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WP2_ Understanding challenges associated with young people's position in the labour market from a urban perspective

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Diagnosis of the socio-economic situation of young people

The number of young people and the dynamics of its changes

Similarly to other European countries, Spain is experiencing an accelerated ageing process. If we look at the age structure of the Spanish population, we can see how the population pyramid has suffered a drastic relative reduction of the population in the age cohorts that correspond to youth and children (see figure 1). Currently, young people aged 15 to 34 represent 21.3% of the total Spanish population, a figure slightly lower than the European average. The relative weight of young people in relation to the total population has been decreasing since the 1980s¹. This population structure entails important challenges for the future, for example, in relation to the sustainability of welfare systems, but it also has political implications at the present moment: the lower population weight of the youth has also led to a lower prioritisation of their needs by political parties and institutions also from the '80s until today (Mari-Klose 2012).

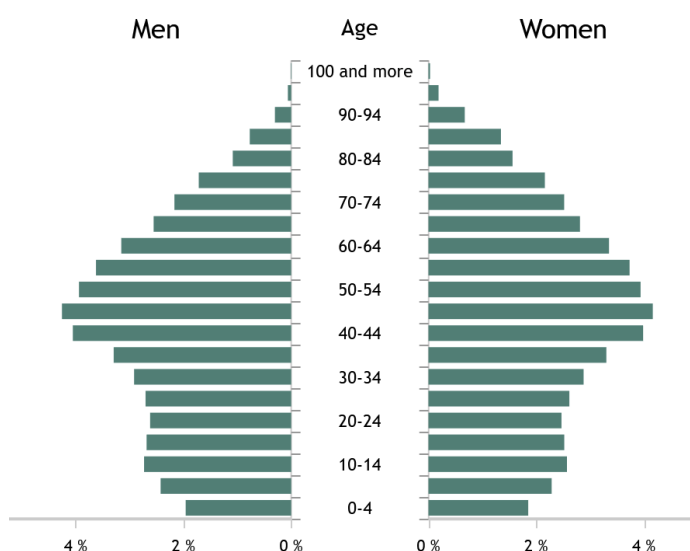


Figure 1. Population pyramid in Spain 2022. Source:INE

For a few years, the arrival of the immigrant population nuanced the drop in the relative weight of the youth population. In 2000, only 2.2% of the population aged 15 to 29 was foreign, 10 years later this percentage had increased to 18.4%, with the economic crisis the rate of arrival of foreign population moderated and, currently, young foreign people in Spain represent 15.3% of the resident population. The influx of people from ex-colonies makes the process of migrant integration easier compared to other countries, as they share language, culture and religion. However, the speed of the arrival of this new immigration has emphasised the problem of urban segregation, with a concentration of migrant population into specific neighbourhoods, especially in medium-sized cities like Terrassa or Matarò.

¹ Source: INE, Continuous Register Statistics. See WP2 national data at the annex

If we look at the territorial distribution, the young population is particularly concentrated in urban areas: 32% of the population between 15 and 29 years of age reside in provincial capitals, while less than 5% of young people live in municipalities with less than 2000 inhabitants².

Social situation of young people (including risk of poverty or social exclusion, education, health, number of young people with disabilities)

The young population is a particularly vulnerable group and is sensitive to changes in the country's socio-economic situation. If we look at the rate of risk of poverty and exclusion, in the worst moments of the crisis, the difference between young people and the average was about 10 points, while currently, 28% of young people aged 15 to 29 are at risk of poverty and exclusion compared to an average of 26% of the entire population. This implies that approximately 2.2 million young people are at risk of poverty or exclusion in Spain³.

Situations of exclusion are closely linked to aspects related to the labour market (70% of young people at risk of severe exclusion are unemployed) and to housing. It should be taken into account, for example, that only 14.9% of young people live independently of their parental home. But having a job does not guarantee getting out of the risk of poverty either. Spain suffers from a serious problem of temporality and low wages that particularly affects young people, and this makes it the third European country with the most workers aged 16 to 24 at risk of poverty (20%) and the second with the highest risk of poverty for those workers aged 25 to 28 (15%)⁴.

One of the most unique characteristics of the education system in Spain is the polarisation of its trajectories: Spain has traditionally had very high levels of early leavers from education and, in parallel, young people with university education over the European average. Post-compulsory and vocational studies, despite being an efficient bridge to employment, are still perceived as studies of a lower category than university studies (López Ortega 2021). In recent years, educational indicators have improved with a reduction in early school leaving. However, Spain remains the country in the EU with the highest percentage of young people who do not have a degree beyond compulsory secondary education (CCOO 2023).

Level of economic development of the country

This factor is related to the productive structure of the country. Spain is the world's 15th-largest by nominal GDP and the sixth-largest in Europe. Spain is a member of the European Union and the eurozone. However, it has some characteristics that explain, in part, a particularly vulnerable position of the youth population. Specifically, the Spanish economy has a lower average productivity than other economies in its environment due to the weight of sectors such as construction or tourism that have little added value and capacity for innovation. The latest edition of the OECD's Economic Survey of Spain warns of the need to increase productivity and skills that may be needed, especially for the future employment of young people (OECD 2023).

² Source: INE, Continuous Register Statistics.

³ Source: EUROSTAT, European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions. See WP2 national data at the annex

⁴ Source: EUROSTAT, European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions.

Economic situation of young people (including labour market analysis)

At the labour level, Spain has been characterised in recent decades by the consolidation of a dualised labour market, divided into two segments: from one side, well-paid, high-skilled workers with permanent contracts and from the other, low-paid workers exposed to recurrent spells of unemployment and precarious work. High levels of unemployment and temporary employment particularly affect young people. The position of young people in the labour market is particularly sensitive to economic cycles and crises, but beyond the cyclical downturns, in general terms, from the '80s until now, the situation of young people in the labour market has been deteriorating (Úbeda et al. 2020).

The Spanish labour market has a clear divide between those workers with good working conditions and stability and a group with more precarious conditions, instability and long periods of unemployment, which affects particularly young people. This dualisation and more unstable situation of young people in the labour market has caused them to be one of the groups most affected by the economic crisis of 2008. In 2008, half of the employed young population had a temporary contract. Thus, the first jobs destroyed during the crisis were those occupied by young people in more precarious situations. The unemployment rate reached 42.4% in 2013, and since then, it has been recovering, with a break in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the pandemic.

In 2022, the new labour reform (Real Decreto Ley 32/2021), which aims to improve the quality and stability of the Spanish labour market, began to be applied. The effects of the reform are evident in the employment situation of young people, especially in the reduction of temporary employment, which has gone from 55% to 36% in just two years (Verd et al. 2024).

Thanks to the data presented in Table 1, we can see how young people in Spain are mainly affected by two important issues: a high level of NEETs, persistent even in older age spans and a significantly high level of drop-outs. During 2012 and 2022, we anyway assisted a significant improvement; Spain in 2012 was a country that was extremely exposed to the crisis, with the implementation of austerity policies that extremely impacted the capacity of labour markets to absorb young people. Both indicators significantly improved in 2022, with a consistent reduction both in terms of NEET young people and in terms of dropouts from schools. However, Spain remains one of the countries in Europe that is more exposed to this problem, and the recent data on PISA also shows that the educational system is not fit to prepare adequately young people for the challenges of contemporary societies. Regional disparities are quite reduced in the country, in comparison for instance with a country like Italy, and the region Catalunya in which our cities are located is one of the regions that performs better in terms of its capacity to integrate young people in labour market and education.

Table 1 – NEET and labour market indicators in Spain, Catalunya and macro areas NUTS1, 2012-2022

	2012	2022										
	NEET rates 15-29	Emp rate 15-24	Emp rate 25-34	Unemp rate 15-24	Unemp rate 15-29	Unemp rate 25-34	NEET rates 15-29	Emp rate 15-24	Emp rate 25-34	Unemp rate 15-24	Unemp rate 15-29	Unemp rate 25-34
Spain	22,2	18,4	64,4	52,9	40,3	27,6	12,7	23	73,7	29,8	22,4	14,5
Noreste Sur (NUTS1)	19,7	17,8	65,6	45,5	36,2	26,1	11,6	16,8	70,3	32,7	23,6	15,9
Noreste Nord (NUTS 1)	15,8	20,1	71,3	42,8	31,7	20,8	9,8	23,4	79,1	24,8	17,4	9,9
Madrid (NUTS 1/2)	17,6	19,7	73,4	48,1	32,1	19,2	10,8	24,6	79,9	29,4	19	10,4
Centro (NUTS1)	21,8	17,4	62,5	54	41,5	29,3	12,4	20,7	73,3	31,7	24,2	15,5
Este (NUTS1)	22,1	21	66,3	51,1	38,6	26,2	13,2	28,2	76,1	25,5	19,5	12,2
Catalunya (NUTS2)	22,2	22	69,2	50,4	36,4	23,7	13,1	30,9	79,1	24,1	17,9	10,2
Sur (NUTS1)	27,3	15,5	56	60,3	49,4	35,8	14,6	19,5	66,8	34,6	28,4	20,3
Canarias (NUTS1)	27,4	15	54,3	62,3	49,9	37,5	14,1	16,2	69,1	43,9	29,2	19,5

Source: own elaboration on Eurostat dataset (edat_lfse_22, lfst_r_lfe2emprrt, lfst_r_lfu3rt)

Table 2 - Early leavers from education and training by sex and macroarea in Spain, Catalunya and macro areas NUTS1, 2012-2022

	2012			2022		
	M	F	GAP (M-F)	M	F	GAP (M-F)
Spain	28,9	20,5	8,4	16,5	11,2	5,3
Noreste Sur (NUTS1)	25	16,6	8,4	11,2	9	2,2
Noreste Nord (NUTS 1)	16,9	15	1,9	10,2	5,1	5,1
Madrid (NUTS 1/2)	25	18,1	6,9	14,7	11,8	2,9
Centro (NUTS1)	33,7	18,8	14,9	14,7	9,5	5,2
Este (NUTS1)	28,9	21,4	7,5	19,2	13,8	5,4

Catalunya (NUTS2)	28,5	19,7	8,8	19,5	14,2	5,3
Sur (NUTS1)	33,6	23,4	10,2	19,2	12,2	7
Canarias (NUTS1)	29,5	26,5	3	16	7,3	8,7

Source: own elaboration on Eurostat dataset (edat_ifse_16)

Challenges and needs arising from the diagnosis of the socio-economic situation of young people

The analysis of the socio-economic situation of young people in Spain shows that their trajectories occur in a context of uncertainty, vulnerability and a certain social polarisation. Despite the recent improvements in some educational indicators and the reform of the labour market, young people in Spain continue to have many difficulties in accessing a stable job with a salary and conditions that allow them to leave home and start an independent life project. CCOO (2023) calculates that in Spain, it is not until the age of 38 that people have the full level of adult autonomy, considering their employment situation (having a stable job) and residential situation (living independently of their parents). It must also be taken into account that the current young generation has grown up in a context of successive economic crises. This circumstance can have a long-term 'scarring effect' on their trajectories that will be different depending on their own strategies during the crisis but mainly on their family resources (Anders & Macmillan 2020). Thus, youth policies must face the challenge of improving the conditions that facilitate the autonomy of young people and minimise the effects on the reproduction of inequalities that the polarisation of opportunities and trajectories may have had, especially in a context of crisis.

Analysis of strategic documents taking into account young people

Legal basis regulating the situation of young people

Spain is a decentralised state in Autonomous Communities that assume specific policy competencies (such as education, health, culture, tourism, etc.). The Spanish Constitution divides competencies by defining some exclusive competencies for the State and others exclusive for the Autonomous Communities, while leaving others as shared competencies that can be assumed either by the central or by the Autonomous Communities' governments. This is the case with youth policies. At present, practically all the Autonomous Communities have assumed competencies in the field of youth through different autonomous regulations. Despite this, the State also plans a general framework of youth policies and maintains essential competencies with a great impact on the rest. At the same time, the local administration plays a very important role in the development and application of these policies. Therefore, youth policies in Spain are in a multi-level governance framework. In addition, the cross-sectoral nature of youth means that legislation in different areas (labour, education, housing, citizenship, etc.) has a great impact on youth policies.

Terrassa and Mataró, the two Spanish BackInTown fieldwork cities, are located in Catalonia. Catalonia was one of the first European Regions that approved a strategic youth policy document (Pla de la Joventut de Catalunya 2000-2010) with great

implications for local policies. Thus, it is a particularly good case to analyse the implementation of local youth policies in two cities that are similar in size and in their metropolitan nature but differ in some socioeconomic traits. In Catalonia, youth competence has been recognized in the Statute of Autonomy since 1979 and developed by Law 33/2010 on youth policies approved by the Parliament of Catalonia on October 1, 2010.

Youth policy

Due to their cross-sectoral nature, youth policies address very different areas. One of the most used distinctions in the field of youth policies in Spain has been the differentiation between transition policies (those that focus on youth transitions in the field of education, work, housing, etc...) and affirmative policies (aimed at supporting forms of expression and experiences of youth at the present time) (Soler & Comas 2015). In general, in Spain, the lack of resources allocated to youth specific needs has meant that the policies managed by governmental youth departments have mainly been affirmative policies in the field of leisure, culture or associationism.

Instead, transition policies are those that have the most important impact on young people's living conditions and future opportunities. In this area, comparative studies place youth policies in Spain in a very marginal position. Andreas Walther (2006, 2022) uses the concept of youth transition regimes to identify the role of youth policies on youth trajectories. Spain is part of the sub-protective model where public policies play a residual role in supporting transitions. This increases vulnerability and uncertainty and forces families to play a more decisive role in these trajectories, facilitating processes of intergenerational reproduction of inequalities.

Strategic documents and operational programs

In general, for a few years now, strategic documents on youth policies have been aware of this deficit in policies aimed at youth transitions and are trying to give it relevance. However, the most ambitious goals in terms of education, work or housing have important implications in areas of government with more political weight, and youth-oriented policies do not always have the capacity to influence them.

At the state level, for example, the Estrategia Juventud 2030⁵ has recently been approved. This strategy aims to provide a general framework for youth policies promoted at the different levels of government. It presents some ambitious objectives, in line with the Strategy of the European Union for Youth 2019-2027, which have implications for all areas of government and proposes to reach a "necessary new social contract that does not leave our young people on the sidelines and that allows building autonomous life projects (INJUVE 2022: 12)".

⁵ <https://www.injuve.es/conocenos/ediciones-injuve/estrategia-de-juventud-2030>

Catalonia has a long tradition of strategic planning in the field of youth. In fact, it was one of the first territories at the European level to approve a comprehensive youth plan in 2000. Just a few months ago, the Catalan Parliament approved the Pla Nacional de Joventut de Catalunya⁶ for the period 2024-2030. For more than 20 years now, this plan has promoted municipalities to also draw up their strategic planning in the field of youth, which is a requirement to receive funding. Catalonia is therefore an interesting case for analysing the application of youth policies at local level, as it has a long tradition of planning and monitoring these policies.

Conclusions resulting from the analysis of strategic documents

In general, strategic documents on youth start from good diagnoses, propose ambitious goals and build governance networks suitable for their functions. Despite this, it has not been proven that they are effective in terms of achieving their goals. Their main challenge is to have more capacity to influence other areas of government and make the needs and interests of young people a priority.

Analysis of EU funds dedicated to young people - level, types, and effectiveness

EU programs dedicated to supporting young people from EU funds, along with an indication of the most important EU funds

The Spanish 'Estrategia Juventud 2030' envisages that actions in the field of youth are financed both by the body in charge of youth policies at state level (Instituto de la Juventud de España- INJUVE) but mainly by the various Ministries that act in areas relevant to youth. Among these funds, the strategy already recognises that European funds have been very important in youth actions in recent years and that they are an opportunity to give more weight to these policies in the future. Specifically, the Strategy indicates that funding can be received from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER) and Invest EU. In addition, there is funding from the European Recovery Instrument (Next Generation EU), through the allocations of the Recovery and Resilience Framework. All these European funds, although they may be oriented in part to youth policies, are managed through different ministries in their respective areas.

Key areas of support for young people through EU programs and expected effects (expectations)

As has been explained, there are many programs aimed at young people that are managed by the various ministries that, in turn, receive European funding through

⁶ <https://jovecat.gencat.cat/ca/orfes/pla-joventut/index.html>

various funds. The most relevant programs aimed specifically at young people and which, in the Spanish case, are managed directly by the INJUVE (Instituto de la Juventud de España) are the Erasmus+ program and the European Solidarity Corps (ESC).

Erasmus+ is aimed at supporting young people in the fields of formal, non-formal and informal education. Specifically, the actions of the program promote the mobility of young students and workers (courses and training) as well as youth exchanges. In the period 2021-2027, the program places special emphasis on social inclusion, the double ecological and digital transition and the promotion of the participation of young people in democratic life.

CES (European Solidarity Corps) aims to create opportunities for young people to participate in volunteering projects - in their own countries or abroad - that benefit communities and citizens across Europe.

One of the main EU youth programs that is not managed directly by INJUVE is the Youth Guarantee. This is a European program that was approved right at the worst moment of the great recession to mitigate its effects on young people. It has been renewed for the period 2021-2027 under the name "Youth Guarantee Plus of decent work for young people". The youth guarantee plan in Spain is managed by the Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal (SEPE) which depends on the Ministry of Labor and Social Economy. The plan includes several ambitious actions with the aim of facilitating access to the world of work for young people by improving their qualifications and professional and technical skills.

Summary of the amount of EU funds dedicated to young people

In relation to the two programs mentioned above, the General State Budget⁷ for the year 2022 includes that 3,230 million euros were executed in the Erasmus+ program and 125 million euros in the European Solidarity Corps program.

Regarding the Youth Guarantee Plus 2021-2027 program, the EU will contribute 3.263 million euros, through the European Social Fund +.

Implementation of product and result indicators in the areas of support for young people

In terms of program coverage, the Youth Guarantee in Spain managed to reach 55.8% of people aged 15 to 24 in a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) situation in 2017, while in 2018 only 30.1% (European Commission 2020).

⁷ <https://www.hacienda.gob.es/es-ES/Areas%20Tematicas/Presupuestos%20Generales%20del%20Estado/Paginas/Presupuestos.aspx>

And in relation to its results, only 17.9% of those who completed the Youth Guarantee program in Spain in 2018 took up an offer within the 4-month target (European Commission 2020).

Key conclusions and recommendations

In recent decades, the situation of youth in Spain has been marked by instability, vulnerability, and delays in the transition to adult life. Since the 1980s, labour reforms have been consolidating the dual nature of the labour market, characterised by a division between a group of workers with good working conditions and stability and another group with more precarious conditions, instability and long periods of unemployment. In the case of Spain, there is a large presence of young people in this second group. Since then, the differences in the levels of unemployment or temporary employment between young people and adults have been much more prominent in Spain than in other neighbouring countries (Úbeda et al. 2020). Job insecurity has effects on other dimensions of young people's trajectories, and this has also meant that for decades Spain, along with Italy, is one of the European countries where young people leave their parents' homes later. This situation of vulnerability and uncertainty was particularly accentuated by the 2008 crisis and, subsequently, by the pandemic, the inflation crisis and the Ukrainian-Russian war in 2022. The greater lack of protection of young people meant that they were the main ones affected by the economic crisis, significantly altering their career and residential transition trajectories and strategies (López-Andreu & Verd 2020).

This situation can also be explained by a certain tradition in Spain of neglecting public policies towards young people. At a comparative level and in relative terms, Spain has an orientation of public expenditure very biased towards the elderly (Lynch 2006). Studies on the role of public policies in supporting youth transitions (in terms of education, work, housing...) place Spain among the group of sub-protective countries that have a less welfare system designed to help these transitions and mitigate starting inequalities (Chevalier 2016; Walther 2022).

The youth areas of the different levels of government (State, regional and local), in their strategic documents, tend to be aware of this deficit in public policies. In the planning of youth policies, we see ambitious objectives in terms of employment, education or social inclusion, but the control of these policies and their funding usually depends on other ministries. This means that the task of youth services is, fundamentally, to convince other ministries to invest more in policies that affect young people but, so far, without much success. This also affects European funds since the largest volume of funding is managed by the ministries of different areas, and they must incorporate the need to prioritise the needs of young people.

The last labour reform of 2022 has significantly corrected some aspects of the disadvantaged position of young people, in particular, temporary work (Verd et al., 2024). However, employment indicators continue to show that there is still a long way to go to guarantee solid and stable access to working life for young people.

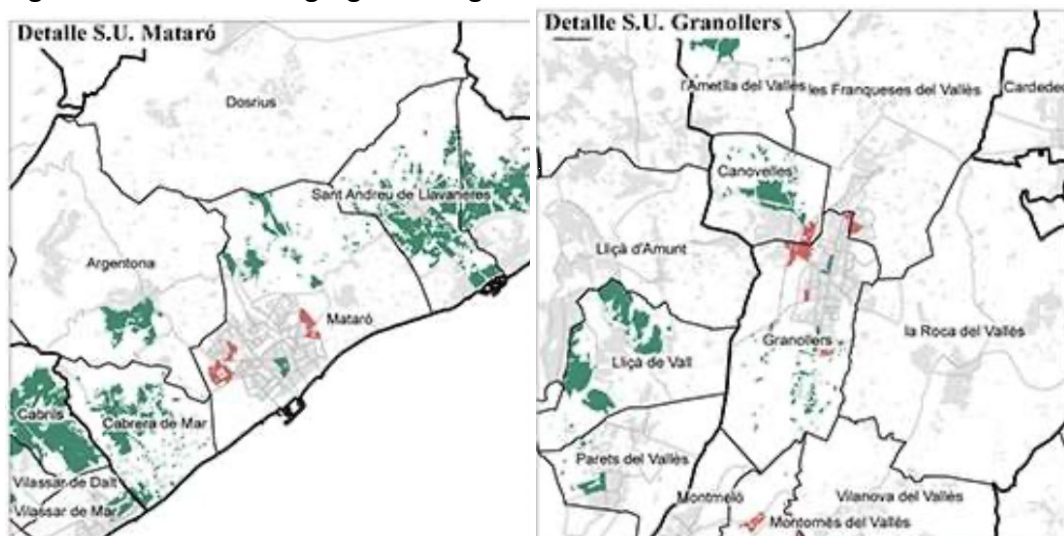
Local administrations have limited room for manoeuvre, but they can intervene in key areas for young people, such as educational provision (especially vocational training), the promotion of economic sectors with greater productivity and added value and control of the housing market. Once again, these are issues that are not usually only in the hands of the youth services of the councils. That is why their lobbying work towards other areas of local government remains a key aspect.

Focus on Middle-Size cities: Terrassa and Mataró

In this project, we are going to study two middle-sized cities in the province of Barcelona, both of which belong to the same NUTS3 – Barcelona and NUTS2 - Catalunya. The two cities, called Terrassa and Mataró, share some similar features, but their divergent destinies make them quite interesting for our study.

First of all, Terrassa is a city of about 225.000 inhabitants, located at the north-west of Barcelona, about 40 minutes by train. Young people (15-34 years old) constitute 22,4% of their population, with 14% of foreigners – both indicators are in line with the Catalan average as well as their GDP per person. Mataró, located on the seaside north of Barcelona and about the same distance from Barcelona, is smaller compared to Terrassa (about 130.000 inhabitants) and with a lower GDP per person, lower than the Catalan average. The rate of young is more or less the same of Terrassa (21,8%), from which it distinguishes for a higher rate of migrants (16%). Both are characterised by having certain neighbourhoods (Ca n'Anglada, Vilardell, Montserrat, Sant Llorenç and la Maurina in case of Terrassa; Cerdanyola, Rocafonda and Palau, in case of Mataró), in which there is a concentration of younger population, migrant and vulnerable profiles. Both are thus characterised by a certain segregation by socio-economic profiles and by migrant origins.

Figure 2 and 3 – The segregated neighbourhoods in the two cities



The two cities had been, during the industrial society, a working-class city characterised by having a concentration of manufacturing employment – with a certain specialisation

in the textile industry. However, in recent years, the deindustrialization process has differentiated their destinies, with Terrassa retaining an important percentage of manufacturing employment (about 14,5%) contrary to Mataró (9,3%), which is increasingly specializing in services. Both are conveniently located within commuting distance from Barcelona, and they are both well-connected to the city. Many of their inhabitants study and work in the Catalan capital.

Table 3 – Significant indicators regarding the two cities (Terrassa and Mataró)

	2018			2022		
	Terrassa	Mataró	NUTS2 / %	Terrassa	Mataró	NUTS2 / %
Young population (15-34)	15,3%	21,5%		16,4%	21,8%	
Youth unemployment rate (16-24)	-	-	27,7%	-	-	24,4%
Activity rate (16-24)	-	-	44%	-	-	45,4%
NEET rates (15-29)	-	-	15,4%	-	-	13,1%
Employment (absolute nº)	90.901	50.984	67,9%	94.890	53.305	69%
Unemployment rates	-	-	11,5%	11,9%	12,4%	9,7%

Source: own elaboration on various local statistics sources

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Annex I: Interviews to Youth policy areas in Mataró and Terrassa

Interview to youth policy officer from Terrassa

The information described in this interview has been extracted from an initial exploratory interview made with the Youth officer referring to the strategic area of Emancipation.

- how do you judge the labour market situation of young people in your town (with particular reference to the NEET phenomenon)? Do you think there are significant differences in the youth labour market in relation to the gender and to the different professional and educational levels?

Terrassa is a city with a very similar demographic profile to that of the Vallès Occidental region and the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. In the form of a pyramid, the young population represents 22.11% of the total. When we talk about the young population, we understand those aged between 15 and 35 years old. This group has decreased by approximately 10% over the last 20 years, but this data is not alarming, as it is within the regional and Catalan averages. Likewise, it is worth noting that one quarter of the young population is foreign, mainly of African and South American origin. This data is also similar to the regional average, being slightly higher, and to the Catalan average, being slightly lower.

Regarding unemployment, it is decreasing. In 2020, it was 20.3%, and in 2021, it was 19.2%. With regard to intersecting axes, unemployment affects men, migrants, and young people without post-compulsory studies more. This shows that education and training are key elements in the socio-labour inclusion of young people.

In Terrassa, there is also a difference concerning the rest of Catalonia in terms of education level. This data is extracted from the metropolitan area, where the index is 9.8% lower than in the rest of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.

It is also necessary to talk about access to housing, a difficulty common throughout the Catalan region. In Terrassa specifically, in 2021, 42% of young people aged between 15 and 34 years old still lived with their parents. This is due to the low availability of rental apartments in the city and their high prices - which have increased in recent years. In this sense, there is a need to increase rental assistance or access to official protection housing.

Finally, another issue that is detected is the psychological well-being of young people. During the pandemic, those aged between 25 and 34 years old were the most affected, as one quarter of them entered unemployment or temporary layoff (ERTE), worsening job insecurity and the feeling of personal incapacity and difficulties faced during confinement. Another issue observed in Terrassa, which affects the psychological well-being of young migrants especially, is discrimination, especially in work and access to housing or places of study. Discrimination is based on skin color, ethnicity, and nationality.

Regarding access to the labor market and education, although the unemployment rate has decreased in Terrassa, the rate of young people with post-compulsory education is lower than in other areas of Catalonia. There is no specific emphasis that I am aware of

regarding the NEET condition; however, it can be said that depending on the area of the city you come from, the level of education and job precariousness may be higher.

Regarding the labor market, individuals aged 16 to 19 are the most affected, possibly due to lack of experience and job demands relative to their curriculum. Additionally, there has been a low job offer, with temporary and precarious positions. Similarly, in neighborhoods where there is access to jobs that do not require much education, the population tends to have fewer studies, and vice versa. It is believed that there is a need to promote policies that provide higher quality work placements, such as Dual Vocational Training.

Regarding education, which is closely related to a young person's ability to find a job, it should be mentioned that in Terrassa, there is not enough training available, especially in terms of Vocational Training degrees. Likewise, there is a need to promote access to information about existing training options to prevent school dropout after compulsory education. Especially in those districts where segregation fosters inequality.

In summary, it can be observed that the situation of youth in Terrassa is very similar to the rest of Catalonia. However, it is necessary to highlight, due to the high level of young migrants (one quarter of the young population), the need to reduce segregations regarding the distribution of the population in the districts. This is considered because Terrassa is a city where migrants or people of different ethnicities may suffer discrimination that reinforces these inequalities. As the population is divided into neighbourhoods according to socioeconomic power, level of education, and labour capacity.

- Is there evidence of migration phenomena of young people? Is it a phenomenon that particularly affects highly educated people?

Terrassa is a city that promotes exchanges with foreign countries through the international mobility program for young people of Vibria Intercultural. In this sense, the reduction of young people in the city is not so much due to mobility abroad, but because there has been a decrease in births.

It should be added that Terrassa is an attractive city for young people in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, as despite the high rental prices, they are lower than in the Catalan capital. Additionally, it is a culturally vibrant city with services and resources, and currently, discounts make healthy and diverse leisure more affordable for the young population. In parallel with this, Terrassa has several universities, such as ESCAC or the Polytechnic, which attract students from other areas of Catalonia and the world to study degrees, master's degrees, or doctorates.

- What urban-level policies have been implemented to encourage the active involvement of young people in the job market (provide examples)?

One of the strategic axes of the Local Youth Plan 2022-2026 is focused on the emancipation of the young collective. Additionally, work is starting to be done through transversality between the different departments of the public administration to be able to make policies that better integrate the transition process of young people into adulthood.

Previously, there was the "En Trajecte" project, which was focused on the most vulnerable collective and sought to promote, through individualized support and specific work plans, the connection to the education system and inclusion in the labor market.

This project was replaced due to the economic subsidy that was hanging for the Youth Orientation Service of Terrassa, which is carried out jointly with Foment. The project offers advice to the entire young population of Terrassa.

On the other hand, decentralized in the Youth Districts, there is the "Espai Impuls" project, which is a space that accompanies young people in the needs that may arise for them, whether they are housing, experiential, occupational, legal, or any other topic of interest to young people.

Also, with the creation of the current Local Plan, in 2021, the Emancipation Pact was generated, which encompasses agents of the city working in contact with or for young people. This seeks to promote and enhance cross-sector work between different administrative departments, entities, and organizations.

Finally, it should be noted that emotional well-being is considered a key element for emancipation, as without this, it is difficult to maintain a job position or connection to studies. It is necessary to continue to promote actions such as Dual Vocational Training, increase the diversity of Vocational Training Degrees, and other policies that promote the professional experience of young people. Also, the role of the public administration as an intermediary between the economic sector and young people, to favor the labor insertion of the young collective.

- Do you judge your city a youth-friendly one (provide examples)? What perception do you have of the presence of gender inequalities?

Despite the difficulties mentioned above, Terrassa is considered a youth-friendly city. The reasons are as follows:

There is a high level of youth associationism, with 26 youth organizations registered with the administration in 2021. All related to educational leisure and distributed throughout the city regardless of the district. There is also diversity in terms of other collectives and social movements.

In the city, efforts are made to promote the territorialization and decentralization of its services, although there is still the perception that many are concentrated in the center. In this sense, the Youth District policy allows for the division of youth facilities across different districts, ensuring a more equitable distribution and guaranteeing equal opportunities.

It is a city that promotes European youth exchanges and international mobility, which is highly valued for the development towards adulthood of young people.

It should also be noted that youth participation is being promoted both in the creation of public policies and in decision-making more focused on daily life. An example of this is the participatory process carried out for the creation of the Emancipation Pact.

Finally, it is a city culturally very active; youth policies are being implemented for access to culture and leisure, with exclusive discounts up to the age of 35. Youth entrepreneurship is also encouraged, especially in cultural projects with initiatives like BaumanLAB.

Additionally, there are large green areas that can be a relational space for people and a large amount of sports activity.

Interview to youth policy officer from Mataró

The information described in this interview has been extracted from an initial exploratory interview made with the Youth officer referring to the strategic area of Youth Policy.

- how do you judge the labour market situation of young people in your town (with particular reference to the NEET phenomenon)? Do you think there are significant differences in the youth labour market in relation to the gender and to the different professional and educational levels?

In general terms, the issues of Mataró are similar to other cities. For example, the difficulties in youth emancipation, both concerning finding stable employment, precarious working conditions, areas, temporality, etc., as well as household emancipation from the family of origin, due to housing prices, housing access conditions, etc. I believe these are shared problems with other contexts, as well as issues like mental health and emotional well-being, which have become more prominent since the pandemic. Discrimination, sexism, racism, LGBTQ+ phobia, etc., are also shared issues. Additionally, there are more education-related issues, especially related to school dropouts.

Problems particularly concentrate in certain territories, with neighbourhoods in situations of vulnerability in which problems of youth inclusion tends to concentrate, there is a higher proportion of young people than in the rest of the city and in other neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are Rocafonda and El Palau and Cerdanyola, where there is also a very high proportion of immigration.

- Is there evidence of migration phenomena of young people? Is it a phenomenon that particularly affects highly educated people?

Few years ago we made a study with our young people and when asked if they wanted to have an experience abroad, the majority of them say yes. We have a service in the city, which is called the International Mobility Service for Youth in the Maresme, which is a service shared among about 24 municipalities in the region. In this service, we offer counselling. So, we have quite a few young people who want to leave and they are accompanied in this process of building this project to leave, either be it for work or study, to do volunteer work, for internships, etc. In general, there are quite a few who leave. Many return, but others do not return because of the good conditions they found in other countries.

- What urban-level policies have been implemented to encourage the active involvement of young people in the job market (provide examples)?

There is no specific program related to youth involvement linked to employment, as it belongs to service like PES and they are not a competence of the Youth office. There are programs that have as main objective the involvement of young people, but not specifically in terms of labour policies. There are programs for NEET, mostly trying to involve people who are not working or studying and there is also a Fair that orient people (MataròOrienta) when they have finished their studies.

The issue of employment is under the competencies of the Mataró Employment Service, so the youth office does not have much room to expand what is already being done. Our most important goals are related to inclusion and equal opportunities, with about 120

youth plan projects. There are projects more related to emancipation, others more related to co-creation, transformation, etc. Others more related to well-being, both health and sports issues, environmental issues. There are also more linked to equality, diversity, social cohesion, and others that are more about reference and communication.

- Do you judge your city a youth-friendly one (provide examples)? What perception do you have of the presence of gender inequalities?

The effort made by the municipality to create a youth-friendly environment is significant, at the municipal level and at the technical level, specifically, by the youth technicians and all the dedication in projects. But they suffer from the fact that generally youth policies are not considered central to cities, while other types of policies – for instance, those that foster employment – have better consideration. So, although I consider Mataró a youth-friendly city there is a lot of space for improvement.