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# **THE PROFILE OF NEETS TEACHERS IN GREECE: FROM EUROPEAN POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

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## CHAPTER 1.

# Introduction

In the European context, young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) are a pressing priority, as more than 8 million young people aged 15-29 are socially inactive. Vocational education and training (VET) can play a crucial role in easing NEETs' transition into the labour market by equipping them with relevant skills and qualifications, enhancing their employability and increasing their chances of finding a job. VET can offer tailored programmes, apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning, helping NEETs to acquire labour market relevant skills.

Despite the high policy relevance and important social implications, several dimensions of this topic have not been sufficiently studied empirically in Greece or more broadly in Europe. This study offers new insights and explores uncharted areas in the realm of VET programmes aimed at NEETs by focusing on the actors that play a key part in ensuring NEETs' quality training: their teachers.

'NEETs teachers' is a term that has been coined for the purposes of this study, referring to practitioners teaching NEETs within the context of VET programmes addressed specifically to them. In this study, NEETs, aged 15-29, are considered as a sub-group of adult learners. In several EU countries, including Greece, the leaving age of compulsory education is 15. The VET programmes in which NEETs participate are typically continuous vocational education (CVET) programmes. CVET is seen as part of adult education. However, there is a trend of blurring boundaries between CVET and initial vocational education and training (IVET) (Cedefop, 2023). In some countries, CVET programmes might be offered by providers responsible for IVET; at the same time IVET provision has become broader and can include also adult learners (Cedefop, 2023). While the practitioners facilitating the learning of adults are usually called 'adult educators', the ones teaching in school-based or work-based learning settings in VET include 'VET teachers and trainers'. As this study has a clear focus on VET, the choice of the term 'teachers' has prevailed over 'educators', even though 'NEETs teachers' are considered as a sub-group of 'adult educators'.

NEETs are not participating in either the labour market or education, therefore facing a high risk of professional, digital and social exclusion (Eurofound, 2012). Initial and continuous vocational education and training (VET) can contribute effectively to the professional, digital and social (re)integration of NEETs (Cedefop, 2022a).

VET teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of VET programmes, as they deliver teaching responding to learners' needs and contribute to strengthening the link between education and work. They do so by establishing new curricula, applying the European tools and shaping quick and flexible responses to emerging needs, related both to the integration of thousands of refugees and migrants into the labour market and to the need to develop basic, digital and entrepreneurial skills (Cedefop, 2016).

This paper explores the following aspects through research questions: general information about NEETs teachers, including institutions of employment and professional experience; topics covered by and usefulness of continuing professional development (CPD) activities; teaching techniques they implement when working with NEETs; and their role in motivating young NEETs' learning and in making VET programmes more relevant to the labour market.

Research methodology included literature review of theoretical and practical approaches from the scientific field of adult education, relevant EU policy documents, and previous empirical studies. The theoretical part of the study was complemented with the collection of primary quantitative and qualitative data by means of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

Research findings allowed to establish the identity of NEETs teachers in Greece, laying the groundwork for a broader comparative approach with other European countries. NEETs teachers in Greece recognise the importance of CPD in the field of NEETs' specific characteristics, as well as in digital and transversal skills. However, interviewed teachers expressed the need to be more actively involved in the design of CPD programmes. NEETs teachers apply learner-centred teaching techniques responding to learners' needs, but without utilising to the greatest possible extent available tools that may support their teaching work. According to the study findings, interviewed teachers reported playing an important part in motivating NEETs' learning, but stressed that the importance of internal motivation of learners themselves comes first. Likewise, they indicated playing an equally important part in linking VET programmes with the labour market, but at the same time they pointed this out emphatically and repeatedly as a major challenge. To help NEETs achieve a successful transition into the labour market, they highlighted the need to receive extended support beyond CPD activities, within a holistic approach and co-operation among all involved stakeholders.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Literature review

Scholars and international organisations (Illeris, 2016; Jarvis, 2004; Cedefop, 2017; European Commission, 2015; OECD, 2005; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2019) have pointed out the professional (re)integration dimension of adult education and lifelong learning, and the role these can play in individuals' professional development, employability, (re)integration into the labour market and social inclusion, but also in fostering the competitiveness of businesses and economies. The literature review undertaken in this chapter focuses on theoretical underpinnings, EU policy documents, and findings from empirical studies. It first explores theoretical aspects drawing on the adult education approaches of liberatory education and transformative learning. It then focuses on NEETs teachers as adult educators and NEETs as adult learners, examining how these groups are approached in adult education theory and empirical research, covering also digital learning aspects. Finally, it explores how these same groups are approached in EU policy documents.

## 2.1. Theoretical underpinnings

### 2.1.1. Liberatory education

The principles of liberatory education governing Freire's approach include the democratic and creative dialogue between teacher and learners, fostering learners' critical thinking and transformation of knowledge as an integral part of the learning process (Manthou, 2007). Freire's ideas were rooted in the individualised approach of learners' social reality (Freire, 1977).

The target population of Freire's educational programmes (Freire, 1977) was comprised of illiterate adults living in remote rural areas in Brazil. Nowadays the concept of illiteracy is extended to several forms, including digital illiteracy, which refers to individuals not being able to utilise digital technology in their educational, professional and social reality (Theocharidou, 2021). The aim of current European policies is the just transitions to digital and green societies and economies, seeking to achieve a sustainable, equitable and environmentally friendly shift that leaves no one behind (Council of the European Union, 2020a). Recent studies discussed the digital skills of teachers and trainers, particularly in the context of the digital transition in education imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic (Cedefop, 2020a;

OECD, 2019). This points to the need to strengthen the digital skills of adult population to ensure social cohesion and mitigate social inequalities stemming from digital deficiencies (Ranieri, 2020). Freire's educational interventions were applied in a societal context with different sociopolitical characteristics from today's knowledge-based society. However, a common element in both societal contexts is the existence of illiterate or low-skilled individuals who face the risk of social exclusion for belonging to a vulnerable social group.

Teaching methods are an integral part of Freire's approach. Freire rejected the 'banking model of education' (Freire, 1977), in which teachers deposit knowledge to passive learners. This process is typically found in teacher-centred teaching methods (Kokkos, 2005), often in traditional educational models and systems. He was one of the pioneer supporters of learner-centred teaching methods. Many adult education scholars have confirmed the effectiveness of learner-centred teaching methods when it comes to adult learners (Jarvis, 2004; Kokkos, 2005). Research has shown that the ineffectiveness of teacher-centred methods was highlighted as a problem by NEETs, who expressed their dissatisfaction with the traditional educational system (Lytrivi, 2020; Papadakis, 2016).

### **2.1.2. Transformative learning**

Drawing on Freire's approach, Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2007) has also had a long-lasting impact on educational policies and practices. Transformative learning refers to the learning process by which problematic and dysfunctional frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) are identified and transformed to become more inclusive, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames can generate more true beliefs and opinions and eventually lead the individual to taking action at individual and/or collective level (Mezirow & Associates, 2007). Reflective dialogue is an integral part of transformative learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2007).

Transformations taking place through reflective dialogue often follow some variation of the following phases (Mezirow & Associates, 2007): a) a disorienting dilemma; b) self-examination of feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame; c) critical assessment of assumptions; d) the individual recognises the source of his/her discontent and shares the transformation process with others; e) exploration of options for new roles, relationships and action; f) planning a course of action; g) acquiring knowledge and skills to implement one's plan; h) trying new roles; i) building competence and self-confidence for new roles and relationships; j) reintegration in life in line with the newly established conditions and with a new perspective.

The theory of transformative learning is particularly relevant for adult education interventions for NEETs. Reintegration, which is mentioned as the tenth phase of transformation described by Mezirow (Mezirow & Associates, 2007) is often the main goal of educational interventions addressed to young NEETs, including educational, professional and/or social dimensions.

Within the context of his theory of transformative learning and reflective dialogue, Mezirow underlines the crucial role of adult educators. Adult educators encourage adult learners' participation in dialogue but also in democratic and civic life. A fundamental process and vital part of adult educators' role in democratic societies is to help learners become aware of their own problematic assumptions and interpretations and those of others, critically reflect on their own assumptions and those of others, fully participate in dialogue and take effective action based on their revised, more reliable and more functional assumptions, which provide a renewed meaning perspective (Mezirow & Associates, 2007).

### **2.1.3. NEETs teachers as adult educators**

The approaches of Freire (Freire, 1977) and Mezirow (Mezirow & Associates, 2007) set the tone for a more detailed consideration of adult educators' preparedness to contribute to the successful implementation of an educational intervention. Karalis (2005) points out that educators of a programme addressed to adults are its most important element. He mentions that issues such as educators' selection, role, profile and skills are crucial for the successful organisation and completion of educational programmes addressed to adults (Karalis, 2005, p. 68). He also underscores the importance of the educator's experience with the specific target learner population of each programme, pointing out that educators who work very effectively with specific groups of adult learners may not be able to perform in the same way with other groups. According to Karalis (2005), adult educators are expected to be able to adapt the content of their presentations and their teaching methods to the specific characteristics, needs and expectations of learners.

Pavli Korre et al (2016) and Illeris (2016) refer to the importance of educators' preparedness. Jarvis (2004) also focuses on educators' CPD, specifying that adult educators cover a variety of roles reflecting a wide range of knowledge, skills and competences, which are constantly evolving, making it impossible to draw up an exhaustive list. Effective communication with learners, adopting a positive attitude towards learners, fostering a positive environment that encourages the participation of all learners, and adapting teaching methods and contents to the individual and group characteristics of learners are only some of the skills needed (Jarvis, 2004).

Pavli Korre (2018) focuses on educators' digital skills within the context of implementation of distance learning programmes for adults. Educators' digital skills are particularly important in the digital transition currently taking place in education (Council of the European Union, 2020a). The digital transition was accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic, as many educational organisations had to implement online teaching overnight, often without the necessary background in digital skills of both teachers and learners (Cedefop, 2020a). Within the context of online programmes for adults, the educator supports learners not only through scientific, pedagogical, technical and digital skills, but also through a positive attitude towards online learning.

Jarvis (2004) distinguishes teacher-centred from learner-centred teaching methods, pointing out that teacher-centred methods are inappropriate for adult education. In teacher-centred approaches, the teacher has an active role and transmits knowledge, while learners are seen as passive recipients of knowledge with limited opportunities to interact and actively participate in the learning process. In learner-centred approaches, the focus of the learning process is shifted to the learners, who are seen as active participants, with the teacher facilitating their learning experience by providing guidance and support. Along these lines, Kokkos (2005) advocates for the implementation of teaching techniques that strengthen the active participation of adult learners. Their active participation can be supported by specific techniques fostering dialogue and interaction between educator and learners but also peer learning, critical thinking and problem solving, as well as experiential learning. Some of the techniques proposed by Kokkos (2005) include enriched presentations, discussion, brainstorming, work in groups, case studies, exercises, simulation and role play. In implementing such techniques, the educator takes up the role of coordinator and facilitator of the learning process, aiming to activate all learners.

Pavli Korre et al. (2016) described in detail the expected learning outcomes of educational programmes for NEETs based on needs analysis conducted with the input of NEETs. They make specific reference to the contribution of active techniques and experiential methods to the achievement of learning outcomes, not only because they encourage learners' active participation in the learning process, but also because they encourage their personal growth and strengthen their social skills. However, they point out that a necessary condition for the implementation of such techniques is that teachers must have received relevant training. Along the same lines, Pavli Korre et al. (2016) mention the necessary ability of teachers to approach NEETs with empathy, understanding their concerns and helping them face their fears and obstacles to learning, to reach personal and social change through self-reflection. Finally, they stress the sensitivity that adult educators are

expected to show in relation to the dynamics expressed in each NEET group, considering the specific characteristics of the group members and adapting the teaching content and techniques accordingly.

Rogers (1999) and Jarvis (2004) point out that adult educators have multifaceted roles. Illeris (2016) refers to the problem of motivation emerging in the current globalised knowledge-based society, which is characterised by intense competition at international level. This creates pressures to educational systems and programmes influencing both teachers and learners. While for some learners pressure can lead to increased motivation, others may not be able to deal with such aspects effectively, failing to complete the education programme they are attending.

In VET, apprenticeships and work-based learning can ease learners' transition to the labour market and for this reason they have been a constant policy priority at EU level from the Bruges communiqué in 2010 to the Osnabrück declaration in 2020 (Cedefop, 2021a). When it comes to matching apprenticeship supply and demand, even when structured systems and platforms exist, personal relationships between VET teachers and companies remain a strong enabler for cooperation between education and the labour market (Cedefop, 2021a). Several EU countries recognise VET teachers' role in linking VET with employment. For example, in Belgium VET teachers participate in working groups aiming to identify the skills that need to be included in VET curricula (Cedefop, 2021a). In Lithuania, VET teachers participate, together with employers' representatives, in the design of VET programmes (Cedefop, 2021a). In Luxembourg, VET teachers participate in processes of adaptation of VET programmes to the needs of companies (Cedefop, 2021a). In Italy, in-company trainers cooperate closely with VET teachers in school-based learning settings to develop individualised training programme for apprentices (Cedefop, 2021a).

#### **2.1.4. NEETs as adult learners**

NEETs are a specific group of adult learners. Eurofound (2016; 2012) has studied extensively the demographic characteristics, sub-categories and NEET trends at EU level. NEETs are considered one of the most problematic groups in terms of their current and future labour market attachment (Eurofound, 2012). According to Eurostat, based on June 2021 data, in 2020, 17.8% of young people aged 20-34 in the EU were NEETs <sup>(1)</sup>. In 2020, the share of NEETs aged 20-34 in the EU varied from 8.2% in the Netherlands to 29.4% in Italy. In all EU countries, in 2020,

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(1) [Eurostat Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training.](#)

in the age group of 20-34, the share of women was larger than that of men for young NEETs.

According to Eurofound (2012), while statistically it is relatively easy to measure the population of young NEETs, conceptually it must be pointed out that the same indicator covers a highly heterogeneous target population. The same study mentions that NEETs include vulnerable and non-vulnerable subgroups, with very different characteristics, experiences and needs for policy support. The common characteristic of all subgroups is that they do not accumulate human capital. This heterogeneity makes it difficult to deal with the phenomenon but needs to be taken into account in the design of policies aiming at their (re)integration into the labour market or education.

For this reason, Eurofound (2016) elaborated the characteristics of the specific NEET subgroups at EU level and established the following classification:

- (a) re-entrants;
- (b) short-term unemployed;
- (c) long-term unemployed;
- (d) unavailable due to illness or disability;
- (e) unavailable due to family responsibilities;
- (f) discouraged workers;
- (g) other inactive people.

According to Papadakis et al. (2014), in general the characteristics of NEETs in Greece align with those of NEETs in other European countries (Eurofound, 2016). Greece belongs to the cluster of EU countries with a particularly high share of NEETs (above the EU average), structural problems and problematic school-to-work transitions, which have experienced an intense negative impact of the 2009 financial crisis (Eurofound, 2016). In this cluster of countries, which is composed of the southern or Mediterranean countries of Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal along with Ireland, the NEET population includes a high share of long-term unemployed and discouraged NEETs, while the shares of NEETs with disability or family responsibilities are below the EU average (Eurofound, 2016).

Eurofound (2012; 2016) has also identified some specific characteristics and risk factors that may lead young people to becoming NEETs. For example, young people with health problems or forms of disability are more likely to become NEET than their peers. Similarly, young people with a migratory background are more likely to become NEET. The risk is higher also for young people living in remote areas or small towns. Other risk factors include low family income and disadvantaged family background, parents' unemployment, divorced parents, lack of professional experience, non-registration with public employment services,

antisocial behaviour, discouragement and, specifically for women, motherhood at a young age. The low educational level in two dimensions, both regarding NEETs themselves and their parents, is pointed out as a particularly important risk factor.

Eurofound (2012) mentions that across the EU NEETs experience some consequences because of their situation. These are financial and may be long-term because they cannot gain professional experience, which increases the likelihood of low pay in their future professional life. But they experience also negative psychological consequences due to feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, anxiety and depression. These feelings increase the risk of disengagement and social exclusion as well as the risk of participation in illegal activities. Finally, specifically for women, early motherhood does not only have a negative impact on their participation in the labour market, but is also related to early marriage or cohabiting, lack of satisfaction with life and lack of a sense of control. These feelings have been empirically confirmed also for Greek NEETs (Lytrivi, 2020; Papadakis, 2016).

Empirical findings (Lytrivi, 2020; EIEAD, 2018; 2019) identify several mental models and habits of mind (Mezirow & Associates, 2007) in the case of NEETs. These include blaming themselves for their situation, low self-confidence and self-esteem, increased stress levels, lack of trust in the educational system and difficulty to adapt to the challenging socioeconomic context, which is the outcome of successive crises.

Cedefop, in cooperation with Eurofound's research team, operationalised the sub-categories of NEETs defined by Eurofound (2016) in its [VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#) by designing the respective NEET profiles. This operationalisation complemented Eurofound's focus on employment, by adding the dimension of education and training and highlighting the role that VET can play in addressing the phenomenon (Table 1). [Risk factors](#) related to NEETs have also been operationalised in the toolkit. Targeted intervention approaches provided in the same toolkit, such as [helping female NEETs \(re\)integrate into education, employment or training](#), aim to address challenges linked to specific sub-groups, such as young women.

Table 1. **Sub-categories and profiles of NEETs**

Eurofound (2016)		Cedefop (2025)	
Seeking work and/or education or training			
Re-entrants		Re-entrants	
Short-term unemployed		NEETs in recent search (of work and/or education or training opportunities)	
Long-term unemployed		NEETs in long-term search (of work and/or education or training opportunities)	

Eurofound (2016)	Cedefop (2025)
Not seeking work and/or education or training	
Illness, disabilities	Unavailable due to illness or disability
Family responsibilities	Unavailable due to family responsibilities
Discouraged	Discouraged and disengaged youth

Source: Cedefop, 2025; Eurofound, 2016.

## 2.2. Policy context

### 2.2.1. Teachers

The crucial role of VET teachers ‘in preparing individuals of all backgrounds and ages to live, learn and work in the world of today’ is recognised also at policy level (Council of the European Union, 2020b). The [Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future](#) (Council of the European Union, 2020b) make explicit reference to VET teachers and trainers, and to adult educators. Although the Council conclusions acknowledge that many of the challenges that teachers and trainers face are common, some of them concern specific levels and types of education and training. Specific challenges of VET teachers and trainers and adult educators include promoting and developing basic skills and competences together with updated professional or technical skills and knowledge (Council of the European Union, 2020b).

Psifidou and Pevec Grm (2022) point out that VET teachers’ and in-company trainers’ decisive role as well as the need for a systematic and holistic approach of their professional development have been constantly acknowledged and highlighted at policy level, from the beginning of the process on enhanced European cooperation in VET set out in the Copenhagen Declaration in 2002 (Council of the European Union & European Commission, 2002) to the recent Osnabrück Declaration in 2020 (Council of the European Union, 2020a). These policy documents underscore that quality VET contributes to the (re)integration of vulnerable groups, stressing the crucial role of VET teachers in preventing early leaving from education and training and in creating opportunities for the reintegration of earl leavers (Psifidou & Pevec Grm, 2022).

Taking into account such challenges and in an effort to understand how these are dealt with at national level, in 2022, Cedefop and ReferNet prepared country reports for EU27, Iceland and Norway regarding VET teachers’ and trainers’ CPD, with a special focus on the inclusive, green and digital dimensions of modern VET. A comparative analysis of the 29 country reports showed that only 7 in 29 examined countries (Estonia, France, Croatia, Malta, Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden) reported CPD activities focusing on NEETs.

### 2.2.2. NEETs

NEETs are a high priority in the EU policies on employment and social affairs. At the time of writing this paper, the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1 January to 30 June 2025) keeps the momentum going by highlighting the positive impact that the social economy can have on the inclusion of groups at risk of labour market exclusion, such as NEETs.

Three of the new strategic targets of the EU (Council of the European Union, 2021) are indirectly related to NEETs. According to the strategic target of the EU for individuals leaving education and training early, their share should be less than 9% by 2030. The share of VET graduates that benefit from work-based learning during their vocational education and training should be at least 60% by 2025. Lastly, by 2025 at least 47% of adults aged 25 to 64 should have participated in a learning activity during the last 12 months.

The [European Pillar of Social Rights \(EPSR\)](#) is a set of 20 principles that aim to promote fair and inclusive labour markets and social protection systems in the EU. It was established in 2017 and provides a framework for EU countries to develop policies and strategies that address the causes of the NEET phenomenon, including lack of education and training opportunities, unemployment and social exclusion. THE EPSR is linked to NEETs in several ways. For example, principle 1 on education, training and lifelong learning emphasises the importance of access to quality education and training, which is crucial for preventing people from becoming NEETs. Principle 4 on active support to employment promotes active labour market policies, including support for NEETs.

The European Youth Guarantee is a key initiative under the EPSR. It was launched in 2013 as a response to the high levels of youth unemployment in many EU countries, aiming to help young people acquire the skills and experience needed for a successful transition into the labour market. The 2020 Council recommendation on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee focuses on the reinforcement of this important policy framework developed by the EU to combat youth unemployment. Member States are requested to continue to address youth unemployment and the issue of NEETs through prevention of early leaving from education and training and structural improvement in the school-to-work transition, including through the full implementation of the Youth Guarantee (Council of the European Union, 2020c). The [reinforced Youth Guarantee](#) is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. Eurofound (2015; 2017) played a significant role

in supporting the implementation of the Youth Guaranteed through its research and analysis on youth employment and education.

The [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#) is the EU's main instrument for implementing the EPSR and addressing the issue of NEETs. The ESF+ provides an important contribution to the EU's employment, social, education and skills policies, including structural reforms in these areas.

Finally, the European Commission, inspired by the success of the Erasmus programme, launched the ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) initiative (European Commission, 2021) for the participation of NEETs in mobility and exchange activities at EU level. The initiative aims to support NEETs who face challenges of professional and social integration through equal treatment and provision of equal opportunities of mobility compared to other categories of young people.

## 2.3. Previous research findings

### 2.3.1. Research and initiatives in Greece

#### 2.3.1.1. *Barometer of the absent: NEETs (2011-13)*

*Barometer of the absent: NEETs (2011-13)* was the first national scale research project on NEETs in Greece. It included two phases of quantitative research and two phases of qualitative research using large sample sizes (800 and 3 500 respondents in the two phases of the quantitative research and a total of 144 semi-structured and narrative interviews as part of the qualitative approach) <sup>(2)</sup>. The project findings revealed the complexity of the NEET indicator and led to a comprehensive policy proposal and a roadmap for the prevention of NEETs' social exclusion (Papadakis, 2013). The study provided information about the main problems NEETs face, NEETs' demographic and social characteristics, and the factors that lead an individual to becoming NEET. The study also analysed NEETs' views and attitudes towards education and training, employment, social welfare and political system, as well as their strategies to successfully overcome the NEET situation (Papadakis, 2013).

According to the study findings (Papadakis et al., 2014), the risk factors for NEETs in Greece align largely with the risk factors identified by Eurofound (2012). The degree of urbanity does not play a significant role, while gender can influence

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(2) [Βαρόμετρο Απόντων. Ανίχνευση, Κατηγοριοποίηση και εμπειρική θεμελίωση προτάσεων πολιτικής για την καταπολέμηση μιας νέας μορφής κοινωνικής ευπάθειας: Οι Neets \(Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training\)](#) (KA 3410).

to some extent the likelihood of becoming NEET, since the share of women is larger than that of male NEETs. Regarding VET programmes, only a small number of NEETs have participated in a VET programme; of those, the vast majority considers that VET is ineffective, with a weak link between the VET programme and the labour market. According to the study findings, NEETs in Greece experience increased stress levels and feelings of despair.

#### 2.3.1.2. *NEETs 2*

The national scale research programme NEETs 2 (Papadakis, 2016) included a quantitative and qualitative approach. The quantitative research was conducted with a representative sample of NEETs aged 15-24 at national level (2 769 individuals) using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The qualitative research included 71 semi-structured interviews, 96 check lists and two focus groups of five individuals each <sup>(3)</sup>. The programme focused on NEETs psychological profile and potential psychopathology, as well as on the impact of the 2009 financial crisis on NEETs. The programme explored also NEETs' views on the welfare state, institutions, training, economy and the labour market, as well as aspects of civic behaviour, public trust and social exclusion/inclusion (Papadakis, 2016). The programme did not include NEETs teachers as target population but explored NEETs' views on their teachers.

The outcome of the programme was a comprehensive intervention for NEETs. Regarding teaching methods that are appropriate for NEETs, the programme intervention proposes a combined teaching method in line with adult education theory, including differentiated learning and learner-centred approaches. According to the programme findings, the combined method encourages individuals' integration into life, society and work. Given that all teaching techniques have advantages and disadvantages, the programme proposes their alternated use depending on the conditions and needs of each learner group. The most appropriate teaching techniques for NEETs include exercises, experiential learning, exploration, presentation, questions-answers, demonstration, problem solving, differentiated approaches, educational drama, brainstorming, project-based learning, case study, practical exercises, role play, work in groups, work in pairs, discussion, snowballing.

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<sup>(3)</sup> Έρευνα και ολοκληρωμένη παρέμβαση για την κοινωνική ενσωμάτωση μιας μείζονος κοινωνικά ευάλωτης ομάδας: ψυχολογικό προφίλ/ ψυχοπαθολογία, προφίλ δεξιοτήτων, διάγνωση αναγκών και ανάπτυξη προγραμμάτων για την κατάρτιση-reskilling και την ψυχολογική υποστήριξη προς την επαν-ενσωμάτωση των «νέων ανθρώπων εκτός εκπαίδευσης, κατάρτισης και απασχόλησης (NEETs). EEA Grants/GR07-3757.

Regarding NEETs' expected learning outcomes, these are in line with the learning objectives set within the context of the educational intervention and include gaining knowledge, fostering social skills, gaining digital literacy and improving organisational skills. According to the study findings, when teachers are aware of the different characteristics of each NEET learner group, they can adapt their teaching techniques to the learners' need to achieve the best possible learning outcomes.

Finally, regarding reskilling, employability, career guidance and job counselling for NEETs, the programme comprehensive intervention proposes: a) promotion and reinforcement of bilateral and tripartite cooperation among public and private actors, and the social partners, b) upgrade of the lifelong learning network in Greece, and c) creation of local networks and a centralised network node to promote communication and cooperation between local networks and exchange of best practices on issues of social vulnerability, unemployment, career guidance and employability.

#### 2.3.1.3. *National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (EIEAD) surveys*

The target population of the first survey of the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (EIEAD, 2018) included 431 former employees of supermarkets Larisa ABEE, which closed after the company went bankrupt in 2015. The survey was conducted within the context of a programme aiming at the reskilling and work reintegration of the dismissed employees, co-funded by the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) and the Public Investment Programme (EIEAD, 2018). Primary data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to the beneficiaries of the training programmes. The information collected concerned the beneficiaries' views on their participation in the training programme and in general on VET. The survey explored also the beneficiaries' attitudes towards utilising the training in the labour market. The survey included also a self-assessment section on the participants' skills and their opinions on the importance of such skills in the performance of work-related tasks (EIEAD, 2018).

342 individuals participated in the second survey (EIEAD, 2019), which focused on NEETs. The survey questionnaire collected and analysed information about NEETs' views on their participation in the training programme and on VET. Along the lines of the first survey (EIEAD, 2018), this second survey explored NEETs' views on utilising the skills and competences gained through the training in the labour market. Through self-assessment, NEETs expressed their views about their skills and the importance of those skills in their future work-related tasks (EIEAD, 2019). The programme attended by NEETs provided training on

specialties demanded in the labour market based on an analysis of the Mechanism of Labour Market Diagnosis (EIEAD, 2019).

The findings of the second survey present a lot of commonalities with the first one (EIEAD, 2019). Most NEETs attribute unemployment to the financial crisis. Most participants have not abandoned efforts for reintegration. Regarding NEETs' views on VET, the vast majority of participants mentioned they are interested in and seek to participate in VET programmes. They search such opportunities through Centres of Vocational Training (CVT-KEK), on the internet, through OAED <sup>(4)</sup> and friends. Their reasons for not participating in VET programmes include lack of information and lack of programmes addressed to NEETs. Although they believe that VET has a positive image in Greece and they do not consider it as second-class education, a significant share of beneficiaries link VET to early leaving from education. Their views on the relationship between VET and the labour market are contradictory as they believe that VET does not secure easier integration into the labour market compared to general education; at the same time, they consider that VET contributes to the reduction of unemployment.

### **2.3.2. Research and initiatives in European countries**

Building on the [findings of 29 Cedefop/ReferNet country reports for EU27 Member States, Iceland and Norway](#), [Cedefop's synthesis report on Teachers and trainers in a changing world](#) (Cedefop, 2022b) looks into the phenomenon of NEETs and VET teachers in a comparative approach. While NEETs as target learner population of VET interventions and CPD programmes for VET teachers covering related skills were reported by only one country in 2016 (Belgium), in 2022 the number of countries focusing on NEETs raised to seven: Estonia, France, Croatia, Malta, Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden.

More specifically, the National Development Strategy for Croatia up to 2030 provides for the development of a coherent support system for learners to prevent early leaving and entering the NEET status, especially for vulnerable groups and learners with disabilities (Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, 2022).

Estonia reported that youth workers track down and support NEETs in choosing an appropriate learning pathway in VET or general education upper secondary schools for adults (Kukk, 2022).

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<sup>(4)</sup> OAED (Οργανισμός Απασχόλησης Εργατικού Δυναμικού) was the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation. In 2022, it was renamed into DYP (Δημόσια Υπηρεσία Απασχόλησης) – Public Employment Service.

France has adopted specific measures to reach out to NEETs, implemented by various professionals within the fields of IVET, career guidance and social work (Joseph, 2022).

In Malta, the Alternative Learning Programme has been implemented since 2013-14. It offers a VET-oriented second chance to learners still in compulsory education who are at risk of becoming early leavers or NEETs (Camilleri, 2022).

In the Netherlands, the reintegration of NEETs into education is a priority. Therefore, national research initiatives aim to identify trends and causes of the NEET phenomenon, as well as the profiles of young people at risk of early leaving from education (Westerhuis & Coenen, 2022).

Slovenia implements project learning for young adults programme, which is a second chance programme targeting NEETs (Šlander et al., 2022).

In Sweden, there is no legislation making municipalities or other regional authorities responsible for NEETs; however, there is a commitment from the government to reduce youth unemployment, and education is a main mechanism identified for this purpose (Swedish National Agency of Education, 2022).

Regarding skills covered by VET teachers' CPD in IVET, most EU countries indicated three main types of skills: a) technical or subject-specific; b) pedagogical/ teaching/ didactic; and c) transversal/ cross-cutting skills (Cedefop, 2022b). Countries made a specific reference to VET teachers' digital skills, which became necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic and in the context of digital transition of education in general (Cedefop, 2022b). Country reports focused also on VET teachers' skills needed to prevent early leaving from education and training and to support learners from vulnerable social groups in achieving their expected learning outcomes. Vulnerable social groups prioritised by EU countries include explicitly NEETs, but also other groups that are indirectly linked to NEETs as they are characterised by one or more risk factors (Eurofound, 2016; Cedefop, 2025) that can lead them to becoming NEETs, e.g. refugees, migrants, people with disabilities, people with special educational needs and learners at risk of early leaving education or training (Cedefop, 2022b). However, with the exception of some countries such as Bulgaria (Hristova & Petrova, 2022), Luxembourg (INFPC, 2022) and Norway (Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and skills, 2022), which mentioned specific skills spanning classroom management, strengthening learners' well-being, fostering a positive environment in the educational setting and learners' guidance, the transversal skills covered by VET teachers' CPD were not described in detail in the country reports.

## 2.4. Research questions

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper draws on the theory of adult education, European policy documents and empirical research findings about adult educators and NEETs, with a specific focus on Greece. Despite the relevant policy and research focus, there is no clear picture on NEETs teachers in Greece. The profile and characteristics of practitioners that teach one or more sub-categories of NEETs within the context of VET interventions in Greece remains understudied.

In this context, this paper aims to answer the following research questions:

- (a) What specific topics does NEETs teachers' CPD cover to prepare them to deal with the needs of this specific target group of learners and the digital transition that is currently taking place in education?
- (b) What teaching methods do NEETs teachers implement within the context of VET interventions for NEETs?
- (c) What is the role of NEETs teachers in motivating NEETs' learning and in making VET programmes more relevant to the labour market?

By answering the aforementioned research questions, this study aims to extract findings that will enhance our understanding of this important but understudied topic. Although NEETs teachers may work also with other groups of young or adult learners and not only with NEETs, this paper seeks to shed light on aspects of the teaching and learning processes that are related specifically to NEETs and their characteristics as these were described in the theoretical framework.

## CHAPTER 3.

# Methodology

A mixed quantitative and qualitative research approach was adopted for triangulation purposes, aiming to increase the reliability of the findings. A questionnaire was developed and disseminated for the collection of quantitative data and semi-structured interviews were conducted for the collection of qualitative data.

The target population of this study consisted of adult educators employed in educational interventions implemented in Greece in the academic year 2021-22 and addressed to one or more subcategories of NEETs (Cedefop, 2025; Eurofound, 2016) or to learners with at least one risk factor to become NEETs (Cedefop, 2025; Eurofound, 2016). The study population worked in some institution providing CVET or adult education programmes. Given that there is no publicly available registry of such population, the only way to access teachers was by contacting the educational organisations in which they could be employed and asking them to forward to the teachers the online questionnaire developed for the purposes of this study. These organisations were identified following consultation with experts that had conducted research on NEETs or were employed in competent authorities (e.g. EOPPEP <sup>(5)</sup>, OAED). Following the consultation process, the questionnaire was sent to private and public Institutes of Vocational Training (IVT-*IEK*), private and public Lifelong Learning Centres (LLLC-*ΚΔΒΜ*), OAED Employment Promotion Centres, OAED Institutes of Vocational Training, OAED Centres of Vocational Training (CVT-*ΚΕΚ*), OAED Centres of Vocational Training for People with Disabilities (CVT PwD-*ΚΕΚ ΑΜΕΑ*), second chance schools and municipal lifelong learning centres, with the request to be disseminated to NEETs teachers. At the end of the above process, the random probability sample consisted of 65 educators. The questionnaire aimed to collect information about their CPD on digital skills and topics related to the target group of the VET programmes, the teaching methods they implement when working with NEETs, and their role in motivating NEETs' learning and in linking the implemented education interventions with the labour market.

During the questionnaire dissemination phase, several challenges emerged. There seemed to be unclarity and uncertainty regarding the providers

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<sup>(5)</sup> [EOPPEP](#) (Εθνικός Οργανισμός πιστοποίησης προσόντων και επαγγελματικού προσανατολισμού) is the Greek National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance.

implementing educational interventions for NEETs, which made it particularly difficult to identify them in the first place, and consequently also NEETs teachers, who were the population of interest. The contact details of NEETs teachers were not always available online; this applied to the contact details of the providers as well. Administrative aspects also had to be considered, as providers requested a series of approvals prior to disseminating the questionnaire to their teaching staff.

Regarding the qualitative part of the study, non-probability sampling was used: individuals were selected based on their availability and accessibility, provided that they had the above-mentioned characteristics required also for the quantitative approach of this study. The sample consisted of five adult educators employed in educational interventions addressed to at least one subcategory of NEETs (Cedefop, 2025; Eurofound, 2016), or teaching learners with at least one risk factor to become NEETs (Cedefop, 2025; Eurofound, 2016). These practitioners were reached following consultations with experts, research and competent authorities dealing with NEETs at practice, research or policymaking level. It was particularly challenging to reach teachers of NEETs belonging to the large categories of short-term and long-term unemployed, due to the difficulty in identifying educational programmes addressed to those categories and providers implementing them.

The questionnaire and interview guide used in the context of this study are available upon request.

### 3.1. Quantitative approach: questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was made available online. The questionnaire link was sent to the participants electronically. The link remained active for three weeks, to make sure participants would have enough time to respond. The estimate time required for the questionnaire completion was approximately 10 minutes. The questionnaire contained a short introductory text describing the purpose of the survey.

The questionnaire was designed based on the insights gained through the literature review. It was structured in four parts. The first part aimed to collect general and demographic information about the participants. The remaining three parts corresponded to the three research questions of this paper. The questionnaire contained 31 questions. It was of semi-structured type as most of the questions were closed-ended, but in multiple choice questions participants were given the possibility to provide also an answer that was not among the ones offered as answer options (e.g. 'other, please specify'). More specifically, the questionnaire included one question about the participants' gender; two open-

ended questions about the respondents' age and specialisation (for which the respondents were not given any preselected answer options); 20 questions with the possibility to select one answer among two or three options (e.g. 'Yes/No/I don't know', 'Less than 1 year/From 1 to 5 years/More than 5 years'); six multiple-choice questions, for which participants were given a range of potential options with the possibility to select one or more options, plus the possibility to provide explanations on their reply if they so wished; and two Likert scale questions.

### 3.2. Qualitative approach: semi-structured interview

Following the lines of the questionnaire, the structure of the semi-structured interview aimed to complement the quantitative approach findings about NEETs teachers in Greece. After an introductory part collecting general and demographic information, the interview was similarly structured around three thematic axes corresponding to the research questions of this paper: a) NEETs teachers' CPD in digital skills and topics related to the specific characteristics of the target population of learners; b) teaching methods implemented by teachers when working with NEETs; and c) role of NEETs teachers in motivating NEETs' learning and in making the implemented VET programme more relevant to the labour market.

The interview contained 20 questions. The first eight questions aimed at collecting general information and at creating a setting of trust to allow the interviewees to express themselves freely. Then, a set of four open-ended questions was designed for each one of the thematic axes, creating a cohesive framework for the interview but at the same time leaving enough margin to the interviewees to share their opinions.

Five interviews were conducted remotely (by telephone or using a videoconferencing tool). Prior to the interview, the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study, data protection issues and potential publication of the interview findings. They were also asked to sign a consent form describing the way of conduct of the interview and the research topic, to make an informed decision on whether they would participate or not. The interviews were conducted according to the agreed terms. Interviewees were anonymised and are mentioned in this paper as I1, I2, I3, I4 and I5.

### 3.3. Pilot

A pilot was conducted for both approaches, with four questionnaires and one interview. The data collected during the pilot were not taken into account in the

analysis of the findings. The pilot participants indicated that they needed less time than expected to fill in the questionnaire. They also pointed out some aspects that needed clarifications and suggested grouping some of the questions. Their suggestions were taken into account to build the final versions of the questionnaire and interview guide.

### 3.4. Research constraints

The research conducted was a personal endeavour, without any administrative or financial support and without the involvement of any other researchers (Kyriakopoulou, 2022). Methodological constraints included challenges in identifying and reaching the survey sample. Given the limitations of this study, the sample composition is not representative of the general NEETs teachers' population, and thus, the results cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, the findings provide novel and actionable insights on NEETs teachers and NEET learners in Greece, which can be extremely useful to policymakers, practitioners and learners. An inferential statistical analysis was out of the scope of this study and will be undertaken at a later stage.

## CHAPTER 4.

# Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data

### 4.1. Introductory part: demographic and other characteristics of the participants

#### 4.1.1. Quantitative approach

The first part of the questionnaire aimed to collect general information about the participants. The questionnaire was filled in by 65 NEETs teachers, of whom 46 were women (70.8% of the sample) and 19 were men (29.2% of the sample). The respondents were aged 25 to 67 and the average age was 45.

Despite the non-representative sample, insights were gained from people with a wide variety of profiles and backgrounds. 40 different specialisations were identified in the respondents' answers; they are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' specialisations

Specialisation	Frequency	Percentage
Economist	7	10.8%
Philologist	6	9.2%
Psychologist	4	6.2%
Teacher	3	4.6%
English teacher	2	3.1%
Administrative employee	2	3.1%
Social worker	2	3.1%
Sociologist	2	3.1%
Hairdresser	2	3.1%
Mathematician	2	3.1%
Career counsellor	2	3.1%
Physicist	2	3.1%
Photographer	2	3.1%
Beautician	1	1.5%
French teacher	1	1.5%
Agronomist	1	1.5%
Graphic designer	1	1.5%
Civil servant	1	1.5%
Dietologist	1	1.5%
LLLC director	1	1.5%
Education counsellor	1	1.5%
Art and music kinetics	1	1.5%
Customer service	1	1.5%
Occupational therapist	1	1.5%
Theologist and Sociologist	1	1.5%

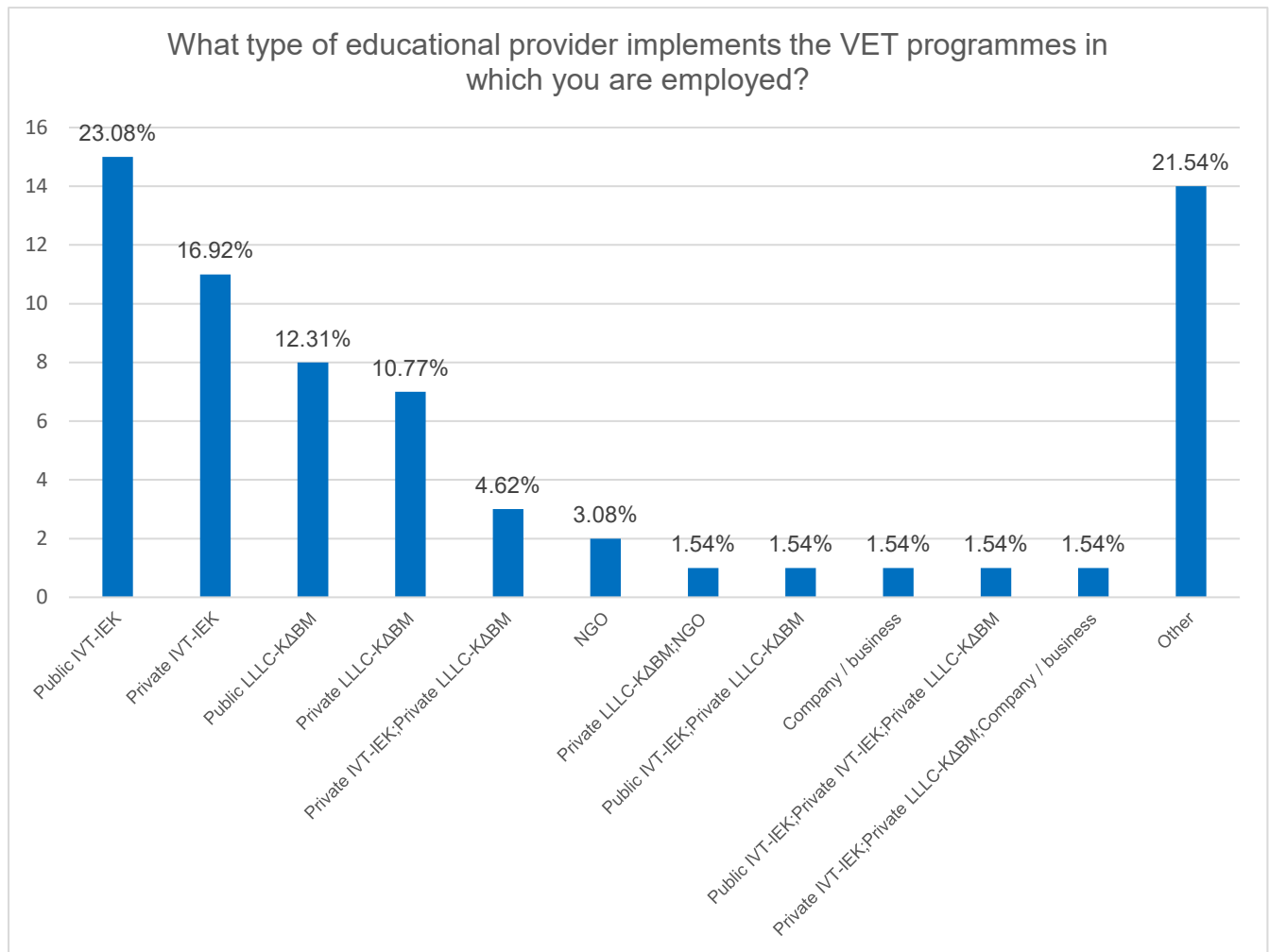
Specialisation	Frequency	Percentage
Owner of IVT LLLC	1	1.5%
Private employee	1	1.5%
Historian	1	1.5%
Marketing	1	1.5%
Computer engineer	1	1.5%
Mechanical engineer	1	1.5%
Music technology	1	1.5%
Kindergarten teacher	1	1.5%
Lawyer	1	1.5%
Economist-Education counsellor	1	1.5%
Computer science and recruitment techniques	1	1.5%
Computer science	1	1.5%
Technologist	1	1.5%
Tourism sector	1	1.5%
Chemist, oenologist	1	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Author.

Regarding their educational organisation of employment, participants indicated public Institutions Institutes of Vocational Training (IVT-*IEK*), private Institutes of Vocational Training (IVT-*IEK*), public Lifelong Learning Centres (LLLC-*KΔBM*), private Lifelong Learning Centres (LLLC-*KΔBM*), NGOs, companies / businesses, as well as combinations of those. Some participants are employed in more than one educational provider. Their replies about their educational organisation are presented in Figure 1.

‘Other’ educational organisations indicated by the respondents included the following types: second chance school (n=8, 12.3% of the sample), second chance school detention centre (n=1, 1.5% of the sample), non-profit civil partnership (n=1, 1.5% of the sample), OAED Institute of Vocational Training (IVT-*IEK*) (n=1, 1.5% of the sample), Community centre Roma branch (n=1, 1.5% of the sample), OAED (n=1, 1.5% of the sample), OAED School for people with disabilities (n=1, 1.5% of the sample).

Figure 1. **Types of educational providers where NEETs teachers are employed**

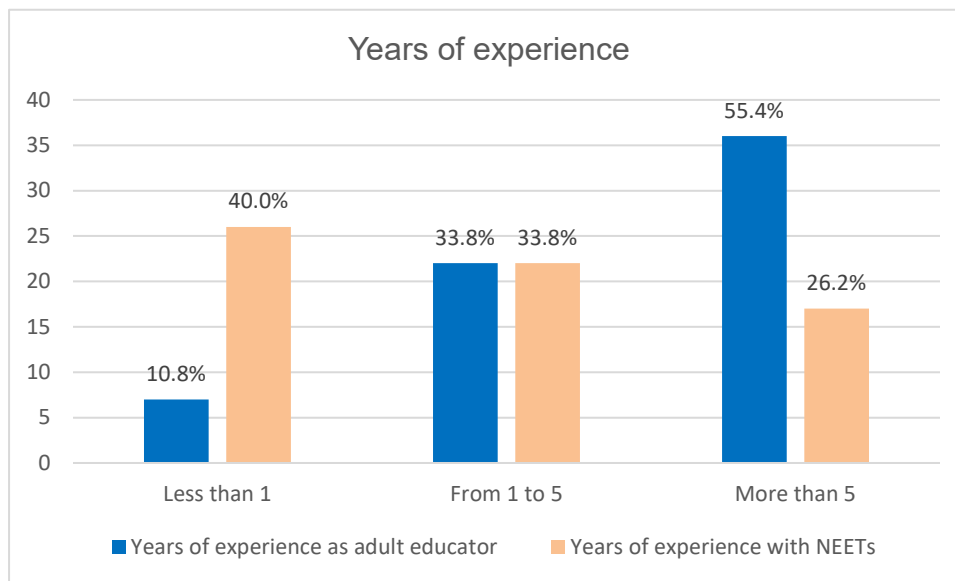


Source: Author.

When asked if adult education is their main occupation, 36 out of 65 participants replied 'No' (53.85% of the sample), 28 participants replied 'Yes' (43.08% of the sample) and 1 participant replied 'I don't know' (1.54% of the sample).

The participants' replies about their years of experience as adult educators in general and as NEETs teachers specifically are presented in Figure 2.

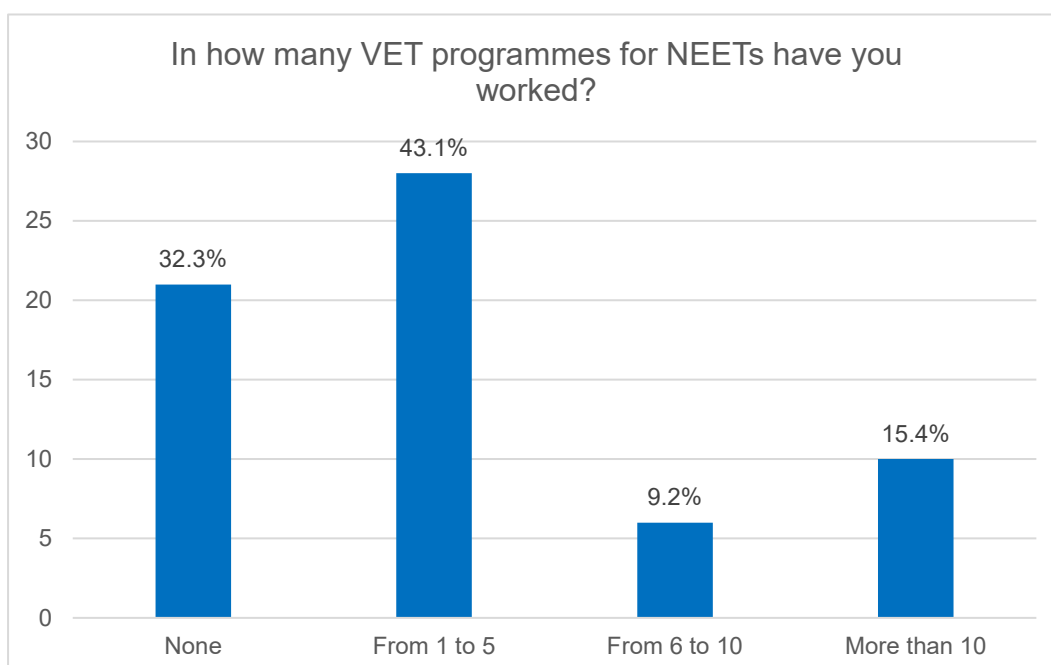
Figure 2. **Years of experience of NEETs teachers**



Source: Author.

The respondents' replies about the number of VET programmes for NEETs in which they have worked are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. **Number of VET programmes in which NEETs teachers have worked**



Source: Author.

Regarding whether formal qualifications are required to work as NEETs teacher, 40 out of 65 participants replied 'yes' (61.54% of the sample), 7 participants replied 'no' (10.77% of the sample) and 18 participants replied 'I don't know' (27.69% of the sample).

#### **4.1.2. Qualitative approach**

The interviews were conducted with five NEETs teachers, of whom three were women and two were men. They were from 29 to 53 years old, with an average age of 38.2. Their specialisations were as follows: doctor of educational policy; mathematician; linguist, with a master's degree on adult education; philologist specialised in teaching Greek as a foreign language and with a master's degree on adult education; ethnographer. Regarding their educational organisation of employment, two of the interviewees were employed at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, one at the Educational Policy Development Centre of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (KANEP-GSEE), one at a second chance school, and one at an NGO. Three interviewees replied that adult education is their main employment, while for two of them adult education is a secondary occupation. Their average years of experience as adult educators amounts to 8, which is reduced to 6.4 when it comes to professional experience in teaching NEETs.

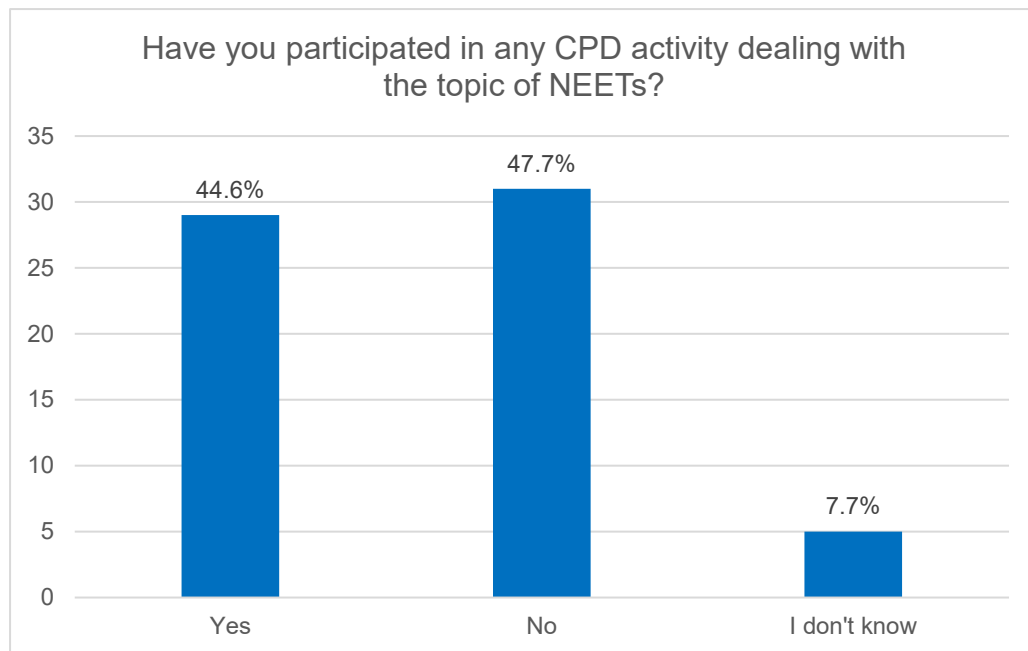
## **4.2. First research question: CPD of NEETs teachers**

#### **4.2.1. Quantitative approach**

The second part of the questionnaire covered the first research question, which concerned CPD activities in which NEETs teachers have participated or wish to participate. First, the questionnaire focused on two main CPD topics: the target learner population because of their specific characteristics, and NEETs teachers' digital skills because of the current digital transition in education. Then, it explored briefly the participants' views on some additional CPD topics covering further skills.

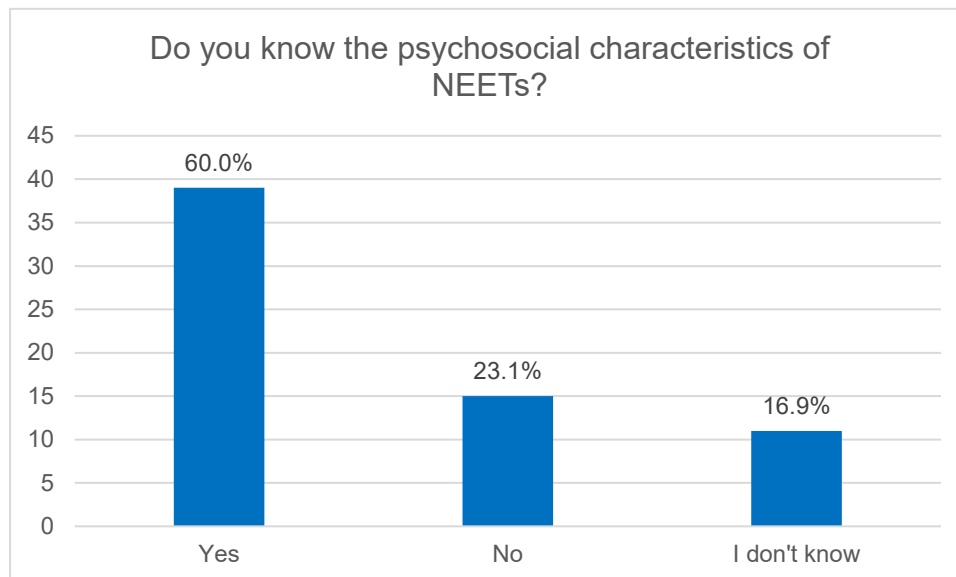
The participants' replies are presented below in Figures 4 to 9.

Figure 4. **CPD on NEETs**



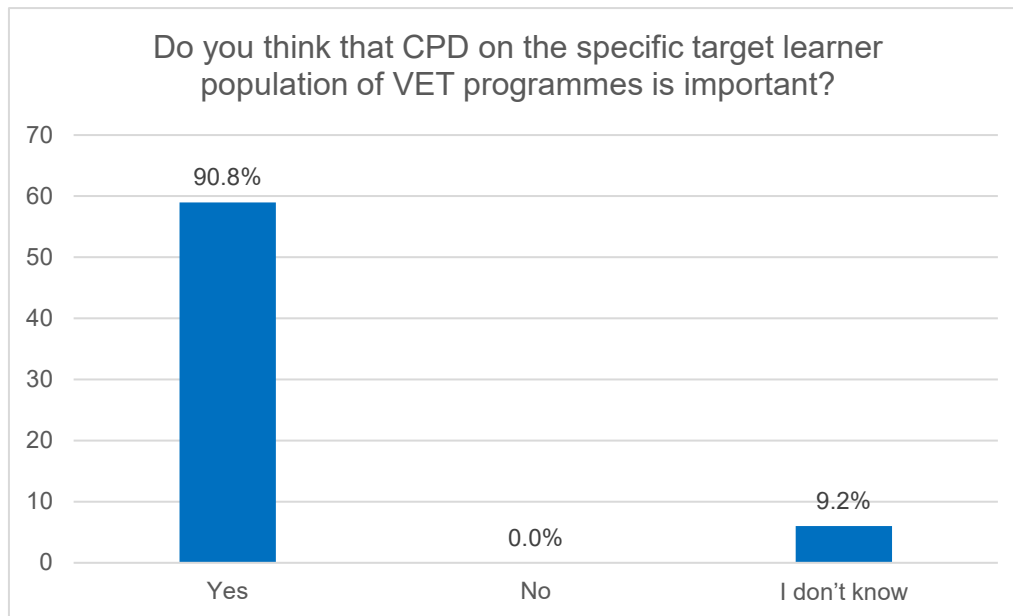
Source: Author.

Figure 5. **Knowledge of psychosocial characteristics of NEETs**



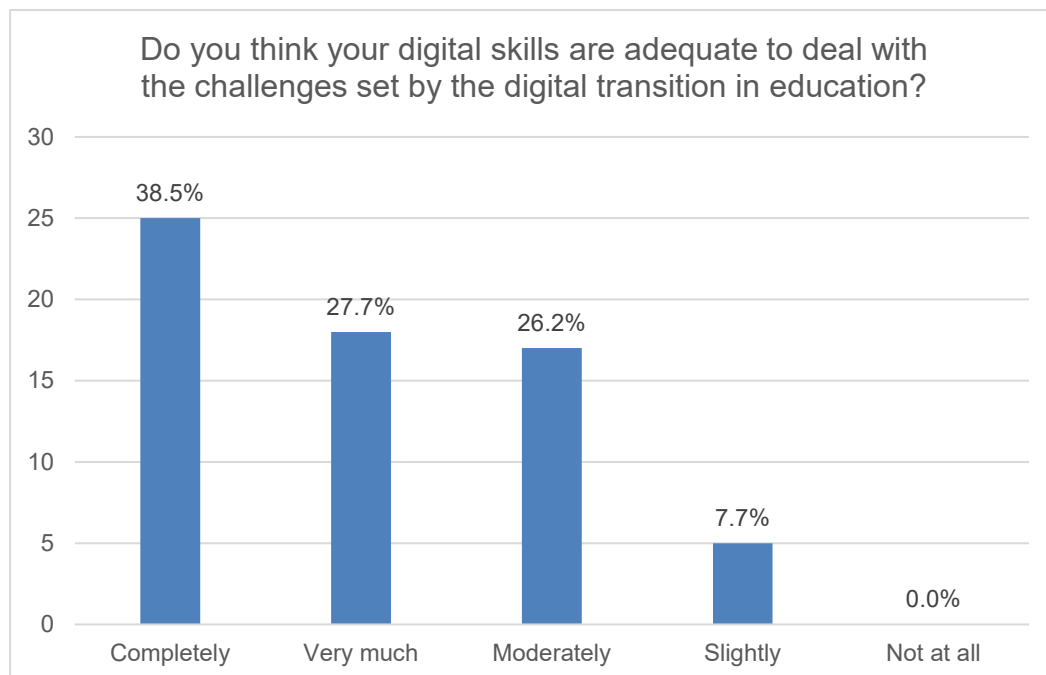
Source: Author.

Figure 6. **Importance of CPD activities on the specific target learner population**



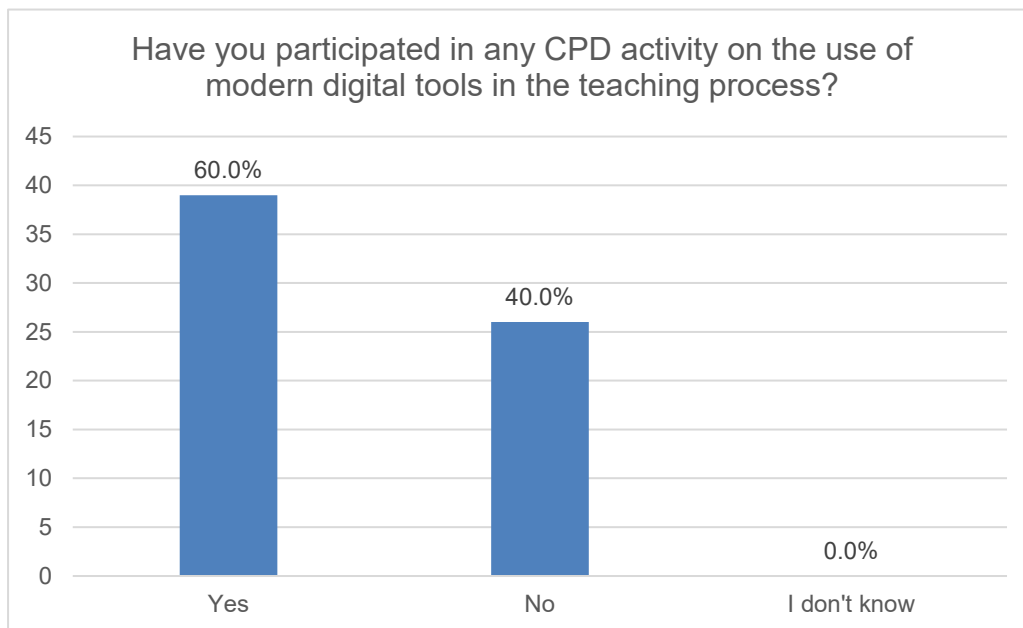
Source: Author.

Figure 7. **Digital preparedness of NEETs teachers**



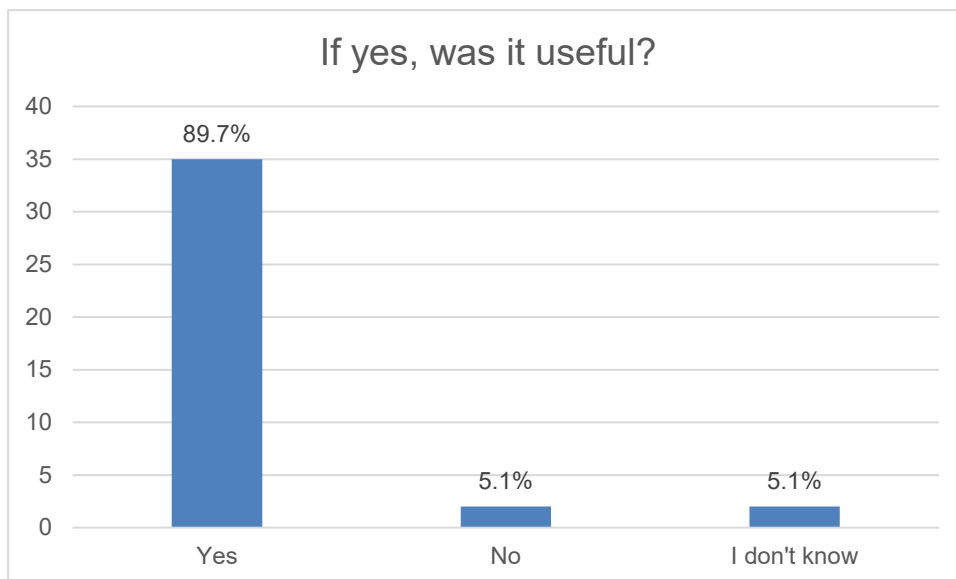
Source: Author.

Figure 8. **Participation of NEETs teachers in CPD on digital skills**



Source: Author

Figure 9. **Usefulness of CPD on digital skills**



Source: Author.

Participants were also asked to express their views about a series of CPD topics that could be important for NEETs teachers, and to indicate any CPD topics they consider important. According to a recent Cedefop study (Cedefop, 2022b), in most EU countries, IVET teachers' CPD topics cover the taught subject, teaching methods and transversal skills. Recent study findings (Lamscheck-Nielsen, Moeve aps, 2020; Agrusti & Corradi, 2015) indicate effective communication, empathy, fostering a supportive environment and putting learners at the centre of the learning process as expected skills of NEETs teachers, aligning with adult education theory (Jarvis, 2004). Based on these insights, the CPD topics covered by the questionnaire of this study include good knowledge of the taught subject and transversal skills. Participants' replies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. **Additional CPD topics participants consider important for NEETs teachers**

CPD topic	Share of participants
Good knowledge of my teaching subject	72.31%
Effective communication with learners	72.31%
Empathy in building the relationship with learners	70.77%
Fostering a supportive learning environment to encourage active participation of learners in the learning process	70.77%
Cultivating mutual respect with learners	67.69%
Strengthening learners' self-perception and self-confidence	64.62%
Adequate digital skills for the implementation of part of or the whole teaching process in a digital learning environment	60.00%
Strengthening a positive attitude towards learners	55.38%
Adapting the educational content to the learning pace of learners	55.38%
Putting learners at the centre of the learning process	53.85%
Motivating learners' learning	49.23%
Adapting teaching methods to the individual and group characteristics of learners	49.23%
Reflective dialogue and/or critical thinking	46.15%
Other: Knowledge of teaching methods, specific characteristics of NEETs	1.54%

Source: Author.

#### 4.2.2. Qualitative approach

The first question of this part of the interview explored whether the interviewees considered they were sufficiently prepared to work with NEETs as learners. All five interviewees replied they felt sufficiently prepared, as a result of relevant studies/formal qualifications, research work and professional experience:

I1: 'I have done extensive literature review, I take part in international fora, I am member of international groups, we have collected good practices for this learner group.'

I2: 'I have participated in several CPD activities as adult educator and I hold a certification from EOPPEP.'

I3: 'I think I have a good educational background gained through my studies, and also a good professional background as I had the chance to work with several groups of NEETs.'

I4: 'I feel prepared, because of relevant professional experience and formal qualifications.'

I5: 'Yes, I believe I belong to those few cases combining relevant field experience and studies.'

However, at the same time, three out of five interviewees expressed some doubts due to the complexity of the NEET phenomenon and the specific characteristics of the target learner group:

I1: 'However, in Greece we may have not explored thoroughly NEETs' characteristics, we may need also a third national-scale study.'

I3: 'However, I think it might be dangerous to claim preparedness regarding the work with such groups, because learners may show unpredicted behaviour as a result of the pressure to which they are subject. I have seen several learners experience an emotional and mental breakdown during the learning process, without an obvious reason... This may lead to dropout.'

I4: 'I think I am sufficiently prepared, but this doesn't mean that I cannot find myself in a situation that I am not familiar with, which I don't know how to deal with'.

Regarding specific CPD activities in which they have participated or wish to participate in the future and the ways in which CPD has helped or could help them, the interviewees raised several issues. Some of them exceeded CPD and touched upon general issues they face when working with NEETs:

I1: 'What is very important is to link [the programme] with employment and the labour market – what are the ways to do this? We have no thorough knowledge of the programmes run by OAED, the municipalities, the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) programmes. We would need a network, a team collecting all this information and channelling it to us, so that we can further channel it to NEETs. NEETs often are not aware of competent authorities, e.g. OAED, they do not know their rights. For most NEETs, the biggest concern is reintegration. They didn't know about second chance schools, apprenticeship vocational schools (EPAS), the OAED apprenticeship, which could be very important for them because, I repeat, their biggest concern is how to reintegrate. Another important need is the psychological support of these individuals. We are adult educators, we are not fully trained to provide the psychological support they need. Also, a career counsellor could significantly contribute to the development of the programmes.'

I3: 'I would wish to receive mental health support in the same way learners received it. Learners bring their experience to the educational process. The social exclusion they may experience is a serious issue that can take huge dimensions. This has an impact also on teachers, as it can increase their stress levels. We would also need interpreters [when working with refugees], but as there was no such provision we built the programme in such a way as not to need interpreters.'

I5: 'An intercultural approach would certainly be beneficial, support the refugees in their effort to reach the labour market. I wish to point out there is lack of funding regarding educational programmes for refugees. Language mediation is also very important.'

While in general they consider that CPD has been helpful, one interviewee talked about CPD fatigue: 'I4: I don't feel I need any more CPD, I am a bit tired, CPD activities, seminars one after another, where more or less the same things are repeated', expressing the need for more targeted CPD on specific topics: 'I4: I would need training on victims of torture or transnational refugees/migrants'.

Regarding their preparedness to deal with the challenges of the digital transition, all interviewees replied they feel sufficiently prepared. At the same time, three out of five interviewees used the opportunity of this question to share that, in their opinion, learners are not sufficiently prepared:

I1: 'Personally, I believe I am sufficiently prepared. Nowadays, there are lots of programmes, links, interactive boards, polls, ways to teach an interactive class to make it interesting for learners. But I am not sure all learners have the required digital literacy or infrastructure. Let's not forget that many of them come from a poor family background.'

I2: 'I am prepared, but learners aren't. During the Covid-19 pandemic we mostly worked in asynchronous ways. Second chance schools did not provide digital teaching, also because most learners did not have the necessary equipment.'

I4: 'I am prepared, I have my laptop, I have internet connection, I also have the knowledge and skills to use digital tools. But the big question is to what extent learners are also prepared. What is the solution for people without a laptop and internet connection? They participate in an education format that they have not selected, it was imposed to them and in addition, they don't have the means to respond to it.'

When asked if they have received or if they would wish to receive training on teaching in digital learning environments, they replied as follows:

I1: 'I believe such training is very useful for people that are not familiar, we have learnt by doing. But the digital learning field evolves rapidly. I may have a

good background, but this doesn't mean I don't need more, especially when I need to work with specific population groups.'

I2: 'No, within the context of second chance schools we have not received any training. It would have been helpful, training on how to deliver digital teaching is important.'

I3: 'No, within the context of the programme we have not received any training, we were only given computers.'

I4: 'In the future, I am sure I will need further training, because technology keeps improving.'

I5: 'I would love to have training on software that does not require learners to have a computer, meaning mobile software and how to use it in class as a digital learning tool.'

### 4.3. Second research question: teaching methods

#### 4.3.1. Quantitative approach

The respondents were asked to indicate NEETs' mental models and habits of mind (Mezirow & Associates, 2007) identified in the target population of the educational programmes in which they have worked. They were given an initial list of mental models established based on previous research findings (Lytrivi, 2020; Papadakis, 2016). They could select those identified within the context of their teaching experience but could also add the ones they have identified but were not included in the provided list. Their replies are provided in Table 4.

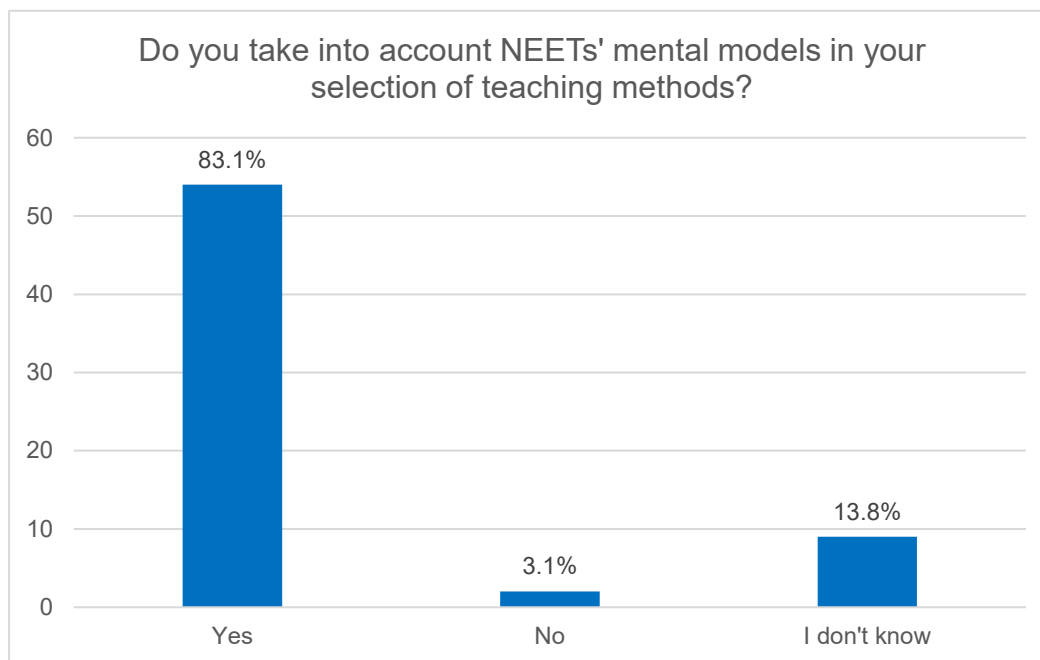
Table 4. **NEETs' mental models and habits of mind identified by teachers**

Mental model and/or habit of mind	Share of participants
Lack of motivation	61.54%
Professional exclusion	55.38%
Lack of strategy and vision for the future	53.85%
Lack of self-confidence	52.31%
Lack of qualifications	50.77%
Increased stress levels	46.15%
Confused about professional future	38.46%
Disappointed with life	35.38%
Lack of trust in the educational system	33.85%
Social exclusion	33.85%
Limited social interaction	24.62%
Other: Insufficient or no understanding because of no Greek or English language knowledge	1.54%

Source: Author.

The survey then sought to understand if the respondents take into account NEET's mental models in the selection of their teaching methods. Their replies are presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10. **NEETs' mental models in the selection of teaching methods**



Source: Author.

The respondents were then asked to indicate the teaching methods they implement when working with NEETs. They were given a list of teaching methods (Jarvis, 2004; Kokkos, 2005; Papadakis et al., 2016), of which they could select the ones they implement. They were also given the possibility to indicate any teaching methods they implement but were not included in the provided list. Their replies are presented in Table 5.

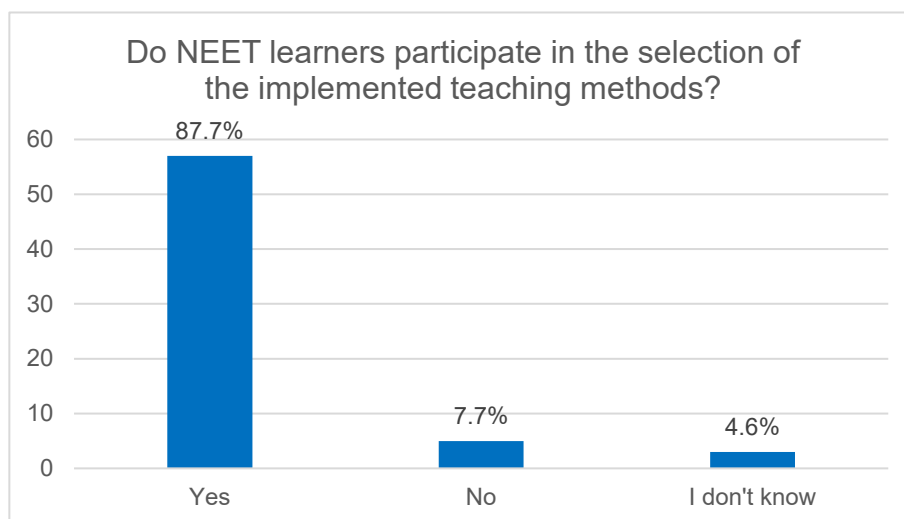
Table 5. **Teaching methods implemented by NEETs teachers**

Teaching method	Share of participants
Discussion	83.08%
Presentations	73.85%
Work in groups	73.85%
Brainstorming	72.31%
Exercises	60.00%
Role play	46.15%
Simulation	38.46%
Art utilisation	27.69%
Other: Utilisation of experience gained in a programme abroad	1.54%

Source: Author.

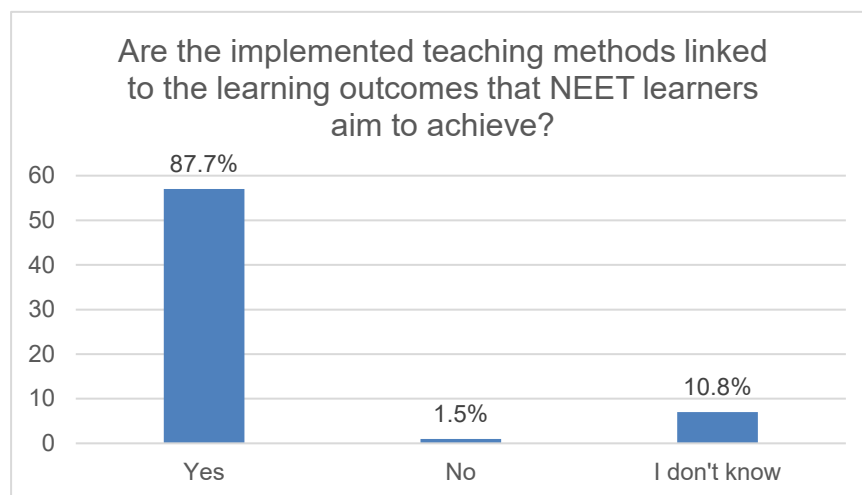
The respondents were also asked if NEET learners participate in the selection of the implemented teaching methods and if the implemented teaching methods are linked to the learning outcomes that NEET learners aim to achieve. The respondents' replies are presented in Figures 11 and 12.

Figure 11. **Participation of NEET learners in the selection of the implemented teaching methods**



Source: Author.

Figure 12. **Link between implemented teaching methods and learning outcomes**



Source: Author.

The next question aimed to explore the learning outcomes that the respondents consider important for NEETs. The participants were offered a list of learning outcomes potentially applicable to NEETs in terms of knowledge, skills

and attitudes (Jarvis, 2004; Kokkos, 2005; Lytrivi, 2020), of which they could select the ones that they considered important for the target learner population. They were also given the possibility to add learning outcomes that were not included in the initial list. Their replies are summarised in Table 6.

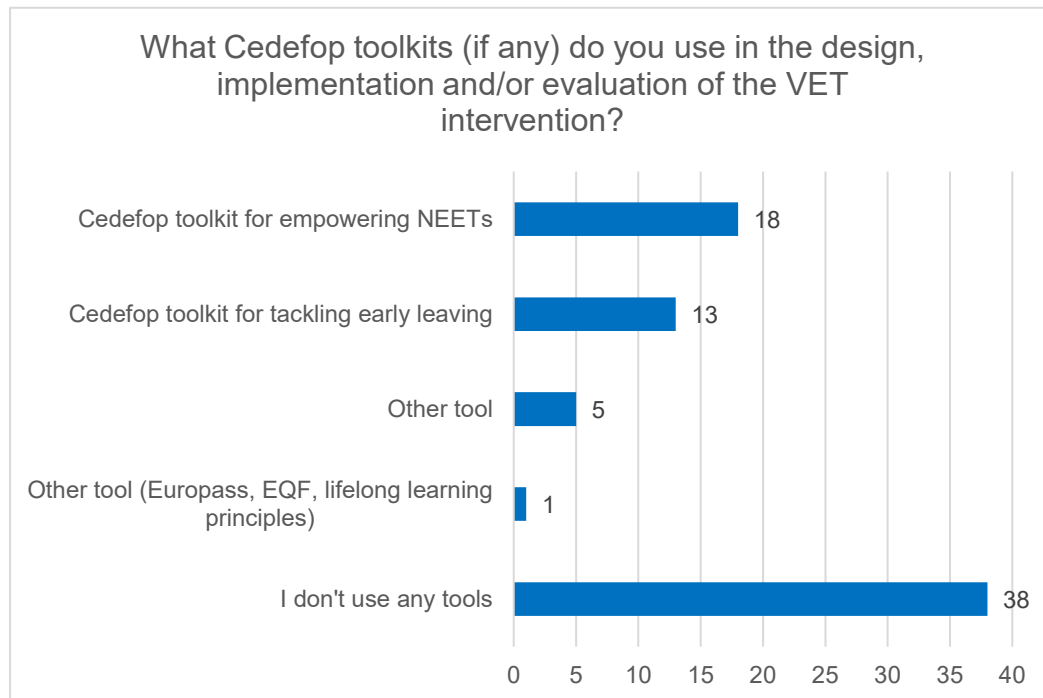
Table 6. **Learning outcomes applicable to NEETs**

Learning outcome	Share of participants
Communication skills	69.23%
Good knowledge of the taught subject	64.62%
Adaptability	64.62%
Problem solving	63.08%
Positive self-perception	63.08%
Teamwork	61.54%
Critical thinking	61.54%
Digital skills	56.92%
Positive attitude towards education/training	53.85%
Positive attitude towards the labour market	46.15%
Other: Personal responsibility. Understand and practise the principle of learning daily and making progress also outside the classroom.	1.54%

Source: Author.

The last question of this part of the survey explored whether the respondents use any relevant Cedefop toolkits to support the design, implementation and/or evaluation of a VET programme or practice. The respondents were provided with an indicative list, of which they could choose the toolkits and tools they use. They were also given the possibility to add tools that were not included in the initial list. Their replies are presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13. **Cedefop toolkits used to support the design, implementation and/or evaluation of the VET intervention**



Source: Author.

#### 4.3.2. Qualitative approach

Within the context of the qualitative approach, the interviewees were asked about the teaching methods they implement when their learners are NEETs. The most frequently used method seems to be work in groups, implemented by three out of five interviewees, largely confirming the findings of the quantitative research (73.85% of the respondents had indicated work in groups as one of the teaching methods they use).

The interviewees indicated additional teaching methods, enriching and complementing the findings of the quantitative approach:

I1: 'The basic principles of adult education do not change in the case of NEETs, the basic teaching methods remain the same: discussion, brainstorming.'

I3: 'Sociogram. Learners' characteristics are identified and analysed in three axes: [...] vulnerability, [...] education [...] aiming at utilising learners' prior experiences, [...] adulthood. [...] Also, regarding specifically refugees and migrants, we apply methods utilising augmentative and alternative communication.'

I4: '[...] I use a communicative approach, role play, projects. My methodology is task-based learning. [...] Learners themselves show what they want, we do not

simply use a book and teach what is written in there. We listen to the learners, what they want to achieve, and based on this we proceed, all methodologies are based on the cooperation with them.'

I5: 'I mainly use theatre pedagogy elements, experiential methods rooted in theatre, performance and scenario representation. I also use task-based techniques, and total physical response, which is related to the use of the body and scenarios. Also, use of everyday objects in the classroom. I had to work for a long period of time without access to technology, I therefore used more practical things.'

When asked how they differentiate their teaching methods when working with NEETs compared to other categories of learners, the interviewees replied that they adapt their teaching techniques to the learners' needs, characteristics and learning objectives:

I1: 'I group NEETs based on their skills, for example 15 NEETs with low digital skills will form a group.'

I2: 'I always adapt to my group of learners, I work to help them meet their learning needs.'

I3: 'Utilising their experience. Detecting the needs, motivation and background of each group, where they come from and under what conditions.'

I4: 'It depends on the group, if it is a group of abused women you need to cooperate also with other specialists, e.g. psychologists, social workers. In such cases, there are also empowerment elements. The techniques are adapted to the needs of the group and also to the needs of each individual separately within the group. For example, someone who doesn't wish to participate in a specific activity will work on something different with me while the rest of the group is working on something else. Differentiation and personalised learning are used a lot.'

I5: 'Gender is very important, for example with Muslim women we limit the physical contact because it makes them feel uncomfortable. I adapt my methods to the learning objectives.'

The next question aimed to explore the ways in which the teaching methods selected by NEETs teachers contribute to identifying and managing NEETs' mental models and habits of mind. The interviewees' replies focused on learners' active participation:

I1: '[...] through a discussion group you can get a good picture of the whole group and identify the group's range of needs. It is important that everyone takes the floor to present themselves. This is how you understand the degree of their self-awareness, but also their self-perception.'

I2: 'I keep a close eye on them, I listen to them, I pay attention to the questions they ask, and also to the way they cooperate in each group and how they help each other.'

I3: 'I always start with a sociogram, to understand whom I have in front of me.'

I4: 'It is very important to respect their views. Learners join the class as they are, we accept them as they are.'

I5: 'My first concern is to understand their education level, which can be highly divergent. I adapt learning activities accordingly, using differentiation within the same group, depending on each learner's needs.'

The last question of this part of the interview explored how learners participate in the selection of teaching methods. According to the interviewees, they participate in the selection of the teaching methods by being responsive or not and by expressing their views:

I1: 'Their attitude shows. If you notice that they are not responsive or that they do not participate in the group or in the brainstorming exercise, you may try a case study, you keep changing the techniques until you find the one that will motivate the group.'

I2: 'Indirectly, with their questions.'

I3: 'We start by identifying what motivates them.'

I4: 'All teaching methods can be used depending on the circumstance. But we have to listen to them carefully. When they themselves select something, this increases their motivation for learning, everything goes smoothly, when something is imposed to them there are also a lot of dropouts.'

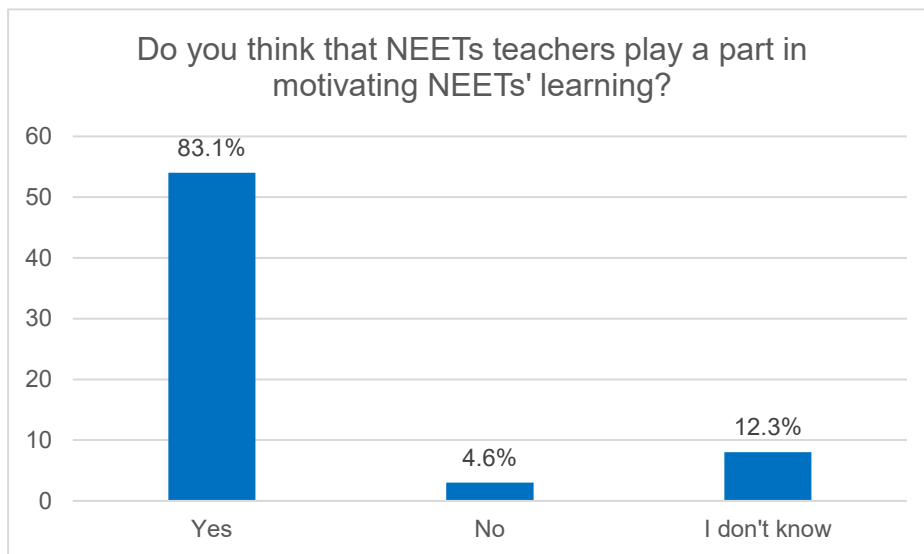
I5: 'Usually by expressing their needs. It's mainly the learners who set the teaching scenarios, not me.'

#### 4.4. Third research question: role of NEETs teachers

##### 4.4.1. Quantitative approach

The third research question aimed to explore NEETs teachers' role in two dimensions: motivation of NEETs' learning and making the educational intervention more relevant to the labour market. When asked whether they consider that NEETs teachers play a role in motivating NEETs' learning, the respondents' replies were as follows:

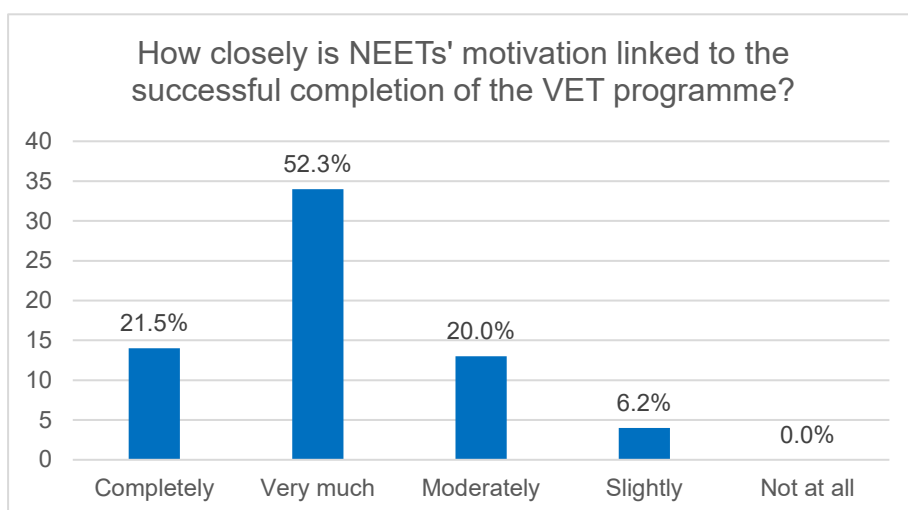
Figure 14. **NEETs teachers' role in motivating NEETs' learning**



Source: Author.

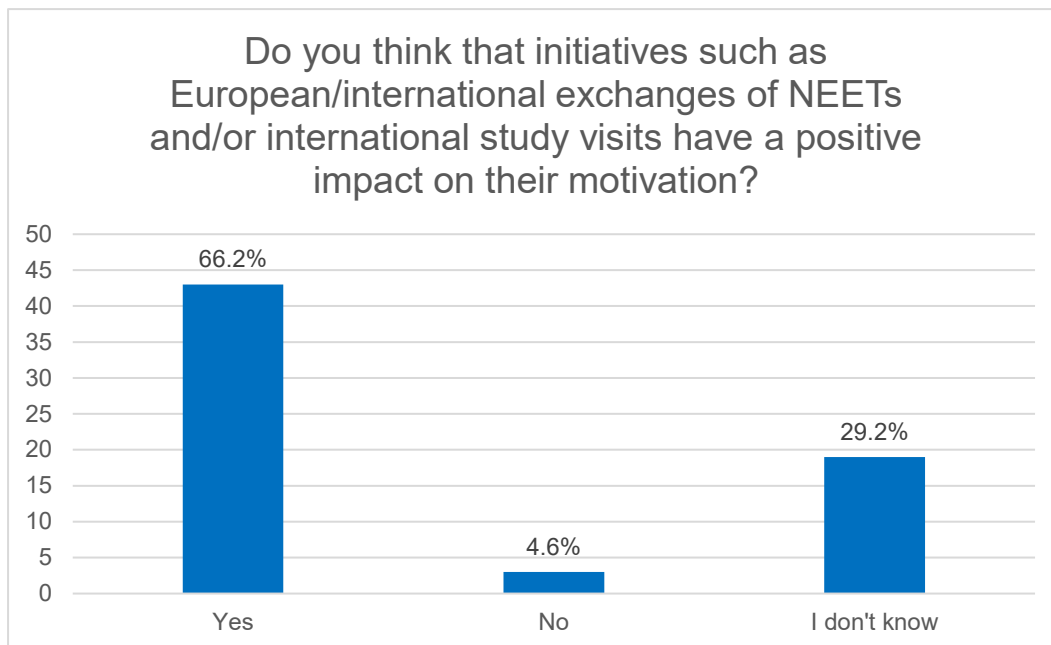
The survey also sought to collect the respondents' views on how closely NEET's motivation to learn is linked to the completion of the VET programme in which they participate, and also if initiatives such as European/international exchange programmes for NEETs and/or international study visits can have a positive impact on their motivation. The respondents were also asked whether they inform their NEET learners about such initiatives. Their responses are presented in Figures 15, 16 and 17.

Figure 15. **Link between motivation and successful completion of VET programme**



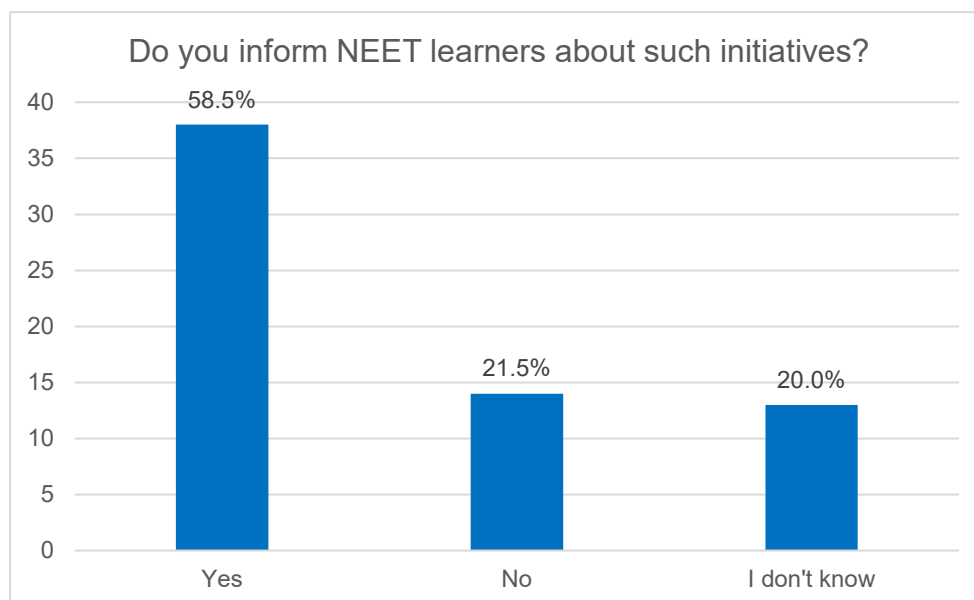
Source: Author.

Figure 16. **Impact of European/international exchanges and/or study visits on NEETs' motivation**



Source: Author.

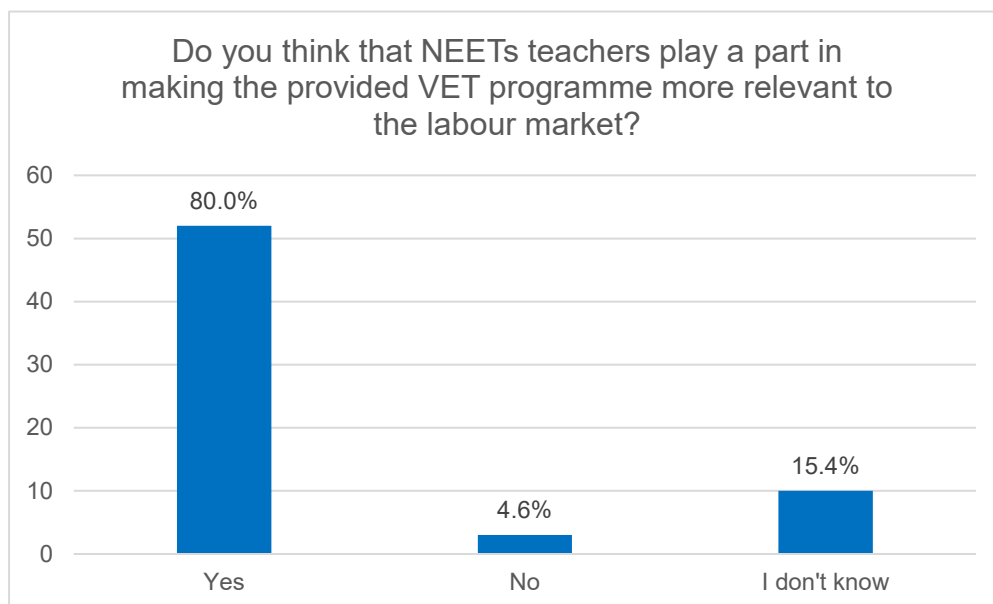
Figure 17. **Awareness-raising about European/international initiatives for NEETs**



Source: Author.

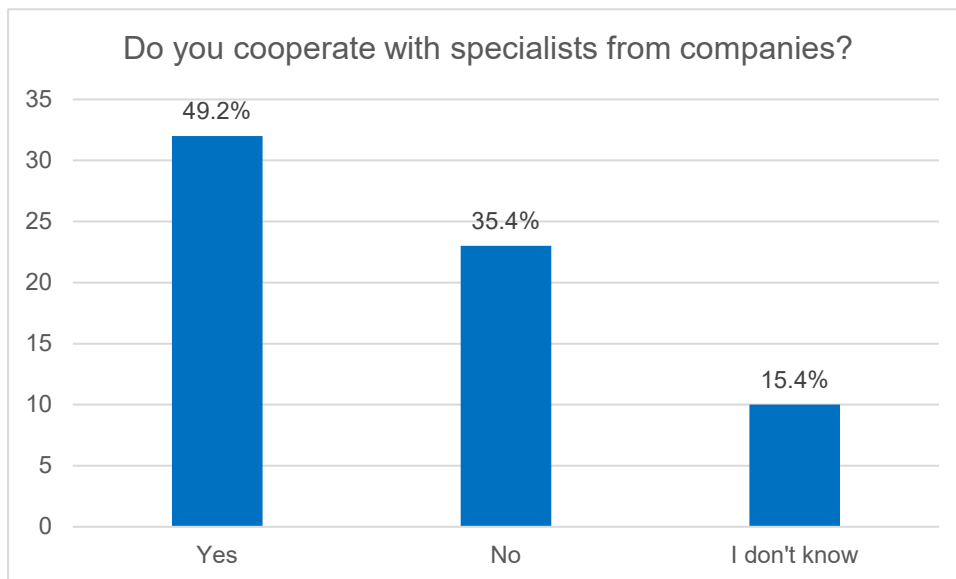
Lastly, the survey sought to understand whether, according to the respondents, NEETs teachers play a part in making the implemented VET programme more relevant to the labour market; whether within the context of the implemented VET intervention NEETs teachers cooperate with professionals or trainers working in companies; whether the VET interventions in which they teach encompass apprenticeship or any other form of work-based learning; and whether they inform their NEET learners about further possibilities of apprenticeship or other forms of work-based learning beyond the completion of the VET intervention they attended. Their replies are presented in Figures 18 to 21.

Figure 18. **NEETs teachers' role in making the VET programme more relevant to the labour market**



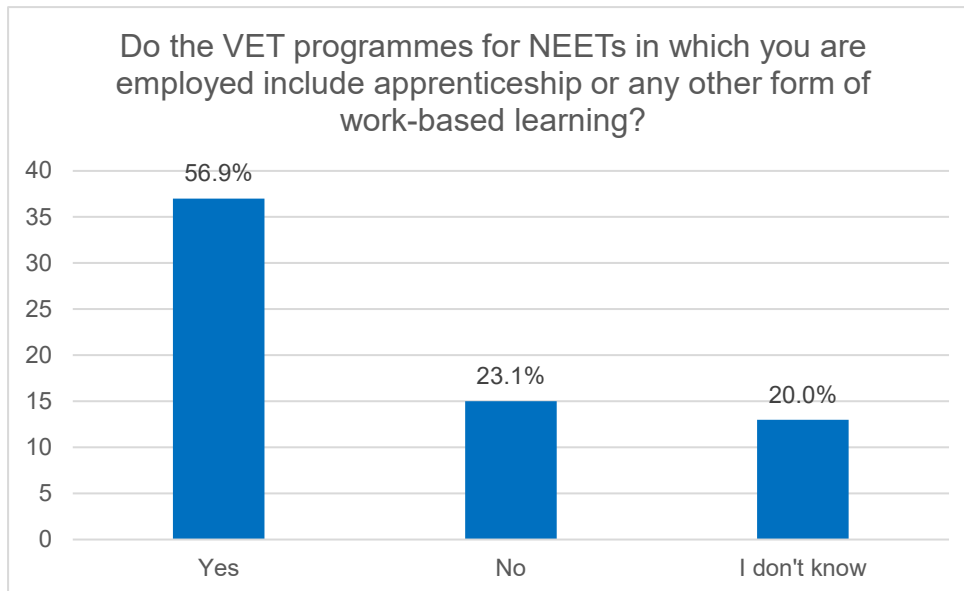
Source: Author.

Figure 19. **Cooperation between NEETs teachers and specialists from companies**



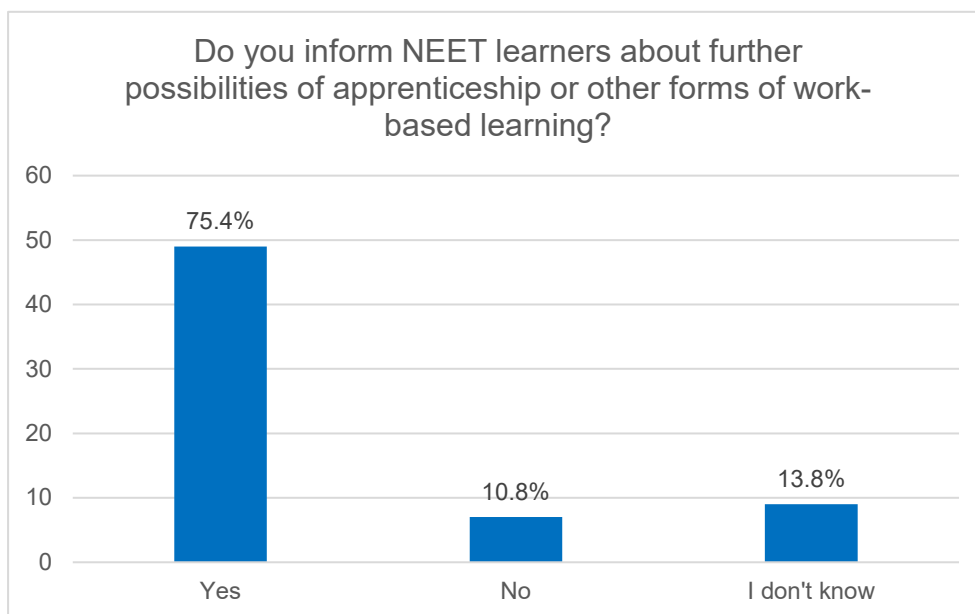
Source: Author.

Figure 20. **Apprenticeship or other forms of work-based learning in VET programmes for NEETs**



Source: Author.

Figure 21. **Awareness-raising among NEET learners about further opportunities of apprenticeship or other forms of work-based learning**



Source: Author.

#### 4.4.2. Qualitative approach

Within the context of the qualitative approach, the interviewees were asked to share their views about the role of NEETs teachers. First, they were asked to describe the role of NEETs teachers in motivating the learning of the target learner population. According to three out of five interviewees, motivating NEETs' learning is part of the teacher's role, but it primarily depends on the intrinsic motivation of the learners themselves:

I2: 'It has to do more with their own interest in learning rather than with us teachers.'

I4: 'Of course the teacher plays a part in motivating their learning, as he/she is responsible for the atmosphere that will be created in the classroom [...]. But what is crucial is their own initial motivation.'

I5: 'Definitely the teacher has a role in motivating their learning. If the teacher does not provide any extrinsic motivation, they will not be able to understand their own intrinsic motivation; therefore, the educator's role is to trigger or multiply their intrinsic motivation.'

According to I1, in addition to the teachers, there are a lot of stakeholders that can be involved in the motivation of NEETs learning.

Regarding the role of teachers specifically, I1 points out: 'NEETs are a heterogeneous population with no common characteristics, aspirations or goals. For us teachers it is not easy. We are trying to find out their wishes and aspirations

by discussing with them, so as to motivate them. But they are not a cohesive group.'

I3 links learning motivation to the acceptance of learners as well as to responding to their emotional needs: 'The educator is a mentor, who guides them and at the same time is guided by them, characterised by flexibility and adaptability to respond to their emotional needs.'

The next question sought to explore the interviewees' views on how NEETs' motivation to learn can be strengthened. The interviewees' replies to this question were particularly important, because they emphasised the complexity of the issue of motivation while reiterating opinions they had expressed at an earlier stage of the interview:

I1: 'One way is to divide them into smaller groups with common aspirations and goals. To motivate a group, it must be a cohesive one.'

I2: 'In the past, they participated in Erasmus programmes, during the period 2000-10, they were very enthusiastic about those. They are enthusiastic even about simple projects, when you take them to places they have not visited before, especially women who had stayed home for a long period of time to raise children, they become totally different people. Anything can motivate them, go to the cinema to watch a movie, study visits to laboratories or companies, anything.'

I3: 'By strengthening the sense of belonging. The learning process is a golden opportunity for these people to become members of a team and receive acceptance. The rest will come, their educational performance, the motivation to undertake studies and find a job.'

I4: 'A collective effort is needed, supported also by a legislative framework [...]. Teachers need experience and CPD on this, they need to be adequately prepared. It is political issue. This is not theory, this is reality. A lot of educators quit, they find it so hard to deal with that they quit their job.'

I5: 'Provide them with the necessary equipment and access to education plays a part in motivation. Educators need to participate in CPD activities, but not on theoretical topics. The link with the labour market needs to be strong, but not an end in itself.'

The interviewees were also asked about NEETs teachers' role in making the implemented VET intervention more relevant to the labour market. The interviewees' replies revealed once again the complexity of the issue: 'I1: The link with the labour market is a huge topic...'. I2 clarified there was a social worker helping learners integrate into the labour market, but focusing on the teacher's role in strengthening learners' self-confidence, she mentioned: 'The fact that through the programme they gain self-confidence is very important; they feel they can, they are in a position to find a job, something that until some time ago they did not

believe about themselves.’. I3 considers the teacher is the ‘mediator between these people and society’. I4 distinguishes the teacher’s role from that of other specialists, whose responsibility would be to provide an effective link with the labour market, although she tries to help learners in this direction because teachers are the first individuals with whom learners share their concerns and ask for help: ‘The teacher is not a job counsellor; the teacher can empower and give ideas. But I could not imagine myself doing both things, teaching and job counselling, the latter is something totally different. Learners ask ‘where can I find a job?’, this is their main concern. [...] I want to help them, I search, as I would do for myself or for a friend, but I am not an expert in this field and there is always the risk of providing wrong information. [...]’ Finally, I5 recognises that the teacher plays a part in linking the VET programme with the labour market, but this happens because of the specific situation of Greece: ‘I5: The teacher is also the person who secures the funding and the links with the labour market. The distortion in Greece is that the educator has to do more than what is required by its role.’

The last question of the interview explored the views of the interviewees about how the link between the provided VET programmes and the labour market can be improved. The interviewees highlighted several key points that can contribute to this direction:

I1: ‘Needs and skills analysis would be necessary. Utilisation of counselling tools, to find out more about their talents. Based on such tools, targeted programmes can be proposed. Direct search, through competent authorities, such as OAED with its Employment Promotion Centres, career offices of the municipalities which have support services. However, a cohesive group remains a key point: group members should have the same starting point and the same goals, e.g. find a job.’

I2: ‘I think this has to do a lot also with the location, where a second chance school is located, maybe networking is easier in big cities than in remote areas.’

I3: ‘The organisation does help them in this. What we need a lot are visibility actions. Society must somehow get to know these people. Learners must participate in initiatives taking place in the city where they live.’

I4: ‘We need a cooperation network comprising social workers, psychologists, job counsellors, career guidance specialists. An integration network which currently does not exist, e.g. for Roma or other vulnerable groups. For the refugees, there is the HELIOS programme, but it is not sufficient. As far as I know, in second chance schools there must be such a network, but I don’t know if it is sufficient. There are two migrant integration centres, one in Piraeus and one in Athens, they are not enough.’

I5: 'First of all, we need educational programmes that will not be created by each teacher separately, there is no single curriculum at the moment, no instructions, nothing. [...] It would be in the interest of society and employers' associations to provide some tools and suggest some ways to help integrate refugees in the labour market.'

## CHAPTER 5.

# Discussion and critical analysis of findings

This section discusses and analyses the findings revealed from the survey and interviews allowing to outline:

- (a) the profile of NEETs teachers including information about their general characteristics;
- (b) their CPD on topics such as digital skills and NEETs' specific characteristics;
- (c) the teaching techniques they apply when working with NEETs; and
- (d) their role in motivating NEETs' learning and in making the implemented VET programme more relevant to the labour market.

The main findings are also discussed in the context of adult education theory and empirical research findings reviewed in the theoretical part of the study. However, comparisons have not always been possible, as the target population of this paper differs from that of previous studies.

Regarding the general information collected about NEETs teachers, it is not possible to compare findings with other studies conducted in Greece, as no reference study providing similar information has been identified. According to the study findings, women outnumber men (70.8% versus 29.23% of the sample), drawing a picture that aligns with the situation described in other European countries (Cedefop, 2022b). The average age of participants was 45 in the quantitative approach and 38 in the qualitative approach; it would be interesting to repeat the survey in a specific timeline and compare the age-related data, to ascertain empirically whether the ageing challenge for VET teachers reported by several European countries (Cedefop, 2022b) encompasses also NEETs teachers in Greece. Participants' specialisations cover a wide range, potentially reflecting the wide spectrum of theoretical and practical subjects offered within the context of VET interventions for NEETs. Economists, philologists and psychologists are the three most frequent specialisations. Regarding the educational provider of employment, the participants' responses cover a wide range of organisations. It is interesting to note that a rather high percentage of participants (55%) indicated that adult education is not their primary occupation. Given that the study was conducted in the context of VET, it is worth exploring further if there are NEETs teachers presenting the characteristics of the emerging profile of 'hybrid teachers' (Cedefop, 2022b), meaning individuals working in parallel in VET institutions and companies. Participants have adequate professional experience, both as adult educators in general (89% of the sample have 1 to 5 or more than 5 years of

experience) and as NEETs teachers specifically (60% of the sample have 1 to 5 or more than 5 years of experience with NEETs) and have been employed in a sufficient number of VET programmes for NEETs (only 32% of the sample have not been employed in any such programme). Finally, attention is drawn to the participants' reply to whether specific qualifications are required to work as a NEETs teacher in VET programmes, since it does not allow to draw a safe conclusion – 61.5% of the participants replied that specific qualifications are required, while 38.5% replied that no specific qualifications are required or that they don't know. It is worth exploring further this topic, to clarify the conditions that need to be met, e.g. teaching qualifications, qualification and qualification level in a specific field, previous professional experience (Cedefop, 2022b).

Regarding the first research question, significant findings emerged in relation to NEETs teachers' CPD on the target learner population and digital skills. Most respondents stated that they have participated or wish to participate in CPD activities on these two topics; they also indicated that they consider such CPD activities important and/or useful. This finding confirms adult education theory, as many scholars have repeatedly underscored the importance of CPD for adult educators in general (Karalis, 2005; Pavli Korre et al., 2016; Pavli Korre, 2018; Illeris, 2016; Jarvis, 2004) and for educators of vulnerable groups specifically (Jarvis, 2004). It is also in line with policy documents (Council of the European Union, 2020b) highlighting the importance of CPD for adult educators and VET teachers as part of their professional growth and well-being. The need of initial and continuing professional development has been mentioned in the country reports on IVET teachers and trainers of all EU countries (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2022). The survey participants highlighted the necessity and importance of CPD on NEETs, whose psychosocial and specific characteristics have been studied both in Greece (Papadakis, 2013; Papadakis, 2016; Lytrivi, 2020) and at EU level (Eurofound, 2016; Cedefop, 2025). The participants indicated that they have sufficient knowledge of the specific characteristics of NEETs, but at the same time stated that it might be necessary to further investigate the NEET phenomenon in Greece. Moreover, they clarified that the fact they know their general characteristics does not mean they do not need additional CPD when it comes to specific subgroups; they are also aware that, despite their preparedness, they might need to deal with cases that have not encountered before or cases with an increased level of difficulty.

Although this was not the aim of the first research question, the interviewees highlighted, in a complementary but emphatic way, the non-preparedness and/or limited digital skills of NEET learners, confirming the digital gap that a recent Cedefop study (2020a) had identified. Moreover, the importance of the learners'

acceptance and sense of belonging emerged; this was studied also within the context of a relevant Cedefop feasibility study (2021b).

The participants acknowledged CPD as a means to update their knowledge in their field of specialisation, aligning with their IVET counterparts' needs as these were reported in many EU countries (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2022; Cedefop, 2022b). Moreover, the participants emphasised the need to cultivate transversal skills (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2022; Cedefop, 2022b), such as effective communication with learners, empathy when building the relationship with learners, fostering a supportive environment to encourage the participation of all learners in the learning process, and cultivating mutual respect with learners. These skills point to the challenges of inclusiveness, the need to update VET teachers' training and the need to approach vulnerable groups, reported by several EU countries (Cedefop 2022b). Teachers' quality and individualised CPD to help them deal with the changing social and digital conditions of today's societies (Cedefop, 2021b) is confirmed also by the findings of this study.

The interviewees took the opportunity to express broader issues on which they wish to receive support going beyond CPD. One of the main issues that was mentioned emphatically and repeatedly concerns the need to effectively link the implemented VET programmes with the labour market (De Luca et al., 2020). Participants stressed the need of better coordination of involved stakeholders and better information of adult educators, so that they can in turn raise awareness more effectively among NEET learners (Papadakis, 2016; Lytrivi, 2020). This finding is linked also to the third research question of this study and is discussed in more detail in the coming paragraphs.

The second research question aimed to explore the teaching methods implemented by the participants when working with NEETs. Learner-centred teaching methods aiming to encourage the participation of all learners are an integral part of the theory and practice of adult education, and their suitability has been pointed out by many scholars (Jarvis, 2004; Kokkos, 2005; Pavli Korre et al., 2016). The target learner population of NEETs is characterised by specific mental models and habits of mind (Mezirow & Associates, 2007) aligning to a great extent with several risk factors identified by Eurofound (2012; 2016) and Cedefop (2025). Regarding NEETs in Greece, Papadakis et al. (2014) mention that the identified risk factors are generally in line with those indicated by Eurofound (2012) and highlight urbanity, ineffective VET, weak links with the labour market, and feelings of stress and despair as (dysfunctional) views expressed by NEETs. Most survey respondents and interviewees indicated they are aware of NEETs' psychosocial characteristics, and they take them into account in the selection of the teaching methods they implement.

According to the comprehensive intervention prepared within the context of the research programme [NEETs 2](#), a combined teaching methodology is proposed for NEETs, in line with adult education theory and particularly education of socially disadvantaged groups, differentiated and learner-centred methods (Papadakis et al., 2016). The programme findings mentioned that the proposed combined methodology contributes to the individuals' integration into society and the labour market and encourages self-reflection. The alternative use of active teaching techniques is also recommended, depending on the specific characteristics of each group of learners.

The data collected from participants regarding the teaching techniques they implement are in line with the findings of research programme NEETs 2 and the proposals of the comprehensive intervention prepared within the context of the programme. The participants emphasised explicitly the conscious use of learner-centred techniques as opposed to the vertical teacher-student relation and transfer of knowledge (Freire, 1977). They stressed the importance of identifying the learners' needs and adapting the teaching methodologies accordingly. The importance of work in groups and differentiated teaching were also highlighted.

However, it is worth noting the 'contrast' emerging from the participants' reply about NEETs mental models, since only 33.85% of participants stated that they have identified NEETs' lack of trust in the educational system. This view has been included in the findings of previous studies and is inextricably linked to the teacher-centred model of the Greek educational system, which is rejected by NEETs as non-functional (Papadakis, 2016; EIEAD, 2018; EIEAD, 2019; Lytrivi, 2020.). The findings of this paper also showed that the participants do not leverage to the maximum extent possible the available tools that can support the design and implementation of their teaching tasks, as 58% of participants indicated that they do not use any support tool.

The third research question aimed to explore the role of NEETs teachers in motivating NEETs' learning and in making the implemented VET programmes more relevant to the labour market. The multiple roles of adult educators have been studied extensively in the context of adult education theory (Karalis, 2018; Rogers, 1999; Jarvis, 2004; Illeris, 2016). Regarding specifically vulnerable groups of learners, motivating their learning can contribute significantly to retaining them in the learning process (De Luca et al., 2020). The intervention approach related to [building motivation to learn](#) included in [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) analyses this topic and provides useful tips for practitioners and policymakers. The respondents of this study confirm previous research findings (Vršnik Perše, 2015. De Luca et al., 2020) regarding the importance of motivating

NEETs' learning, by acknowledging NEETs teachers' role in this respect and by emphasising the importance of learners' intrinsic motivation.

The respondents referred to the positive impact that international exchange programmes and/or study visits can have on motivating NEETs' learning. Cedefop (2020b) pointed out the efforts made to promote international mobility in IVET, but also the challenges of this initiative for vulnerable learner groups. Increasing the participation in European mobility programmes was also an important initiative within the context of apprenticeships in VET (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2020) and is the main focus of the European programme ALMA (European Commission, 2021) addressed specifically to NEETs. [ALMA](#) features also among the resources offered by Cedefop VET toolkit on empowering NEETs.

Finally, the study explored the role of NEETs teachers in making the implemented VET programmes more relevant to the labour market. The insufficient link between VET and the labour market was pointed out as a structural weakness in Greece (Papadakis et al., 2014; Papadakis, 2016; EIEAD, 2018; EIEAD, 2019; Lytrivi, 2020). The same weakness was identified also in other EU countries, like Italy and Spain (De Luca et al., 2020). Moreover, NEETs in Greece indicated that finding a job is an essential priority for their social and professional (re)integration (EIEAD, 2018; EIEAD, 2019; Lytrivi, 2020; Papadakis et al., 2014). The importance of easing transitions from education to work was pointed out by Eurofound (2012, 2016).

Cedefop (2017) highlighted the importance of upskilling and reskilling for the integration and stay of young and adult NEETs in the labour market. Recent policy developments provided in Cedefop's [Timeline of VET policies in Europe](#), such as [training needs anticipation](#) and [employment activation strategies](#) in Spain, the [national strategy for competences/skills](#) in Italy and [restructuring the Public Employment Service, CVET and skills forecasting](#) in Greece put a special emphasis on NEETs and their reintegration into the labour market through VET. Relevant intervention approaches included in [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#) that can provide support to linking VET programmes with the labour market include [offering mentorship programmes to NEETs](#), [easing transitions into work](#), [supporting NEETs to manage their careers through lifelong guidance](#) and [validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling [early leaving](#) includes complementary intervention approaches such as [developing employability skills](#) and [work-based learning and simulations](#). Finally, Cedefop (2021a) pointed out the role of VET teachers in linking VET with the labour market in some EU countries.

While within the context of this study the issue of linking VET with the labour market was the thematic focus of the third research question only, it emerged

across all research questions and throughout the analysis of the study findings, showcasing the importance of this issue and NEET teachers' concern about it. The respondents of this study consider that they play a role in linking the implemented VET interventions with the labour market, although they seem uncertain about their precise role in this regard. In any case, they indicated this issue as a topic on which they wish to receive support, emphasised the necessity to create a comprehensive and coordinated network with the participation of all stakeholders, and the need of guidance from employers' associations and the labour market. They confirmed NEETs' distress to (re)integrate into society by finding a job, as well as the fact that teachers are the first individuals to whom they express their concerns and ask for help, since teachers act as mediators between NEETs and society. They also highlighted teachers' role in strengthening NEETs' self-confidence, to help them believe that they are capable of finding a job. Finally, the respondents mentioned the clear distinction that needs to be made between the roles of NEETs teachers and job counsellors.

## CHAPTER 6.

# Conclusions

This paper aimed to outline the profile of NEETs teachers employed in VET programmes in Greece by collecting general and demographic information, subsequently complemented with information about NEETs teachers' CPD, teaching methods and role. It also laid the groundwork for a broader comparative approach with other European countries by providing some preliminary insights on policy initiatives and practices in other EU member states. This study contributed to filling important research gaps and to identifying trends in relation to the topics it explored with the goal to support policies aiming to prepare a high-quality teaching force for NEETs in Greece and beyond. The main conclusions are summarised in this section.

### **Demographic and other characteristics of NEETs teachers**

Given that, to date, NEETs teachers' profile has not been sufficiently studied in Greece or in other European countries, this paper contributes to a first approach of these professionals. A better understanding of their profile and needs would allow for the provision of more targeted support. The findings showed that NEETs teachers cover a wide range of specialisations and are employed in several types of educational organisations, with women outnumbering men. Regarding their professional experience, most survey participants indicated from one to five or more than five years of experience as adult educators in general. This picture is reversed when it comes to professional experience specifically with NEETs: most participants indicated less than one year of experience with NEETs, while only one fourth of them reported more than five years of experience with NEETs. Less than half of the survey participants reported adult education as their main occupation. Moreover, the participants were uncertain as to whether specific requirements need to be met to work as NEETs teachers. These findings reveal that further research is needed to reach a thorough understanding of the NEETs teacher profile.

### **NEETs teachers' CPD**

NEETs teachers confirmed the usefulness and importance of CPD on the target learner population and digital skills. According to the respondents, CPD activities on NEETs should focus on the specific subgroup of beneficiaries of each VET programme and be provided at an initial stage, as participants indicated that

NEETs are a learner group with specific characteristics and there is always the possibility to deal with difficult cases, even if they are experienced in working with vulnerable groups of learners. Participants also pointed out that teachers' digital skills alone are not enough for the successful implementation of distance learning; both teachers and learners must have such skills but, according to participants, this is not always the case as learners often lack both digital skills and the necessary equipment. This leads to an increased risk of dropout from the programme they follow.

Participants expressed a need to participate more actively in the selection and design of CPD activities, mostly related to the characteristics and needs of the specific groups of learners they work with. As within the context of CPD, NEETs teachers become adult learners themselves, it is important to take their preferences and experience into account. This is in line with the findings of a recent Cedefop study on teachers and trainers in IVET, which reported that needs analysis for CPD takes place in very few member states (Cedefop, 2022b). Moreover, they stated that they need broader support that often exceeds CPD activities. They would wish to receive psychosocial support to manage more effectively the increasing levels of stress stemming from working with vulnerable groups of learners, language mediation when working with learners who do not speak Greek, and support in job counselling and career guidance since for NEET learners they are the first and most accessible interface with the labour market.

### **Teaching methods implemented with NEETs**

This study confirmed the validity and suitability of learner-centred approaches for NEETs. The participants stated that they apply a wide range of active teaching techniques to encourage the participation of all learners, meet their needs and help them achieve their expected learning outcomes, taking into account their preferred ways of learning and their mental models in the selection of teaching methodologies. However, the respondents' replies revealed that often they do not identify NEETs' lack of trust in the educational system, and they do not use to the maximum extent possible the available tools for the support and empowerment of NEETs when designing, implementing and/or evaluating VET interventions. Cedefop's [VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#) and [VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) have a great potential in this respect, as they provide valuable resources to support the design, implementation and evaluation of VET programmes aimed at NEETs. Their replies also showed that learner-centred teaching techniques can become more effective for NEETs if dealt with as an integral part of a multifaceted empowerment framework, which takes into account the dimensions of experiential

learning, fostering of communication and transversal skills, and strengthening their self-confidence.

### **NEETs teachers' role in motivating NEETs' learning**

This paper focused also on NEETs teachers' role in motivating NEETs' learning. The study findings revealed lack of motivation as the most frequent mental model identified in NEETs. As learners' lack of interest may lead to dropout from the programme they attend, the timely identification of such signs by teachers is crucial to help NEETs remain in the programme and complete it successfully. These findings are in line with further views expressed by the participants recognising their own essential role in motivating NEETs' learning but at the same time underscoring the fundamental importance of learners' intrinsic motivation, calling for a greater focus on NEETs' empowerment. Within the context of educational and training interventions for NEETs, more opportunities to participate in European or international exchanges and/or study visits could be offered, as according to the respondents, such activities could have a positive impact on motivating NEETs' learning.

### **NEETs teachers' role in making VET programmes more relevant to the labour market**

Finally, the respondents expressed the view that NEETs teachers play an important part in making the implemented VET programmes more relevant to the labour market. Their replies showed that strengthening apprenticeship or other forms of work-based learning can have a positive impact on effectively linking the educational interventions with the labour market. A practice involving cooperation with specialists from companies, already implemented to a certain extent by NEETs teachers, could be further strengthened as it could be beneficial for both teachers and specialists.

The issue of linking the implemented VET programmes with the labour market went far beyond the context of the third research question, penetrating all questions and stages of the discussion. It emerged as an important challenge, which was pointed out emphatically and repeatedly from several points of view. The respondents underscored that professional (re)integration emerges as NEETs' distress and greatest expectation from their participation in a VET programme. Moreover, professional exclusion was mentioned by the respondents as one of the two most frequent mental models identified in NEETs. According to the respondents' views, linking VET programmes for NEETs with the labour market is a top priority, but the problem cannot be addressed individually by teachers only. It must become the focus of a coordinated effort and holistic approach, aiming to

the cooperation of all involved stakeholders. The creation of a comprehensive network, which would ensure the participation of teachers, learners, psychologists, social workers, job counsellors, representatives of employers' associations and representatives of local and regional authorities could contribute to a more effective link of VET programmes with the labour market. Through this network, teachers could be informed about the available programmes and other initiatives addressed to NEETs, so as to inform learners in turn. This same network could allow learners to receive the broader support they need, including psychosocial support and career guidance.

### **Next steps**

The findings of this study could be used for further analysis and research, for example a complementary survey of NEET learners and comparative analysis of the findings from the two target populations (NEET learners and teachers). Regarding NEETs teachers, a complementary study focusing on the required qualifications and conditions to work as NEET teacher in VET would be interesting. A comparative approach with case studies from other EU countries either with similar characteristics with Greece (e.g. high share of NEETs, structural problems) or presenting a completely different picture (e.g. low share of NEETs) would be informative, allowing to extract trends and good practices. The findings can be used as a basis to draw new intervention approaches and enrich Cedefop's toolkits on early leaving and on empowering NEETs (e.g. on the specific profile of NEETs teachers). They can also be the starting point of thematic or case studies focusing on the role of second chance schools in the reintegration of NEETs or the (re)integration of NEET refugees in the labour market in Greece or in other European countries.

## Acronyms

CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuous vocational education and training
CVT-KEK	<i>Κέντρο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης.</i> [Centre of Vocational Training]
CVT PwD-KEK ΑμεΑ	<i>Κέντρο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης Ατόμων με Αναπηρία.</i> [Centre of Vocational Training for People with Disabilities]
DYPA	<i>Δημόσια Υπηρεσία Απασχόλησης</i> [DYPA – Public Employment Service]
EOPPEP	<i>Εθνικός Οργανισμός Πιστοποίησης Προσόντων και Επαγγελματικού Προσανατολισμού.</i> [National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance]
IVET	initial vocational education and training
IVT-IEK	<i>Ινστιτούτο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης.</i> [Institute of Vocational Training]
KANEP-GSEE	<i>Κέντρο Ανάπτυξης Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής της Γενικής Συνομοσπονδίας Εργατών Ελλάδας.</i> [Educational Policy Development Centre of the Greek General Confederation of Labour]
LLLC-ΚΔΒΜ	<i>Κέντρο Δια Βίου Μάθησης.</i> [Lifelong Learning Centre]
NEET(s)	young people not in employment, education or training
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OAED	<i>Οργανισμός Απασχόλησης Εργατικού Δυναμικού.</i> [Greek Manpower Employment Organisation] (renamed into <i>Δημόσια Υπηρεσία Απασχόλησης</i> [DYPA – Public Employment Service] in 2022)
VET	vocational education and training

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# THE PROFILE OF NEETS TEACHERS IN GREECE: FROM EUROPEAN POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This innovative study breaks new territory in two key areas: it puts VET centre stage as a key intervention to support NEETs and presents the first mixed-methods research effort to collect and analyse evidence on the profile and role of NEETs teachers in Greece. It fills a significant knowledge gap, shedding light on a crucial yet understudied topic that has far-reaching implications for VET policymakers, practitioners, and learners. By providing fresh insights into the effectiveness of VET in addressing the complex challenges faced by NEETs and their teachers, this study has the potential to inform and transform the way NEETs and their teachers are approached within the context of youth education and employment. The goal of this research is to contribute to effective practices and evidence-based policymaking.

**Keywords:** teachers and trainers, young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), continuing professional development (CPD), digital skills, transversal skills, teaching methods, motivation to learn, labour market integration, youth transitions, vocational education and training (VET).

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