, reason: does not know how and where else to look for a job Did not search for work and want to work, reason: does no longer or not yet feel professionally ready Did not search for work and want to work, reason: too young or too old to find a job Did not search for work and want to work, reason: had looked for a job before but had not found any
8= Other	NEETs that cannot be identified as belonging to group 1-7

Source: own depiction

Table 16. NEET rates in ETF partner countries, 2020-2023 (% of Population, 15-29)

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albania	27.9	26.1	25.2	24.6
Armenia	30.8	29.2	26.6	25.6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	25.9	25.1	23.5	22.2
Egypt	36.5	35.0	34.0	32.1
Georgia	35.1	34.6	30.8	26.9
Kosovo	40.5	36.7	36.7	37.9
Moldova	33.4	32.8	33.5	29.1
Montenegro	26.6	27.0	23.4	20.6
North Macedonia	26.6	24.6	23.1	24.3
Serbia	20.0	19.1	15.4	15.2
Türkiye	32.0	28.4	27.2	25.8
Ukraine	20.0	19.8		

Source: national LFS. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology

Table 17. NEET rates of women in ETF partner countries, 2020-2023 (% of female population, 15-29)

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albania	30.0	29.1	27.8	25.6
Armenia	35.5	34.3	33.6	30.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	25.9	25.1	23.5	22.2
Egypt	56.2	54.9	53.9	50.9
Georgia	38.4	37.3	34.5	30.9
Kosovo	43.1	39.0	40.2	42.1
Moldova	36.3	36.8	37.3	32.1
Montenegro	26.9	25.2	21.8	20.9
North Macedonia	29.5	26.2	24.8	26.9
Serbia	21.6	21.0	17.5	16.6
Türkiye	42.9	39.4	38.2	36.4
Ukraine	26.2	26.3		

Source: national LFS. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology

Table 18. NEET rates of men in ETF partner countries, 2020-2023 (% of male population, 15-29)

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albania	25.8	23.2	22.6	23.6
Armenia	26.4	24.0	20.0	21.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	30.1	28.8	27.4	25.9
Egypt	17.6	16.6	16.2	15.3
Georgia	32.1	32.1	27.2	23.2
Kosovo	38.0	34.5	33.4	33.8
Moldova	30.6	28.8	29.6	25.8
Montenegro	26.3	28.7	24.8	20.2
North Macedonia	24.0	23.0	21.5	21.9
Serbia	18.4	17.3	13.4	14.0
Türkiye	21.3	17.7	16.5	15.6
Ukraine	14.2	13.6		

Source: national LFS. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology

Table 19. NEET rates of low educated persons in ETF partner countries, 2020-2023 (% of Population, 15-29)

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albania	25.0	24.2	21.9	22.9
Armenia	9.4	6.7	7.7	6.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	14.1	11.1	10.1	10.5
Egypt	30.3	28.6	26.3	23.0
Georgia	21.3	19.3	16.2	12.7
Kosovo	26.8	26.3	29.7	30.4
Moldova	28.0	28.0	28.7	24.4
Montenegro	11.4	9.0	7.4	10.1
North Macedonia	18.8	16.1	15.0	23.2
Serbia	14.6	16.2	13.2	13.3
Türkiye	31.9	28.5	26.8	25.8
Ukraine	7.9	7.6		

Source: national LFS. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology

Table 20. NEET rates of intermediate non-VET educated persons in ETF partner countries 2020-2023 (% of the Population with non-VET education levels, 15-29)

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albania	31.6	27.3	26.9	29.1
Armenia	37.1	33.0	32.3	33.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17.1	15.9	15.6	12.0
Egypt	12.3	9.6	12.0	11.6
Georgia	40.1	40.8	35.7	31.6
Kosovo	38.8	32.9	36.0	39.0
Moldova	22.2	22.7	24.4	23.1
Montenegro	15.5	17.8	16.5	9.5
North Macedonia	28.5	28.2	27.1	25.5
Serbia	7.3	10.4	5.3	6.7
Türkiye	29.3	26.0	27.5	26.3
Ukraine	18.5	17.3		

Source: national LFS. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology

Table 21. NEET rates of intermediate VET educated persons in ETF partner countries 2020-2023 (% of the Population with VET education levels, 15-29)

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albania	28.4	25.7	32.8	23.6
Armenia	48.7	46.7	39.1	37.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34.1	34.1	32.7	31.6
Egypt	54.9	52.5	52.7	51.8
Georgia	52.6	51.5	44.3	43.6
Kosovo	49.7	51.8	52.0	48.0
Moldova	50.6	46.8	47.8	42.6
Montenegro	35.4	37.2	31.6	27.9
North Macedonia	16.2	22.4	32.5	24.7
Serbia	25.1	23.5	20.4	18.6
Türkiye	34.0	29.6	27.8	26.3
Ukraine	29.4	31.1		

Source: national LFS. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology

Table 22. NEET rates of high educated persons in ETF partner countries 2020-2023 (% of the Population with high education levels, 15-29)

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albania	27.4	27.8	27.0	21.2
Armenia	31.3	34.5	28.9	22.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	25.4	26.4	25.5	23.5
Egypt	59.7	59.4	60.4	59.5
Georgia	33.5	33.9	33.7	30.4
Kosovo	51.7	41.7	37.9	40.0
Moldova	36.0	38.4	39.0	31.6
Montenegro	38.9	39.0	29.4	24.3
North Macedonia	35.0	27.8	25.4	23.6
Serbia	23.8	18.4	12.1	15.7
Türkiye	32.9	29.3	27.2	24.7
Ukraine	23.2	23.4		

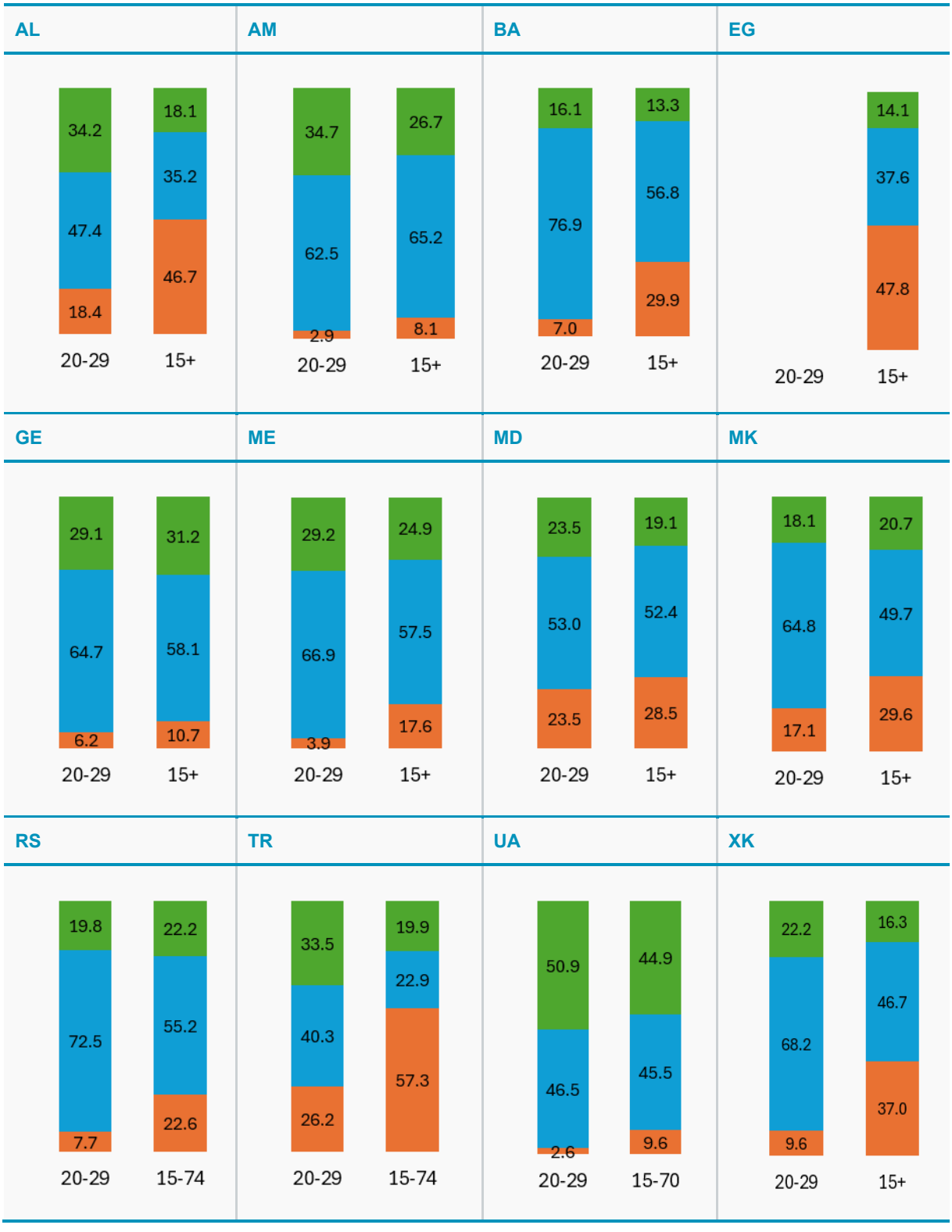
Source: national LFS. NEET rates for Moldova do not correspond to the NSO data due to differences in the calculation methodology

Table 23. Relative size of youth population (15-29)

Country	Share of youth population (15-29) on working-age population (15-64), 2023
Egypt	40.2
Kosovo	36.1
Türkiye	33.5
Albania	32.2
Montenegro	28.6
Armenia	28.1
Georgia	27.4
North Macedonia	27.0
Moldova	25.4
Serbia	25.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	24.2
Ukraine	22.1

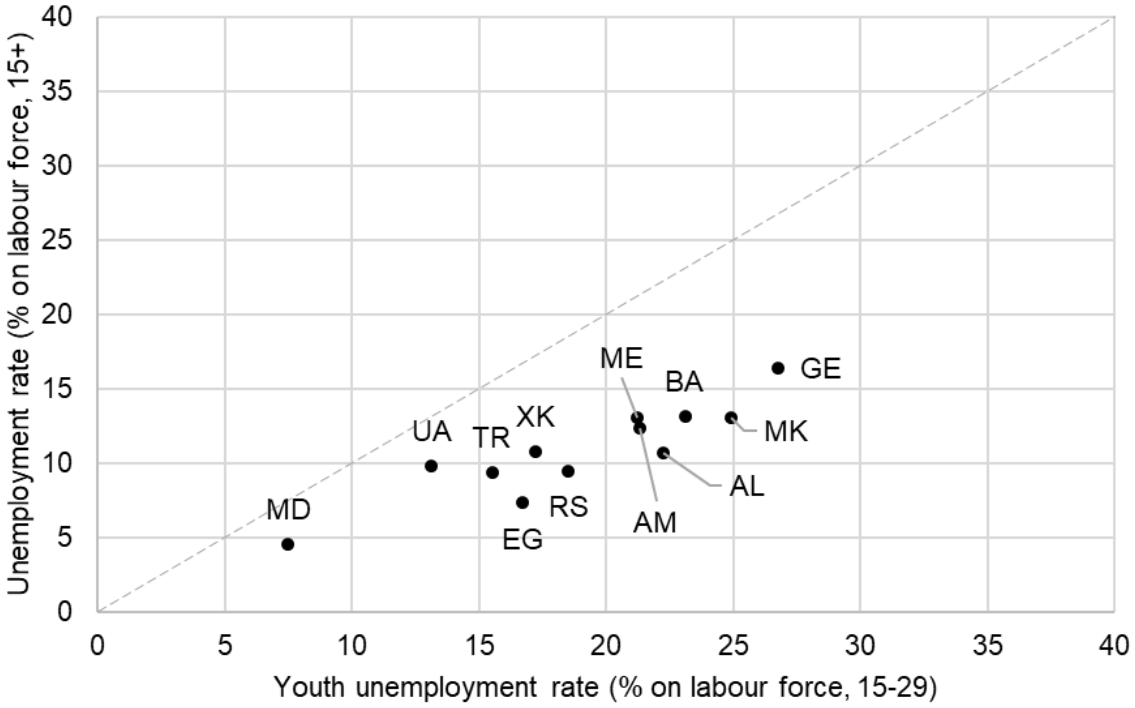
Source: Own calculations based on World Bank estimates.

Figure 32. Educational attainment of the total population by age, 2023, %



Note: Data on Ukraine refer to 2021, Data on Egypt refers to 2022 (no data for 20-29), for BA and RS 15+ refers to age 15-74.
Source: ETF KIESE database (national LFS data).

Figure 33. Relation between youth unemployment rate and total unemployment rate (% of labour force, 15+), 2023



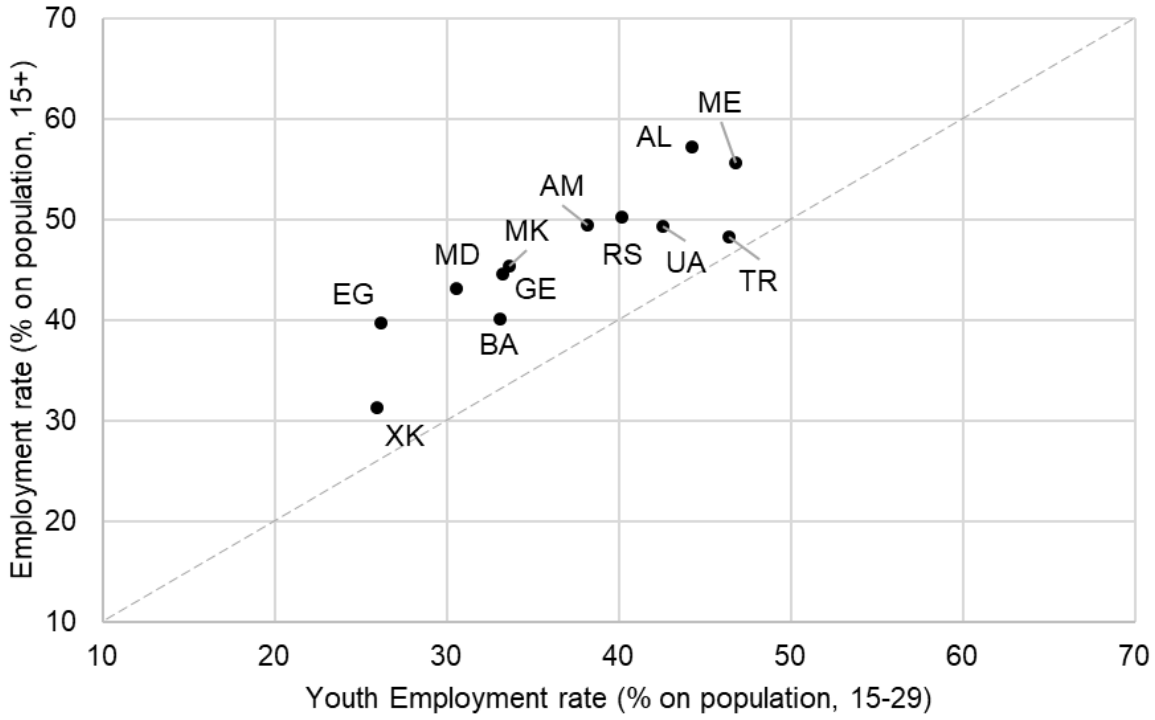
Source: ETF KIESE database (national LFS data). Note: BA, RS: 15+ refers to the age group 15-74. EG: data refer to 2022. JO: ETF calculations based on national data. UA: data refer to 2021. For countries below the 45°-line, youth unemployment rate is higher than working-age unemployment rate. For countries above the 45°-line, youth unemployment rate is lower than working-age unemployment rate. For countries close to the 45°-line, there is no big difference between youth unemployment rate and working-age unemployment rate.

Figure 34. Relation between youth out of labour force and persons out of labour force (% of Population, 15+), 2023



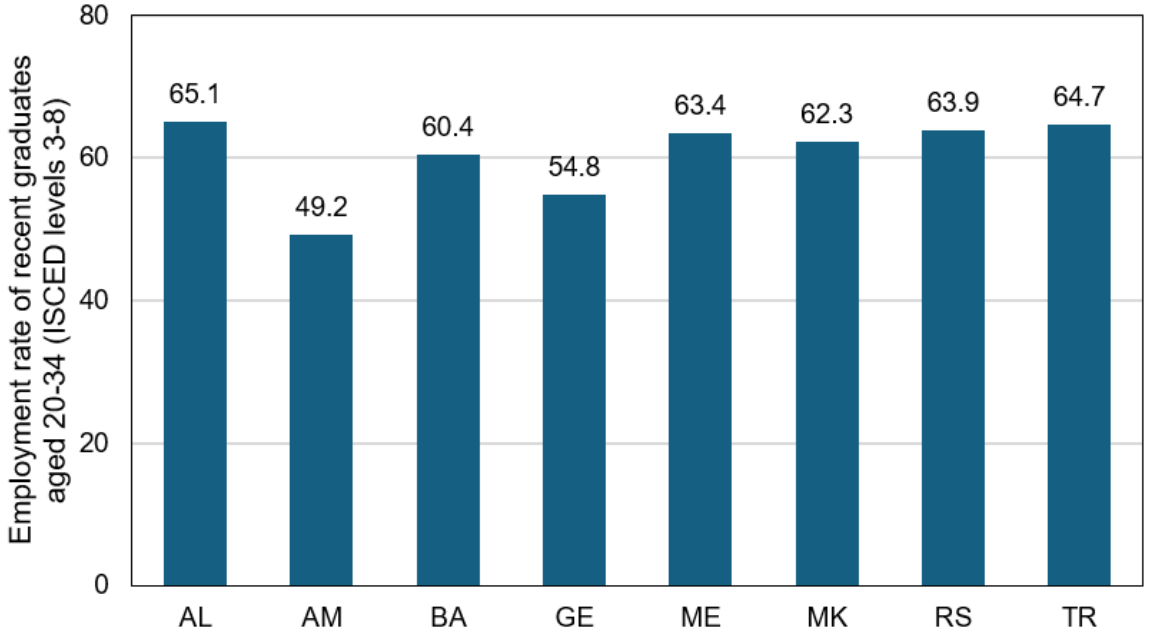
Note: Data on Ukraine refer to 2021
Source: ETF KIESE database (national LFS data).

Figure 35. Relation between employment rate of youth (15-29) and employment rate of total workforce (15+) as % of the population, 2023



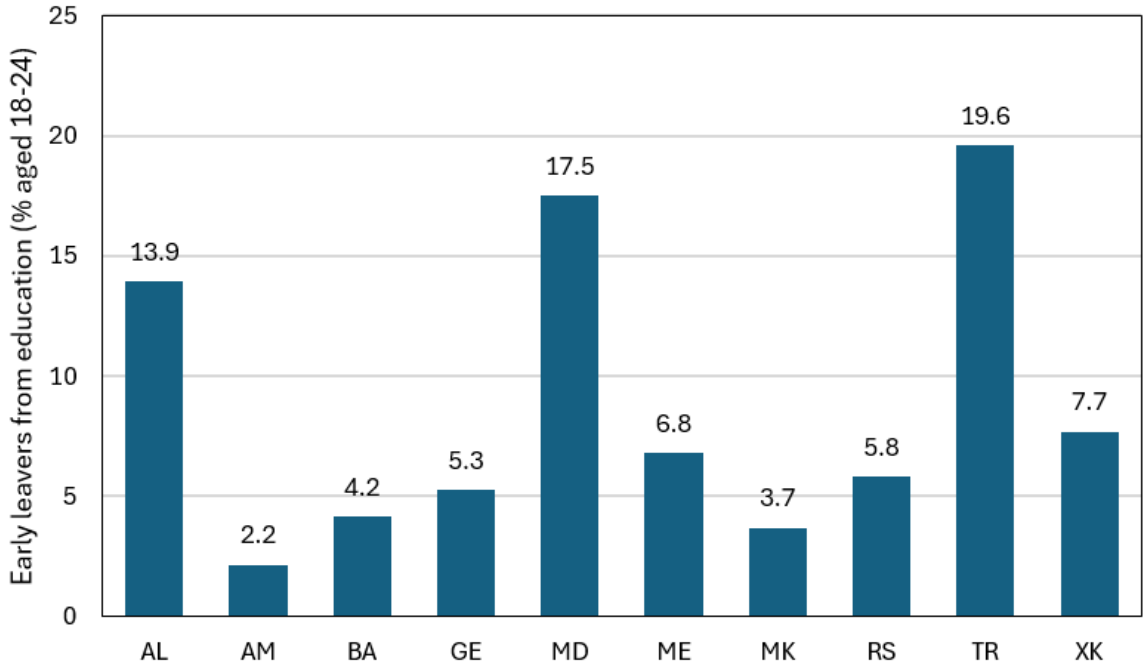
Note: Data on Ukraine refer to 2021
Source: ETF KIESE database (national LFS data).

Figure 36. Employment rate of recent graduates aged 20-34 (ISCED levels 3-8), 2023



Note: Egypt, Moldova, Ukraine and Kosovo were not available.
Source: ETF KIESE database (national LFS data).

Figure 37. Early leavers from education (% aged 18-24), 2023



Note: Data for Egypt and Ukraine not available.
Source: ETF KIESE database (national LFS data).

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