

8. Facilitate the school-to-work transition

WHAT and WHY?

The transition from school to work is a critical point in the life of a young person. It can have long-term implications for future employment prospects, earnings and career trajectories (Scarpetta, Sonnet and Manfredi, 2010^[81]). Youth with migrant parents – in particular those born abroad – are at a higher risk of not transitioning smoothly from education into the labour market and to find themselves neither in employment, education or training (Lillehagen and Birkelund, 2018^[82]).

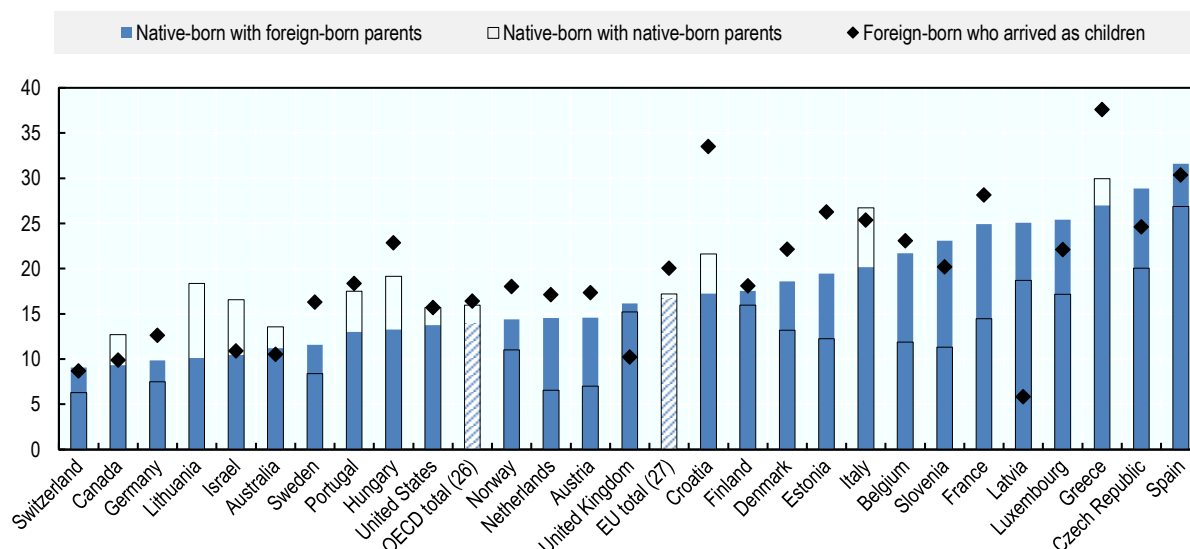
Part of the difficulties which youth with a migrant parents encounter are specific to those with a lower education level. These youth are also in many countries less likely to start and complete VET programmes (Jeon, 2019^[83]). Yet, difficulties are also frequently observed among the highly educated, which indicates that differences in formal education cannot account for all of the observed differences (Connor et al., 2004^[84]; Krause and Liebig, 2011^[85]). Besides, young people with migrant parents and a higher education degree have a much harder time finding a position at their skill level than their peers of nativ-born descent (Crul, Keskiner and Lelie, 2017^[86]).

One reason are social networks. Such networks are essential for job-search, especially for the very first contact with the labour market. They can provide information about job opportunities and tacit knowledge about the functioning of the labour market. Networks can further help to establish a first contact with an employer and may also improve the conditions for a person to apply and get accepted for a job. Children of immigrants tend to have fewer networks. They can generally rely on less assistance from their social network when searching for their first job than children of natives (McDonald, Lin and Ao, 2009^[87]; Levitt, 2009^[88]; Pedulla and Pager, 2019^[89]). This is partly because their parents lack the relevant networks themselves, and parental support is often important for the first labour-market contact of youth. In addition, immigrant parents and their children often lack relevant knowledge about the functioning of the host-country labour market. Finally, there is the issue of discrimination (see next lesson).

WHO?

In OECD Europe, foreign-born youth who arrived as children are more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) than their peers with native-born parents. In several OECD countries like Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands, their NEET-rates are twice as high. Differences are also observed for native-born youth with immigrant parents, though they tend to be less pronounced (OECD/EU, 2018^[1]). While overall, NEET rates for youth with migrant parents are favourable in the OECD countries that were settled by immigration, there are important differences across origin countries. For example, those of Hispanic parentage show significant disadvantage in Canada and the United States (OECD, 2018^[6]). In the countries that were settled by immigration, young migrants born abroad – especially those with refugee parents – tend to be the focus group, whereas in OECD Europe, the programmes also include native-born youth with migrant parents.

Figure 8.1. Percentage of youth aged 15-34 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), 2017



Source: OECD/EU (2018^[1]).

HOW?

Policies to facilitate the school-to-work transition of youth with migrant parents include:

- Offering remedy for insufficient networks and lack of knowledge about the host-country labour market and its functioning, through targeted employment services or mentoring schemes
- Ensuring that financial barriers are not an obstacle to pursue internships
- Promoting participation and completion of vocational education and training (VET) programmes

Employment services that assist youth with migrant parents in their search for a first job can remedy for lack of relevant parental contacts and information about job opportunities. They aim to get youth in touch with potential employers and accompany them during the job-search period. Support offers include, for example, coaching, career guidance and assistance with CV and interview preparation.

In Australia, the 'Pathways to Employment Program' assists 12 to 25-year-old youth with migrant parents to bring their skills and experience to the workplace. It offers direct guidance, employment opportunities, traineeships, apprenticeships, and work experience across a wide range of industries. The programme also includes a mentorship scheme that matches volunteers with professional work experience with tertiary-level students. New Zealand supports the school-to-work transition of migrant students through various pathway programmes, including the vocational pathway programme linking student's knowledge and skills to job options. The "gateway" programme provide workplace experience along with relevant training, introducing students' to the wider industry training programme. Refugee students receive specific and individualised support through the Refugee Pathways and Career Planning programme in targeted high schools. In Finland, the youth guarantee scheme combines employment and education elements. The scheme guarantees a job or training placement within three months of becoming unemployed as well as a spot in upper secondary school, vocational education and training, apprenticeship training, or in a youth workshop for all school-leavers. Young immigrants can combine vocational upper secondary education and training with instruction of Finnish or Swedish as a second language or complete the entire training in their mother tongue. France has a large-scale mentoring programme with voluntary mentors – either

business executives or newly retired people – who mentor a young person in a personal relationship over a number of months. These mentoring networks operate within a structure, most often a local mission (a body jointly financed by the French authorities and cities to facilitate youth employment), in partnership with chambers of commerce and companies. The mentors use their contacts, facilitate relations with companies and re-motivate young people. This programme, which has existed since 1993, is particularly effective since two-thirds of these young people either find stable employment or a training programme leading to a qualification, and youth with migrant parents account for a large share of the participants (OECD, 2010^[5]). In Germany, the “student mentors” (*Schülerpaten*) project offers one-on-one mentorship between German-speaking volunteers and students with migrant parents. Mentors support students with their schoolwork through weekly meetings in their homes. They also serve as contacts for everyday questions and can advise their mentees on finding a suitable career (*Schülerpaten Deutschland*, 2021^[90]). Another large-scale programme in Germany are the “youth migration services” (*Jugendmigrationsdienste*). Across the country, more than 470 such services support youth with migrant parents – including refugees – with a wide range of services. The focus is on integration into training and the labour market, via counsellors who together with the young people set goals and look for offers that fit individual abilities, provide job application training or training in the use of new media. The more than 950 employees reach around 120 000 young people every year. The initiative includes an online advisory service (*jmd4you*) free of charge and available in different languages (German Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, 2021^[91]).

Financial barriers can represent a major additional hurdle that complicates pathways into meaningful employment for many children of immigrants. A case in point are internships, which – often unpaid or poorly paid – have become increasingly important to increase young people’s employability in competitive sectors and establish professional networks. The programme ‘Schotstek’, run by the city of Hamburg, Germany, aims to overcome this barrier. The scheme provides excellent students from immigrant families with a close-knit and high-end professional network of entrepreneurs, founders of start-ups, scientists, artists, managers, politicians and other outstanding personalities, as well as a growing community of successful alumni. At the centre of the programme are individual coaching and mentoring activities, measures to improve the youngsters’ networking and self-organisation skills, and projects aimed at broadening their horizons. The programme also provides financial support and assists with the search for internship opportunities and a first job. Provinces and Territories in Canada also provide grants and funding for youth apprenticeships. One example is the ‘Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program’, a school-to-work transition programme at secondary schools. Therein full-time students in grades 11 and 12 earn co-operative education credits through work placements in skilled trades. While not specifically targeted at youth with migrant parents, they account for a significant proportion of participants.

Apprenticeships or vocational education and training (VET) programmes can facilitate the school-to-work transition. Policies can support youth with migrant parents to benefit more from such programmes. The first step is to have a sufficient number of training places available, the second is to raise awareness about and promote participation in vocational pathways among youth with migrant parents and including their parents (see Jeon (2019^[83]) for an overview).

Switzerland and Germany, two OECD countries with wide-spread and renowned apprenticeship and vocational education and training systems, encourage the participation of youth with migrant parents in VET options through targeted schemes. In Switzerland, a 12-months apprenticeship preparation programme for young refugees provides up to 3 600 apprenticeship-preparation opportunities since 2018-21. Depending on participants’ skills, the programme either provides early language training to integrate into skills development programmes, or language and professional training for vocational training. The programme targets future employment in sectors where there is a demand for skilled labour, such as health professions. Germany has a longstanding programme of ‘regional vocational qualification networks’ (*Berufliche QualifizierungsNetzwerke-BQNs*) across the country to promote access to vocational training, with a focus on youth with migrant parents. It includes information campaigns in schools (in regions with

low initial educational attainment), acquisition of internships and vocational training spots for youth with migrant parents (in regions with limited vocational training places), and awareness-building among local employers and the general public. The programme benefits from a co-operation of employment agencies, chambers of commerce, migrant organisations and local governments and entrepreneurs. The network connects youth with migrant parents and mainstream services. Germany has also a broad range of other activities to support youth with migrant parents in the VET system (see OECD (2019^[92]) for an in-depth discussion).



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