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Who are the unemployed youth and how many are they?

Youth unemployment figures frequently raise headlines on desperate situation of masses of young people. However, the concept of “unemployed” fails to capture the reality of young people. For adults, unemployment is often associated to inactivity or even marginalization. However, young people looking for a job are often pursuing other productive activities in addition to job search, such as studying. Hence, they are ill described as “inactive” or “marginalized”.

Furthermore, comparing the unemployment figures internationally is challenging. Due to the differences in the level of participation to education, the unemployment figures of 15-19 years old in EU19 countries give very misleading information on the relative severity of youth inactivity or marginalization in these countries, as shown previously by Hämäläinen and Juutilainen (2010).

To better capture the magnitude of the youth inactivity, the concept of “NEET” (not in employment, education or training) has been put forward. However, this definition is not straightforward either (for example, Goujard, Petrongolo & Van Reenen, 2011, as well as on-going work by Statistics Sweden on measurement of youth unemployment in EU LFS). Should we exclude all students, or only those studying towards a qualification? Which is more important, being registered in an educational institution or claiming to actually study full-time? How do we treat young people taking care of their small children? What about those in military service?

To comprehend the relative severity of “real” marginalization or inactivity of youth in different countries, a more detailed analysis of the composition of youth unemployment and NEET-level in different countries is needed. This study will search to answer *how many youth are inactive or marginalized* by analysing *who are the unemployed and NEET youth and what do they do*. This is done by analysing whether they are also full-time students, if they still live with their parents or take care of their own children, how long have they been unemployed or inactive, and how large are the differences between age groups of 15-19; 20-24 and 25-29. We also compare information of employment and study retrieved from different sources: how well does the young people’s own definition of their main labour status correspond to official ILO/Eurostat definition and to their status in public employment office.

The analysis will be conducted using **EU LFS** microdata for **all available countries**. The aim is to create groups of countries with similar pattern in the activities of youth. The analysis will be cross-sectional, using the latest available data, which is from the year **2010**. The results will be presented in the form of aggregated frequency tables and figures.

References

Goujard, A.; Petrongolo, B. & Van Reenen, J. (2011). The Labour Market for Young People (pp. 39-54). In P. Gregg & J. Wadsworth (eds.). *The Labour Market in Winter - the state of working in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford Press.

Hämäläinen, U. & Juutilainen, V-P. (2010). Nuoret - duunissa vai MOLLissa? (The youth - employed or unemployed?). *Talous & yhteiskunta*, 1/2010.