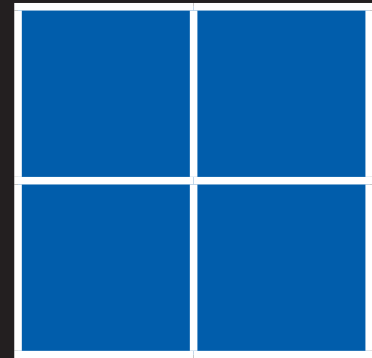


“Painted from life ...” A Disengaged Youth? Young people and NEETs in a devastated country

Nikos Papadakis and Maria Drakaki, Antonis Papargyris, Vassilis Dafermos, Maria Basta, Panagiotis Theodorikakos, Prokopis Pandis, Argyris Kyridis

LLAKES Research Paper 59



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“Painted from life...”
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Nikos Papadakis
and Maria Drakaki, Antonis Papargyris, Vassilis Dafermos, Maria
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Abstract

This Research Paper presents and analyses the findings of the new EEA-funded large-scale research Project entitled 'NEETs2' (EEA Grants/GR07-3757), which was completed in 2016. In brief, through primary nationwide quantitative and qualitative research), the project aimed, firstly, at the research-based mapping of the relationship between Greek NEETs and psychopathology - the sketching of their psychological profile - as well as the investigation of the impact of the economic crisis on their psychological profile and life course. Secondly, it aimed at a research-based mapping of NEETs' skills profile and their needs-in-skills. Within this context, the findings led to a targeted and competence-based training-reskilling programme (including two counseling and vocational guidance handbooks) and a proposed set of psychological supportive activities to promote the social inclusion of NEETs in Greece.

The research paper raises definitional issues concerning NEETs, while emphasizing the relation between youth unemployment and NEET rates both in the EU and Greece. Based on several of the key findings of the quantitative research, the paper maps the profile NEETs in Greece today, analyses their socio- demographic characteristics (comparing to the control group, namely the rest of the youth), presents findings related to the medical history and health-related characteristics and sketching the psychological profile of Greek NEETs. Furthermore it analyses the impact of crisis on the life course and employability of NEETs in Greece and provides evidence-based insights on their politically-related attitudes and civic values.

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The research leading to several of the results presented in the present research paper has received funding from the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, under the Project Contract n° EEA Grants/ GR07- 3757 (‘Neets2’).

The Project was carried out by the Centre for Educational Policy Development of the General Federation of Greek Workers (KANEP/GSEE) (Project Coordinator Partner), the Centre for Political Research & Documentation of the Department of Political Science at the University of Crete (KEPET/ UoC) and the Centre for Human Rights of the Department of Political Science at the University of Crete (KEADIK/UoC) (Project Partner 1). It was implemented from 15/12/2015 to 14/12/2016.

The Research Paper’s title is part of a quote attributed to Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (see Lambert, 2010). The Paper itself is based on the presentation titled “Greek Young People not in Education, Employment or Training, in the Era of Crisis: NEETs’ Social Inclusion/ Exclusion, Employability, Civic Values and Political Behavior” in the *UCL-IOE LLAKES Research Conference 2016*.

1. Sketching the socio-economic background

Seven years after the outbreak of the crisis in Europe and six since the first Greek “Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies” (on 2 May 2010)¹, followed by strict conditions and extended austerity measures (see Featherstone, 2013: 202), the wake of the Recession are more than evident in the Greek Economy and Society. In fact, despite the rescue efforts, the austerity measures and the domestic reforms, the crisis is ongoing and its social impact is undoubtedly tremendous, while the recession in Greece deepens.

Greece has been more affected by the economic crisis than any other country in Europe. By the end of 2013 the economy had already contracted by 23.5% in real terms relative to its 2007 level. As Matsaganis comments:

‘This is far greater than the equivalent contraction in other southern European economies – Spain: –5.5 per cent; Portugal: –7.4 per cent; Italy: –7.8 per cent or Ireland –5.0 per cent – over the same period. So deep and drawn out a recession has simply no precedent in the peacetime economic history of most advanced economies.’ (Matsaganis, 2013: 3).

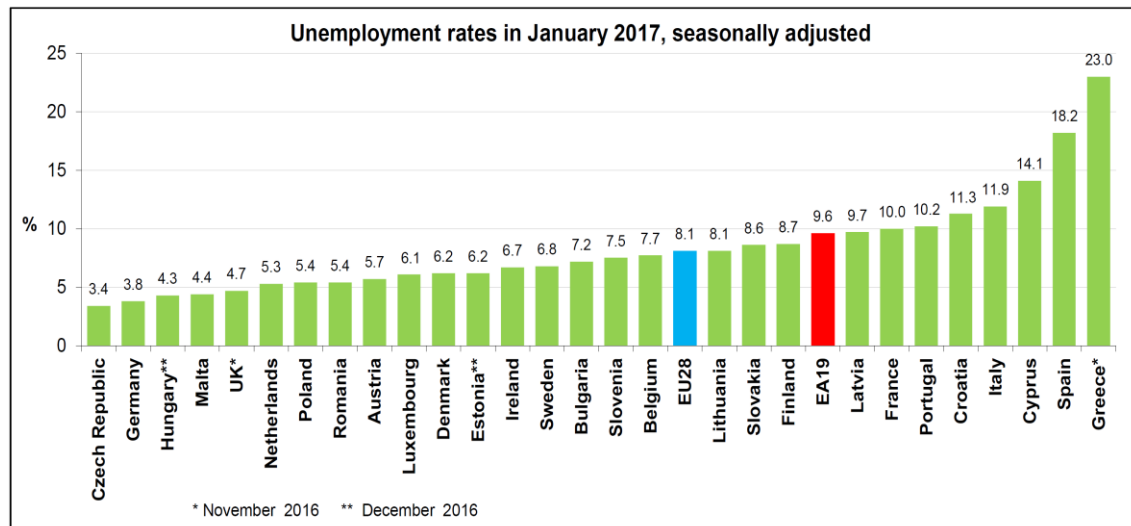
Furthermore, across the OECD countries, Greece is the country with the highest vertical decrease in real wages, representing about 5% per year since the 1st quarter of 2009. The crisis has affected both private and public sectors in Greece. According to OECD data, wage cuts averaged 3.4% pa in the private sector - and 1.9% pa in the public sector. (OECD, 2014: 1).

The impact of the ongoing crisis in employment was huge and persistent. Unemployment has risen from 7.8% in 2008 (see Eurostat, 2017a) to 27.5% in 2013, with 1 319 562 people being unemployed in December 2013 (HSA, 2017a: 2). Since the onset of the crisis,

¹ The first Greek “Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies” was agreed on 2 May 2010 by the Greek Government on the one hand and the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund on the other, aiming at tackling the economic crisis in Greece. The Greek Government designed a multi-year Programme, which was based on two key pillars: a) fiscal policy and b) pro-growth measures in order to correct the structural fiscal imbalances of the country and boost the competitiveness of the Greek economy. The “Memorandum” included fiscal policy measures in order to increase the revenue of the Greek state, such as spending cuts through the reduction of the public sector wages and the pension outlays. Regarding the pro-growth measures, the targets were the strengthening of the competitiveness and the enhancement of the Greek economy through reforms and measures in the areas of labour market policies, Greek entrepreneurship; as well as the improvement of the public enterprises’ management and investments; fight corruption and tax evasion etc. The total financial support to the Greek Government by the E.C., the E.C.B. and the I.M.F. was €110 billion (see in detail: IMF, 2017: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2010/pr10176.htm>) [accessed 24.5.2017].

unemployment in Greece remains at peak. While total unemployment in the EU28 dropped to 8.1% in January 2017 (its lowest level since 2009 and 0.8 percentage points lower than in January 2016), total unemployment in Greece was still 23% in November 2016 (Eurostat, 2017b). In addition, at the 3rd quarter of 2016, the long-term unemployment rate in Greece reached 16.7%, over four times the level for the EU28 (Eurostat, 2017c).

Figure 1: Unemployment rates in the European Union (EU28 & EU19)



Source: Eurostat, 2017b: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7895735/3-02032017-AP-EN.pdf/8a73cf73-2bb5-44e4-9494-3dfa39427469> [accessed 24.5.2017]

In 2011, Matsaganis claimed that ‘*the rise in unemployment is likely to be transformed into higher poverty, while in the past the correlation between the two has been rather weak*’ (Matsaganis, 2011: 510). Indeed, this is the case. In 2015, 21.4% of the Greek population lives under the poverty limit, while 35.7% is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, according to the Hellenic Statistic Authority (HSA, 2016: 1-2). Moreover, due to the lack of an effective Welfare State in Greece (which would provide a safety net and a decent level of living conditions for those who are at risk-of-poverty), as well as the increase of both total unemployment and long-term unemployment, there is a significant rise in the number of Greek jobless households (see Matsaganis, 2013; Papadakis et al, 2016a). When the economic crisis hit Greece (2009), the proportion of the population living in jobless households was 4.9% for 0-17 years and 8.4% for 18-60 year olds. However by 2013, the proportion in jobless households had increased to 13.3% for 0-17 year olds and 19.6% for 18-60 year olds (HSA, 2015: 38-39). In 2015 over one million Greeks lived in jobless households (see in detail HSA, 2016: 3).

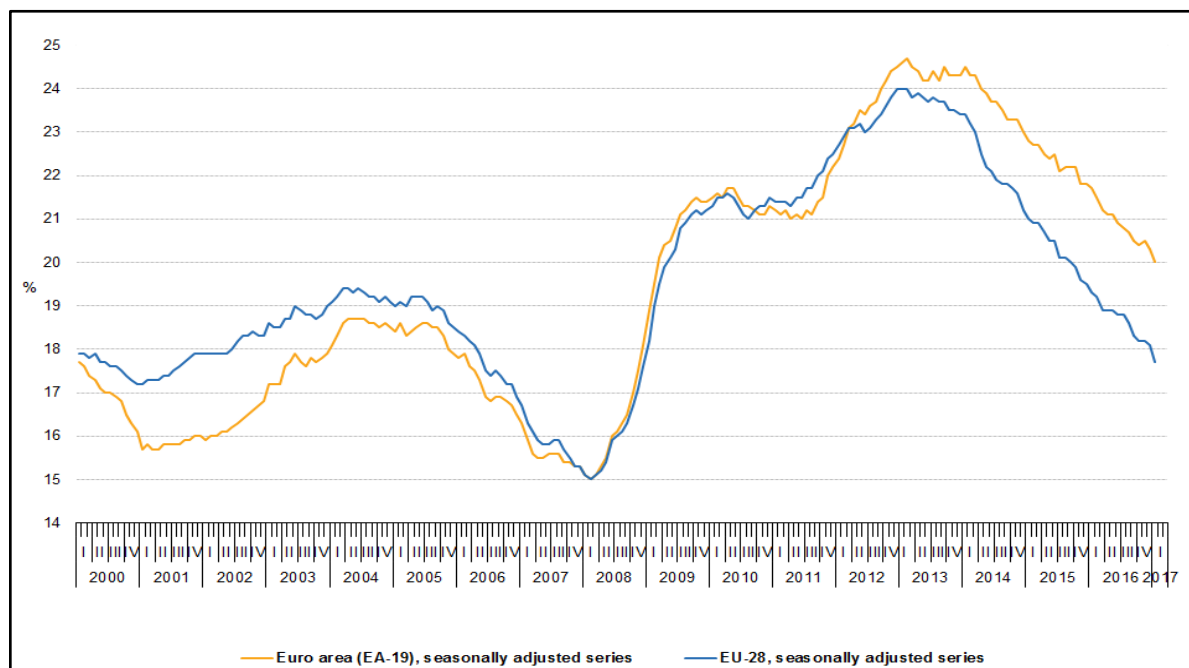
All the key domains and the age-groups of the Greek society are affected by the ongoing recession, since among others things *'the fiscal crisis is depriving the welfare state of precious resources'* (Matsaganis, 2011). Probably the most affected age-group is the youth.

2. On Youth unemployment in the EU and Greece

2.1. Youth unemployment in the EU

Historically in the EU the rate of youth unemployment² has been at least double that for the population as a whole. The onset of the economic downturn resulted in a dramatic increase in the rates of youth unemployment between 2009 and 2013, due to the difficulties that young people face in finding jobs and getting integrated in the labour market. Figure 2 shows the changes in youth unemployment rates in the EU between 2000 to 2017, and, in particular, the sharp increase of the rate from the onset of the financial crisis (2008) until 2013 (see Eurostat, 2017d).

Figure 2: Youth unemployment rates, EU-28 and EA-19, seasonally adjusted. January 2000 – January 2017 (%)



Source: Eurostat (une_rt_m) as cited in Eurostat 2017d: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics [accessed 24.5.2017]

² In the present research paper, the definition for the youth unemployment rate follows the Eurostat definition that is: *"The youth unemployment rate is the number of people aged 15 to 24 unemployed as a %age of the labour force of the same age. Therefore, the youth unemployment rate should not be interpreted as the share of jobless people in the overall youth population."* (Eurostat, 2017b: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7895735/3-02032017-AP-EN.pdf/8a73cf73-2bb5-44e4-9494-3dfa39427469>) [accessed 24.5.2017]

In the year to January 2017, youth unemployment in the EU28 dropped slightly (by 1.6 percentage points) compared with 19.3% in January 2016, but remained very high at 17.7% (men: 18.6%, women: 16.7%) (Eurostat, 2017b and 2017e). There were over four million young people (aged 15-24) unemployed in the EU28 and 2826 million in the EA19³ (Eurostat, 2017b). Despite the slight decline in youth unemployment in the last three years, youth unemployment is still far higher than it was before the crisis.⁴ Increasing asymmetries have also emerged among the Member States. In January 2017, the best performing country is Germany (6.5%), while Greece (45.2% - December 2016), Spain (42.2%) and Italy (37.9%) are the lowest performers (Eurostat, 2017e).

2.2. Youth unemployment in Greece

Undoubtedly, Greece is one of the EU countries, where the impact of the economic crisis was most rapid and visible from the very first months it hit the country. This was particularly visible in terms of youth unemployment. This has dropped from its peak level of 60% in March and May 2013, but was still at an extremely high 45.2% in December 2016 – higher than in Spain (42.2% - January 2017) and in all other EU states. Youth unemployment in Greece is at twice the EU average, and twice the level before the onset of the crisis.⁵ Almost one in two young people are affected (Eurostat, 2017e and 2017a).

Some sections of youth have been harder hit than others. Young women are more likely to be unemployed than young men, with a 48.8% unemployment rate compared with 42% for young men (Eurostat, 2017e). All regions in Greece have seen rapid rises in youth unemployment between 2008 and 2015 but rises have been particularly high in: Thessaly (from 34.4%, in 2010 to 60.3% in 2015); Peloponnese (from 29% in 2010 to 50.5% in 2015); Southern Aegean (from 14.9%, in 2008 to 33.8% in 2015); Attica (from 19.1% in

³ The EA (Euro Area) is composed of the Member States of the European Union, which have replaced their national currencies with the euro (single currency). In 1991, when the euro was introduced as a “booked money”, the Euro Area consisted of 11 Member States. Nowadays, the Euro Area is constituted by 19 Member-States of the EU, namely: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, France, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, , Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland (European Commission, 2017: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/euro-area/what-euro-area_en) [accessed 24.5.2017]

⁴ Specifically, in 2008, the rate of youth unemployment in the EU was 15.9% (Eurostat, 2017a: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en) [accessed 24.5.2017]

⁵ In Greece, the rate of youth unemployment was 21.9% in 2008 (Eurostat 2017a: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en) [accessed 24.5.2017]

2008 to 47.2% in 2015) and Crete (from 14% in 2008 to 40.4% in 2015 (see Eurostat, 2017f and Table 1).

Table 1: Youth unemployment rates (15-24 years) in Greece (2008-2015) (NUTS 2 Regions, %)

TIME	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GEO								
Greece	21.9	25.7	33.0	44.7	55.3	58.3	52.4	49.8
Voreia Ellada	:	:	36.0	51.3	60.0	62.5	54.1	52.6
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki	:	:	40.1	51.8	53.0	59.4	50.7	53.8
Kentriki Makedonia	:	:	34.1	51.4	60.7	62.0	53.4	51.9
Dytiki Makedonia	:	:	35.3	52.7	72.3	70.4	49.6	49.4
Ipeiros	:	:	37.1	48.6	61.1	67.4	69.8	58.6
Voreia Ellada (NUTS 2010)	23.4	28.6	:	:	:	:	:	:
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki (NUTS 2010)	21.4	30.4	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kentriki Makedonia (NUTS 2010)	22.4	28.0	:	:	:	:	:	:
Dytiki Makedonia (NUTS 2010)	36.6	34.8	:	:	:	:	:	:
Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	23.7	26.6	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kentriki Ellada	:	:	34.3	42.9	55.1	58.4	57.3	55.6
Thessalia	:	:	34.4	46.7	53.7	57.5	59.8	60.3
Ionia Nisia	:	:	35.2	26.2	23.9	51.5	44.8	54.6
Dytiki Ellada	:	:	35.3	45.1	56.8	59.0	61.1	54.6
Stereia Ellada	:	:	36.9	42.5	58.7	59.5	59.1	55.4
Peloponnisos	:	:	29.0	39.0	62.3	60.3	52.0	50.5
Kentriki Ellada (NUTS 2010)	28.5	29.8	:	:	:	:	:	:
Ipeiros (NUTS 2010)	31.2	34.7	:	:	:	:	:	:
Ionia Nisia (NUTS 2010)	27.1	26.5	:	:	:	:	:	:
Dytiki Ellada (NUTS 2010)	31.3	28.8	:	:	:	:	:	:
Stereia Ellada (NUTS 2010)	27.7	32.9	:	:	:	:	:	:
Peloponnisos (NUTS 2010)	23.1	25.8	:	:	:	:	:	:
Attiki	19.1	21.9	30.9	43.2	56.0	60.6	52.5	47.2
Attiki	19.1	21.9	30.9	43.2	56.0	60.6	52.5	47.2
Nisia Aigaiou, Kriti	15.0	22.5	29.6	39.3	43.6	42.9	38.9	38.4
Voreio Aigaio	:	24.6	29.7	43.0	45.8	46.1	40.2	42.1
Notio Aigaio	14.9	24.5	28.4	36.8	41.0	37.2	25.8	33.8
Kriti	14.0	20.9	30.4	39.8	44.1	45.4	46.3	40.4

Source: Eurostat 2017f:

http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_r_lfu3rt&lang=en. [accessed 25.5.2017]

Furthermore, the employment rate of recent Higher Education graduates⁶ has stagnated and remains extremely low. It slightly improved, from 47.4 % in 2014 to 49.9 % in 2015, but was still far away from the EU-28 average, which was 80.5 % in 2014 and 81.9 % in

⁶ Employment rate of recent graduates (aged 20-34) in Greece, who left tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) between 1-3 years before the reference year (European Commission, 2016: 6).

2015 (see European Commission, 2016: 1 & 6). Additionally, Greece has an alarmingly low employment rate of recent VET upper-secondary graduates⁷. In 2015, it was just 37.5%, namely almost half the EU average of 73.0 % (see European Commission, 2016: 7).

Youth unemployment is explicitly related to poverty-risk and social exclusion. Even though no social group in Greece has been unaffected by the crisis, which left a quarter of economically active adults unemployed and about a third in poverty⁸ at the 4th quarter of 2016 (see in detail HSA, 2017b: 108-114 & 126-127)], the impact of the crisis on the new generation is particularly worrying and multi-parametric.

3. Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

3.1. On the state of play in the EU

The NEET indicator corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group and sex that is not employed and not involved in education or training. The age ranges used in the indicators, adopted by different bodies, vary. Eurostat use a measure which covers the 15-24 years age olds (European Commission, 2011 as cited in Eurofound 2012: 22) while the OECD use a measure covering 15 to 29 year olds (see OECD, 2013: 326). The term NEET in most European countries refers to young people aged 15-24 (see European Commission, 2013: 2). It is worth mentioning that *‘while the youth unemployment rate refers just to the economically active members of the population who were not able to find a job, the NEET rate can be understood as the share of the total population of young people who are currently not engaged in employment, education or training’* (Eurofound, 2012: 23 & 40).

⁷ Employment rate of recent VET upper-secondary graduates (aged 20-34) in Greece, who graduated 1-3 years before the reference year (European Commission, 2016: 7).

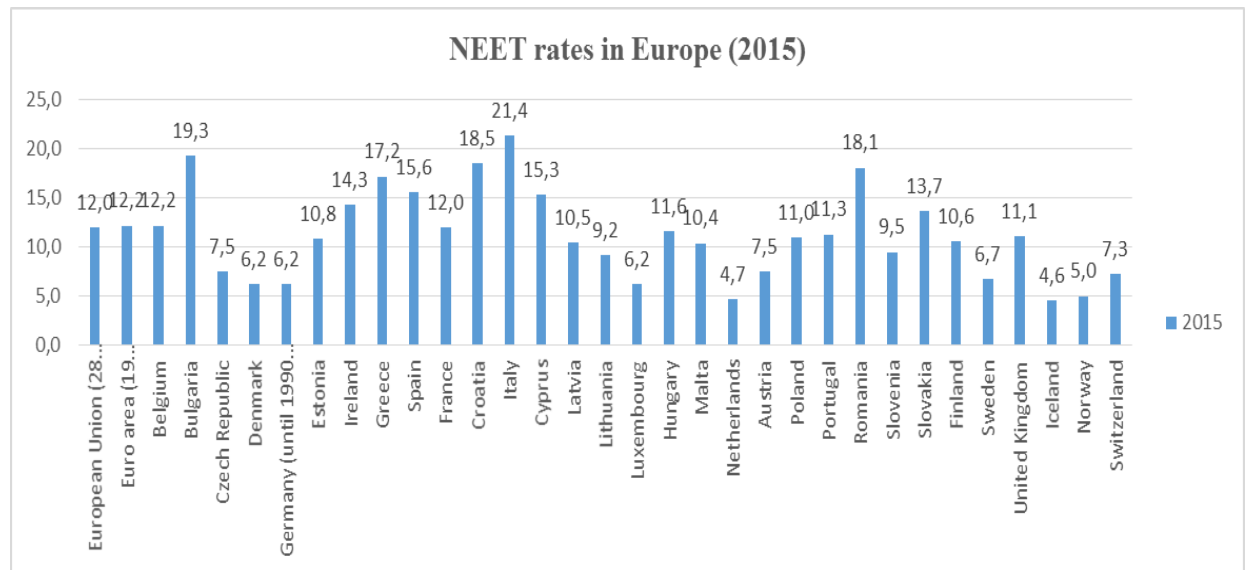
⁸ The term poverty refers to people who are at risk-of-poverty or social exclusion. The term follows the Eurostat definition for people who are at risk-of-poverty or social exclusion, namely the Europe 2020 both target and indicator on poverty and social exclusion. According to Eurostat, *“This indicator corresponds to the sum of persons who are: at risk of poverty or severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity. Persons are only counted once even if they are present in several sub-indicators. At risk-of-poverty are persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers). Material deprivation covers indicators relating to economic strain and durables. Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources, they experience at least 4 out of 9 following deprivations items: cannot afford i) to pay rent or utility bills, ii) keep home adequately warm, iii) face unexpected expenses, iv) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, v) a week holiday away from home, vi) a car, vii) a washing machine, viii) a colour TV, or ix) a telephone. People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 living in households where the adults (aged 18-59) work 20% or less of their total work potential during the past year.”* (Eurostat, 2017g)

NEETs may be classified (according to Eurofound) in five main sub-groups, namely the following: *‘the conventionally unemployed, the largest subgroup ... the unavailable ... the disengaged ... the opportunity-seekers ... the voluntary NEETs’* (Eurofound 2012: 24). It seems that specific groups have an increased probability of becoming NEETs, including those ‘with low levels of education, an immigration background, some level of disability or problems of mental health, as well as young people with a problematic family background’ (Eurofound 2012: 55-56). There is obviously a heterogeneity within the NEETs category/group (Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 47). Specifically, that heterogeneity is related to individuals’ different socio-demographic characteristics and family background in combination with the heterogeneity of the countries. Regarding the socio-demographic characteristics, the factors, which are taken into account for young persons’ classification into NEET sub-groups, are gender, age, immigration background, educational level, health status, living with parents and religiousness. In terms of the family background, the parameters are the household income, the area of the household location, the parents’ educational level as well as the unemployment background of the parents (Eurofound, 2012: 55).

On the Eurostat measure the rate of NEETs among 15 to 24 year olds in the EU28 reached 13% in 2013, while it was just 10.9% in 2008 (see Eurostat, EU-LFS data [edat_lfse_20] as cited in European Commission, 2015: 17). The share of the NEET population varies among EU Member States. In Greece, Italy and Bulgaria the NEET rate exceeded 20% in 2013 (see Eurostat, 2017h). The rate for NEETs in the EU has gradually decreased since 2013, yet remains higher (12% in 2015) than it was before the onset of the economic crisis (see European Commission 2015: 17). In the vast majority of the EU countries, the rise in rates for NEETs was a consequence of the increase of youth unemployment, rather than inactivity. Specifically, in Greece, Spain and Croatia around 70% of NEETs were unemployed but active in 2014, while in Bulgaria, Romania and Italy the majority of NEETs were inactive (see European Commission, 2015: 48). According to Eurofound, in these countries, a share of inactive NEETs, who are available to work, are not seeking for a job due to family responsibilities. However, the majority of inactive NEETs, are ‘discouraged workers’. Namely, they believe that there is no available job for them (Eurofound, 2012: 33). This fact implies that there are structural barriers in relation to

young population's transition and inclusion in the labour market or in education (Eurofound, 2016: 20).

Figure 3: NEET rates in Europe (2015) (aged 15-24)

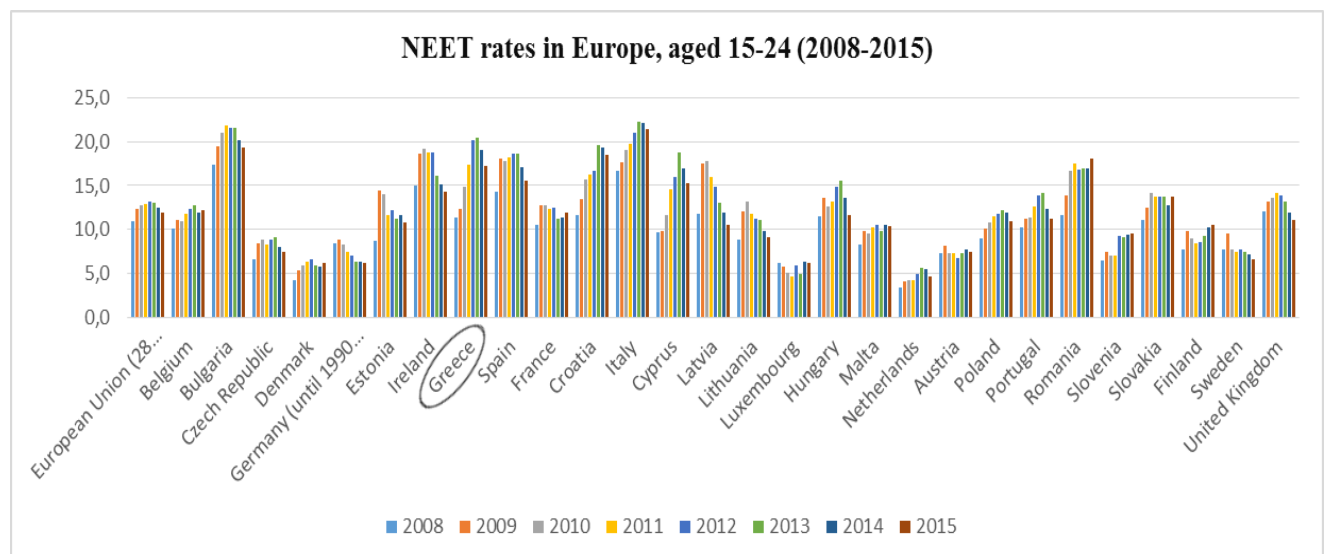


Source: Eurostat, 2017h:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tesem150&plugin=1> [accessed 24.5.2017]

In countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Italy, Croatia and Romania the NEET rate increased considerably since the beginning of the crisis until 2015, not least due to increases in youth unemployment. In 2015, the NEET rates in these countries were 19.3%, 17.2%, 15.3%, 15.6%, 21.4%, 18.5% and 18.1% respectively (see Eurostat 2017h and also Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 4: NEET rates in Europe (aged 15-24) (all ISCED 2011 levels) (2008-2015)

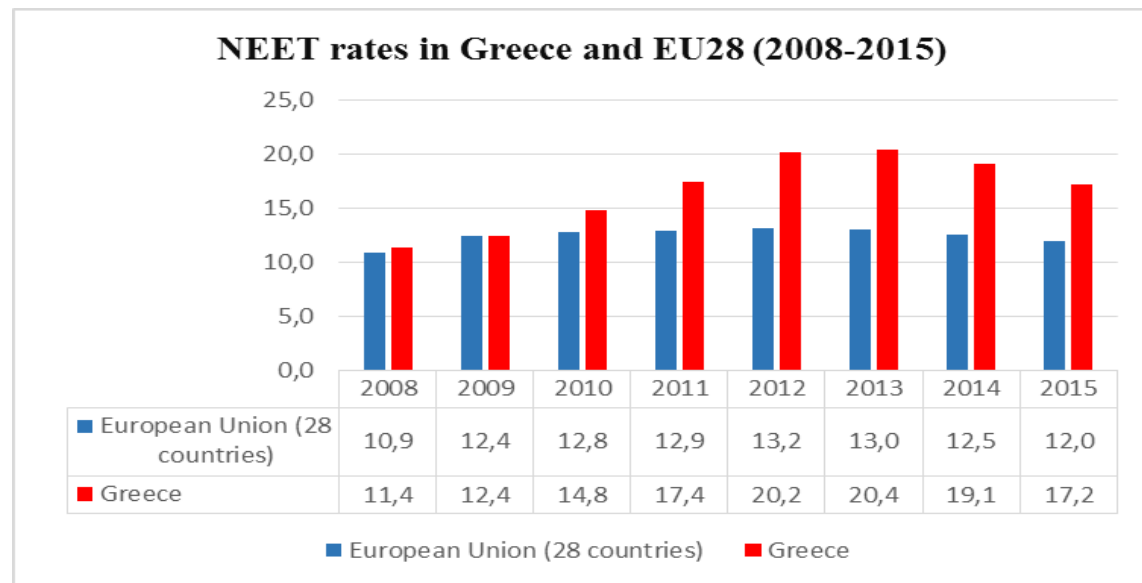


Source: Eurostat, 2017i: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_empl_160&lang=en [accessed 25.5.2017]

3.2. NEETs in Greece

Before the crisis, Greece had a similar proportion of young people classified as NEET as the rest of the EU. However, by 2013 the rate for NEETs had reached 20.4% - almost double the rate for 2008 and 42% higher than the EU average (13%). By 2015 the NEET rate was still above 17%. (Eurostat, 2017i) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: NEET rates in Greece & EU28 (2008-2015)

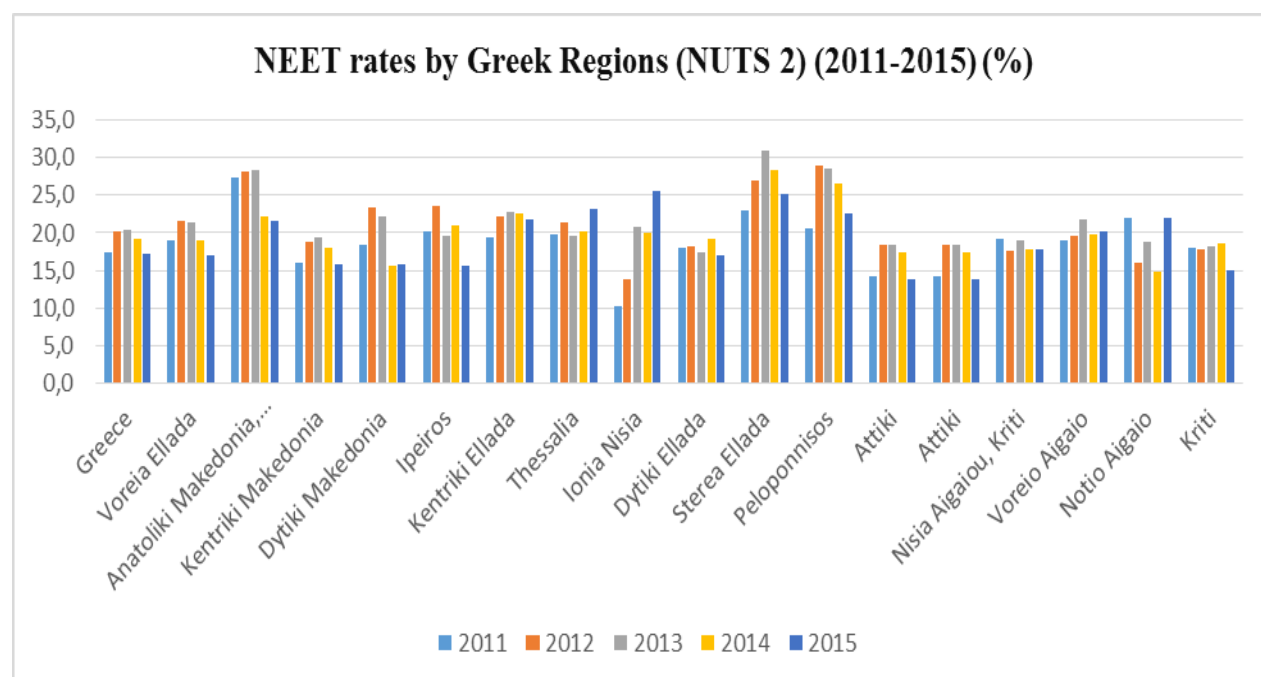


Source: Eurostat, 2017i: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_empl_160&lang=en [accessed 25.5.2017]

Throughout the period from 2008 to 2012, the percentage of women classified as NEET in Greece was higher than that for men. In 2012 the male NEET rate was 19%, 2.9 percentage points higher than in 2011 (16.1%) and 2.3 percentage below the corresponding female rate (21.3%). In 2013, the female NEET rate slightly decreased to 20%, while men's rate increased to 20.9%. In 2014, both NEET rates dropped (to 18.7% for men and 19.6% for women), while in 2015 the NEET rate for both men and women dropped further (to 17.1% and 17.2% respectively) and converged (see Eurostat, 2017i).

Regarding the regional dimension, Greece has witnessed a significant increase from 2011 to 2015, mainly in the regions of Thessaly, Ionian Islands, Central Greece and Peloponnese. Further, we should mention that despite the slight decrease at the country level, in island regions a mirror-image trend is evident. In 2015 the NEETs rate in the Ionian Islands reached 25.5%, rising from 19.9% in 2014, while in South Aegean it reached to 22%, rising from 14.8% in 2014 (see Eurostat, 20167j & Figure 6).

Figure 6: NEET rates by Greek Regions (NUTS 2) (2011-2015) (%)



Source: Eurostat, 2017j: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_22&lang=en.

It is clear that there is a direct and persistent correlation between the broader impact of the crisis and the NEET rate that reflects the ongoing disengagement of the youth from the labour market and the key social institutions. This disengagement arises from the impact of the economic recession on the labour market, resulting in a huge lack of jobs and, consequently, in the rapid increase of the youth unemployment rate in Greece (see in detail Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 47, 54, 58; Drakaki et al, 2014: 240-242). Furthermore, the inadequacy of the Greek Welfare State, which has failed to protect NEETs and young people in general as well as to re-integrate them in the labour market, constitutes an additional major parameter for youth's disengagement from the labour market and the social institutions (see Kotroyannos et al, 2015: 275-276).

In contrast with the disengagement of youth in Italy from the labour market due to the majority of them being inactive (Eurofound, 2012: 33, 39 and 2016: 20), the type of disengagement of the Greek young people is different. Although, Greece and Italy belong to the same cluster of countries in terms of NEETs' population and both of them have structural barriers and problems related to the transitions of young people from the education system to the labour market and a share of NEETs are 'discouraged workers' (see in detail Eurofound, 2012: 39 and 2016: 44), Greek NEETs have remained economically active. They continue to seek for a job, even though there are few jobs in

the country and they are willing to migrate either within the country or abroad in order to find a job (see Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 67-68; Drakaki et al, 2014: 247; GPO & KEADIK, 2012: 42, 50; KEADIK & KANEP, 2013: 20).

3.3. Prior research findings on NEETs

There have been a number of major research projects on NEETs in Greece since the onset of the crisis. A national research project (2011-2013), entitled the ‘‘Absents’ Barometer’’: The NEETs’ created the foundation for a NEETs composite indicator and for the development of an integrated set of policy proposals concerning the public policy complex. It also led to the formation of the NEETs GIS⁹ in order to map NEETs by Prefecture in Greece, and the creation of a road map for a multilevel intervention to prevent the social exclusion of NEETs. The project mapped and analysed the demographic and social characteristics of NEETs (including by gender, age, urbanity, educational level, family income, nationality). It also examined the views and attitudes of NEETs in respect to education and training, employment and social welfare.

Following this was a new, EEA- funded Project entitled ‘NEETs 2’¹⁰ which completed in 2016. This was a large-scale quantitative and qualitative research project which aimed, among others things, to map the psychological profiles of Greek NEETs, and to identify any risk factors for psychopathology. Furthermore, the quantitative research analysed the different facets of the impact of the ongoing recession on the life course, civic values, public trust and political behaviour of NEETs¹¹. It found that those classified as ‘*NEETs are a heterogeneous and vulnerable social group, including young people in poverty*

⁹ Specifically, within the research project ‘Absents’ Barometer: The NEETs’, a NEETs GIS (Geographical Information System) was designed at national scale based on the findings of the two-phase quantitative research of the Project. Specifically, the NEETs GIS constituted the first online geographical database for NEETs in Greece, which mapped NEETs’ profile by Greek Prefecture, presenting their sociodemographic and economic characteristics (NEET rate, sex, age, urbanity, income etc.) by Prefecture (see in detail KEADIK & IESL/FORTH, 2013).

¹⁰ The full title of the research Project ‘NEETs2’ was ‘*Research and Comprehensive Intervention for the social inclusion of a major socially vulnerable group: Psychological profile / psychopathology, skills’ profile, needs assessment and programmes’ development for training-reskilling and psychological support towards the re-inclusion of “young people not in education, employment of training (NEETs)”*’ (EEA Grants/GR07-3757).

¹¹ All the key findings of the quantitative and qualitative research of the project entitled ‘NEETs2’ as well as all the key aspects of the tools, consisting of the framework of the proposed and developed twofold comprehensive intervention towards NEETs’ social inclusion in Greece, have been published at the open-access website of the project (<http://neets2.soc.uoc.gr>) [accessed 24.5.2017]. The project website is available on both in Greek and English language (http://neets2.soc.uoc.gr/?page_id=53&lang=el [accessed 24.5.2017] & http://neets2.soc.uoc.gr/?page_id=157&lang=en) [accessed 24.5.2017].

and/with low educational attainment. ' (see Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 44-75; Kotroyannos et al, 2015: 272-276).

The main findings of the first project on NEETs in Greece, entitled 'Absents' Barometer'¹² (2011-2013), could be summarised as follows (see analytically Papadakis, 2013: 15-75; Drakaki et al, 2014: 240-254; Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 44-75). Young NEETs in Greece are a heterogeneous group, but have certain likely characteristics. The Greek NEET is usually in the 20-24 age group, can be male or female (most often female), tends to have a medium educational level (yet, including many tertiary education graduates) and often has prior work experience. She or he tends to come from a low income family, and has rarely undertaken vocational training. Young NEETs are usually supported by their families, and are often uninsured. In terms of their values and attitudes, they tend to be highly skeptical of the Welfare State, and express intense distrust of politicians. Despite their exclusion from education, training and employment, and the consequent frustration and stress which forms part of their everyday reality, they continue to set themselves goals. They are not always optimistic, that they will succeed, but they continue to aspire to return to work and learning. The biographical rupture and vulnerability, which NEETs have suffered do not prevent them from seeking to redraw their own life course. Nor do they discourage them from highlighting broader political proposals to address social vulnerability and tackle socio-educational inequalities.

4. Prometheus Bound: The Greek Youth and NEETs within the Crisis Era

4.1. Socio-demographics, psychological prolife and the revival of the intergenerational transmission of poverty

The recently completed research project, entitled 'NEETs2', looked more broadly at the life course and values and young NEETs and young people in general in Greece. It focused on the key determinants of life-course, civic values, public trust, political behavior and survival strategies.

¹² All the key research data and findings of the research project entitled 'Absents' Barometer' have been published at the **Social Data Network – So.Da.Net of the CESSDA: Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives – cessda.net** [accessed 24.5.2017]. Additionally, the project summary has been published, in Greek and English, at the website of the new EEA-funded research project entitled 'NEETs2': http://neets2.soc.uoc.gr/?page_id=155&lang=en [accessed 24.5.2017].

Based on the stratified, quota-based, sampling (with 2769 respondents in the total of the 13 Administrative Regions), the key findings of the “NEETs2” Project were that¹³:

- ✓ The NEET rate, in May 2016, was 16.4% of the Greek young population (aged 15-24) (see KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 7).
- ✓ NEETs, compared to our control group (namely young people 15-24 years), are older, have less age-adjusted years of education, are more likely to live with their parents, have more work experience and lower family income.

Table 2: Socio-Demographics Comparison between NEETs and Control Group

	Neet	Control Group	p
Age (years)	22.03 (2.09)	20.16 (2.85)	.005
Education (years)	12.82 (2.17)	12.12 (2.42)	.0001
Age-adjusted education (years)	11.95 (2.11)	12.27 (2.44)	.001
Education type			.0001
Elementary School	2.0	2.8	
Middle School	7.1	18.8	
High School	50.2	52.4	
Technical	13.1	4.9	
Technological	8.7	5.4	
University	18.4	15.0	
Graduate degree	0.4	0.7	
Women	51.9%	54.3%	.19
Married	10.3%	3.6%	.0001
Lives with parents	71.9	62.5	.0001
Has medical insurance	72.7%	83.8%	.0001

¹³ The statistical data analysis of the quantitative research was carried out with the SPSS 17.0 statistical package. Mean \pm SD and frequencies were used for the analysis of the means and the frequencies. Moreover, bivariate analyses were carried out in order to control possible correlations, while the comparison between NEETs and Control Group was conducted through bivariate analysis, and, specifically, using ANOVA analysis (continuous variables) and χ^2 (categorical variables). Statistically significant differences were considered the differences with $p < 0.05$. Finally, in order to investigate risk factors associated with psychopathology emergence among NEETs’ group, multivariate analysis was carried out using Linear Regression Model with outcome variables the total scores of Depression (PHQ-9) and Anxiety (GAD-7) questionnaires as well as the score of well-being (see in detail KEPET & KEADIK, 2016b).

Previous work history	73.4%	52.2%	.0001
Vocational training	17.9%	15.6	.13
Family income (Euro)			.0001
<500	22.0	15.1	
501-1000	37.3	30.7	
1001-1500	23.0	26.6	
1501-2000	10.6	17.0	
>2000	7.1	10.6	

Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016b: 11-12.

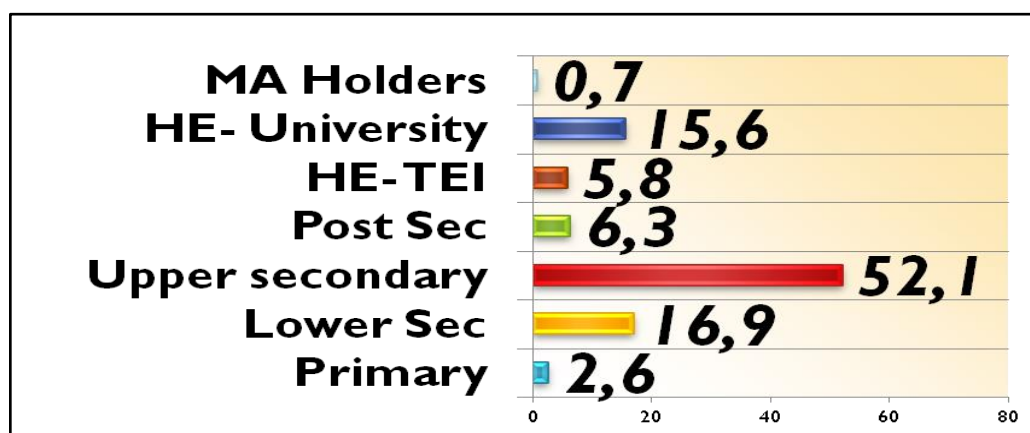
Age seems to be a determining factor that affects a young person's chances to qualify as NEET. Following a descriptive analysis, we can document that after the age of 22 the NEET phenomenon grows exponentially and culminates at the age of 24 years, where 34.9% of people of this age are now NEETs (see KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 7).

This allows us to conclude that the Greek family (less so the Greek society) have managed to find ways prevent the marginalization of younger people, mechanisms which, however, do not cover equally efficiently older ages. The relatively low rates of early school leaving/dropout and respectively the high rates of completion of upper secondary education in Greece explain the low incidence of NEETs in the younger age groups. On the other hand, "the family protection even "unintentionally" contributes to young people's entrapment in a family enclave, which is transformed into a key tool of informal social protection, especially when the welfare State fails to actually protect,.... the traditional social enclave of family undertakes the treating of social pathologies that "occur" to its members, assuming the role of "social protector" not only where when its members cannot be protected but also acting unsolicitedly" (Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 52). Yet, family seems to operate as an individualized policy substitute, given the deconstruction of the Welfare State, preventing the total disruption of NEETs' life course.

Regarding the education level of the young people in Greece, almost one out of four young people (aged 15-24) is high-skilled. 27.4% of the Greek NEETs are Higher Education graduates (clearly more than their peers – 21.1%), namely more than one out of four NEETs is high-skilled in Greece. Indeed, this is an alarming finding, especially given the

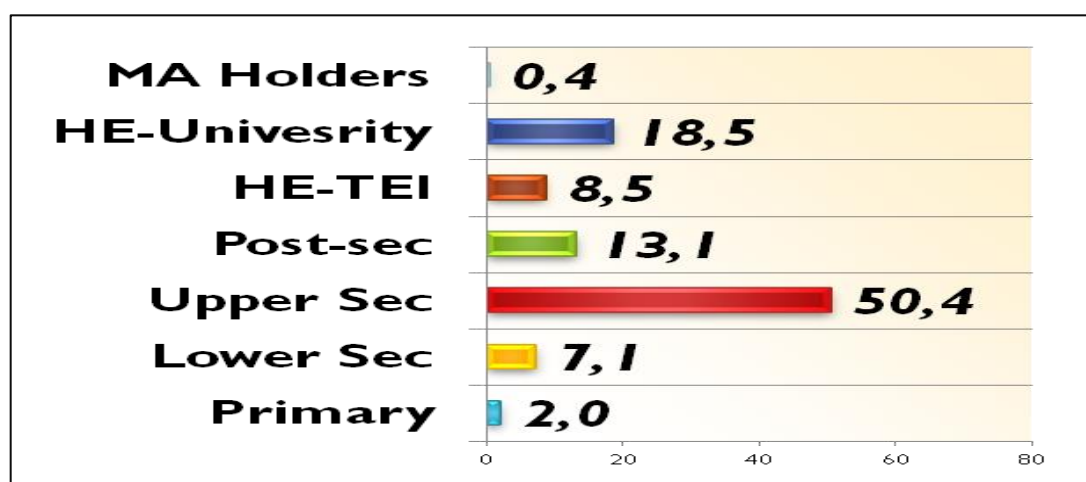
fact that in the majority of the EU countries, NEETs are usually low- or medium- skilled (Eurofound 2012: 31; Eurofound 2016: 2)¹⁴ (see Figures 7-9).

Figure 7: The Education Level of the Greek Youth (22.1% HE Graduates)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 12.

Figure 8: The Education Level of NEETs



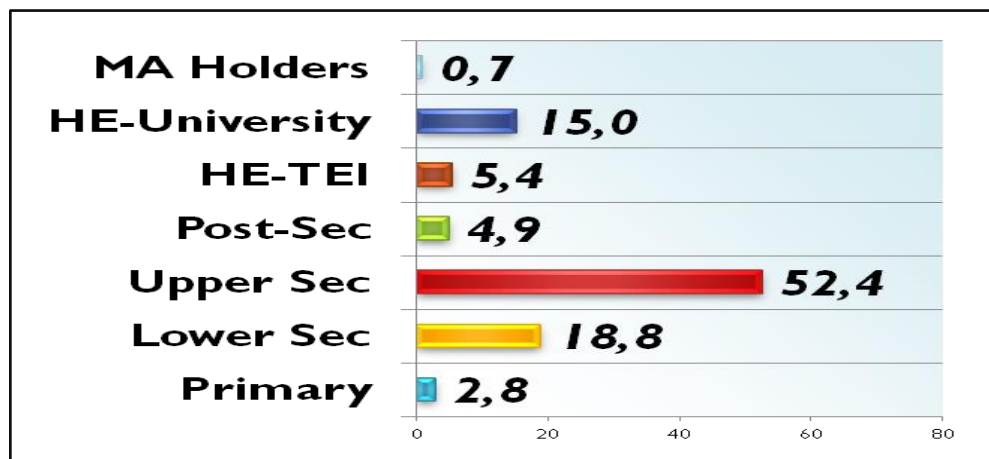
Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 12.

In terms of family income, it should be noted that the majority of both the youth as such and the NEETs live in households with low or very low income. This finding is of particular interest. Further analysis documents that NEETs are usually members of families with a lower income than their peers. We can, therefore, state that the family

¹⁴ According to the recent Eurofound report on Neets: ‘The largest group of NEETs is composed of young people with an upper secondary level of education – the so called ‘missing middle’, often excluded from the policy discourse. However, beyond absolute numbers, the probability of becoming NEET still decreases as educational level increases: hence, education is confirmed as the best protection against unemployment and exclusion. Nevertheless, southern European and Mediterranean countries tend to have a large proportion of well-educated NEETs as a result of the crisis’ (Eurofound, 2016: 2). Undoubtedly, Greece fits the southern- Mediterranean case in terms of NEETs’ educational level.

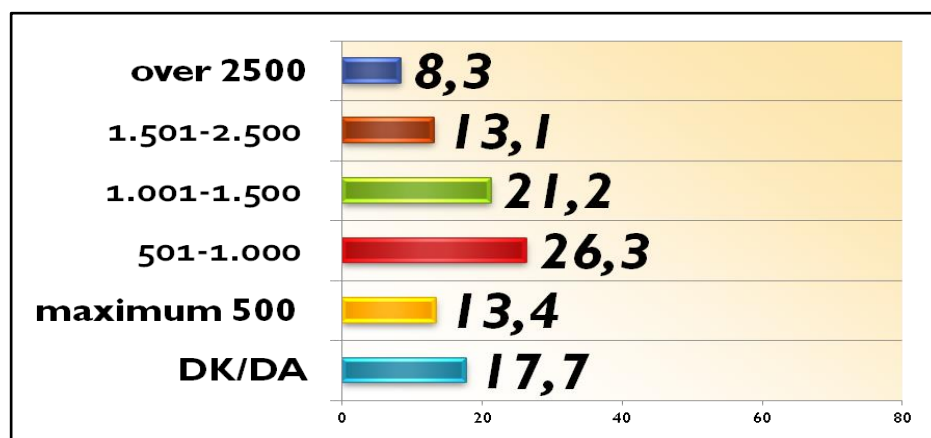
income is a decisive determining factor that increases a young person's chances to fall in the NEET category (see Papadakis et al, 2016b: 36-37). In other words, the lower the monthly family income is, the greater the risk of social exclusion becomes. Without doubt, NEET status in Greece is more frequent among lower socio-economic levels/groups (with less age-adjusted years of education and lower family income). What is even more alarming is the fact that approximately 40% of the Greek young people live in households, whose monthly income is less than 1000 € (see Figures 10-11).

Figure 9: The Education Level of non-NEETs



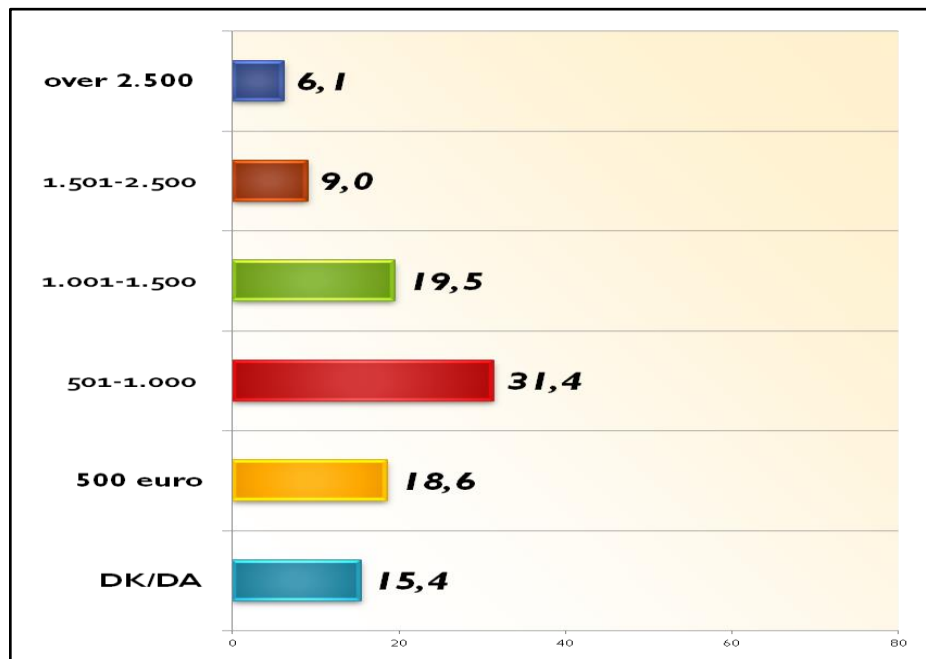
Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 12.

Figure 10: Family Income of Young People (in total)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 19.

Figure 11: Family Income of NEETs



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 19.

The above-mentioned findings further confirm the hypothesis of intergenerational transmission of poverty in Greece today (see Papatheodorou & Papanastasiou, 2010; Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 56).

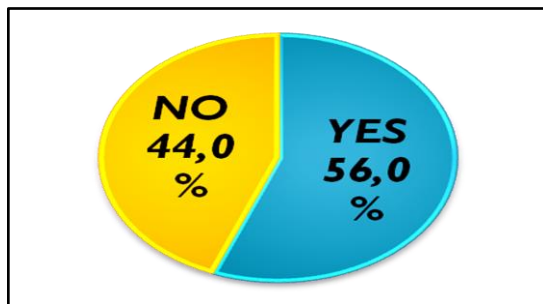
What about NEETs' psychological profile? Anxiety, but not depressive symptoms, are more frequent in NEETs. Smoking, but not other substances use, is more frequent as well. NEETs status is associated with less social contacts and isolation. Among NEETs women, smokers, having less social contacts and low self-efficacy, are more likely to have increased anxiety symptomatology (see KEPET & KEADIK, 2016b: 12-27; Basta, 2016). In other words, NEETs status in Greece is associated with increased anxiety, leading to isolation and affecting their quality of life. In contrast to other countries, Greek families may support NEETs preventing them from developing heavy depressive symptoms, suicidality and substance abuse early on. However, future longitudinal studies should examine if depressive symptomatology and substances increase in this group later on in life.

4.2 The impact of the ongoing crisis in youth employability-unemployment, social exclusion and survival strategies

Given the abovementioned, the self-definition of the individual condition by the young people in Greece is not surprising. Proportions of 30.8% of the young people and 45.8% of NEETs in Greece describe their situation as hard and unbearable (see KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 26). Thus, one out of three young people in Greece and half the NEETs face severe difficulties in their daily life. The significant variation of 17.9 percentage point between NEETs and their peers (see KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 32) demonstrates the strong psychological impact caused by the marginalization of young people and their alienation from the labour market and the educational process.

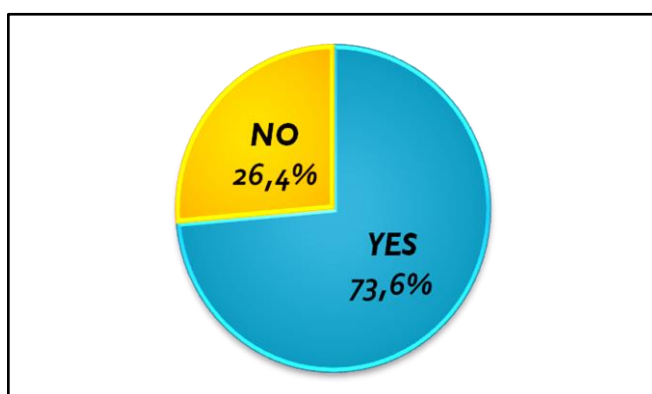
It is worth mentioning, that the majority of young people and the vast majority of NEETs have prior working experience (see Figures 12 & 13).

Figure 12: Prior Working Experience of Young People (in total)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 13.

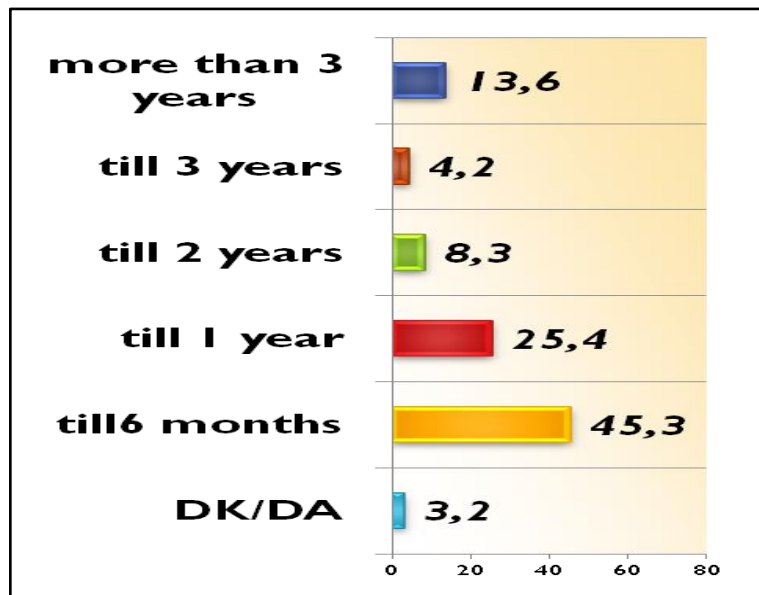
Figure 13: Prior Working Experience of NEETs



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 13

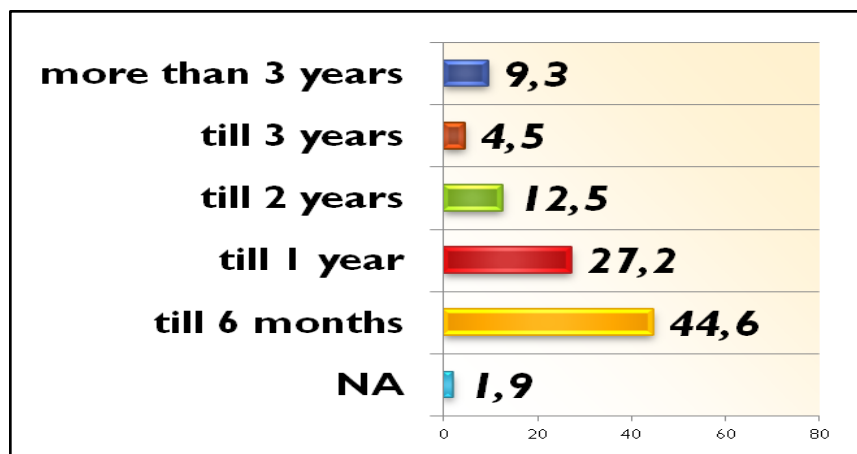
NEETs, coming from families with lower income, are forced to enter the labour market earlier, yet all of the 73.6% of them who have prior work experience are now unemployed. It is a crystal clear effect of the persisting crisis. The following findings make it self-evident. The vast majority of the NEETs (84.3%) as well as of their peers (79%) have lost their jobs during the last 2 years (Figures 14 & 15).

Figure 14: Unemployment period of Young People (in total) (*concerns the ones who have prior working experience*)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 14.

Figure 15: Unemployment period of NEETs (*concerns the ones who have prior working experience*)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 14.

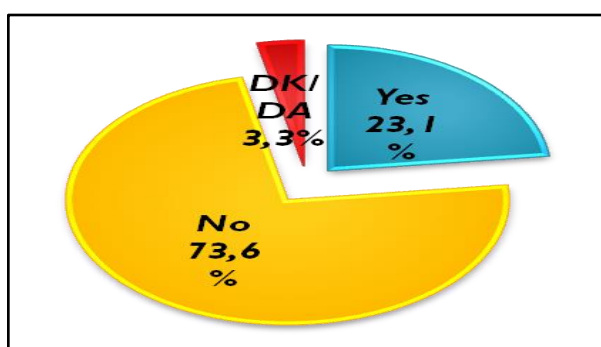
The vast majority of young people (including NEETs) who have prior working experience, gained it mainly in the tertiary sector. NEETs usually have previous work experience, due to seasonal employment (catering, leisure and tourism). Given that, we could presume that

the ones who are recently unemployed belong to the category of seasonally employment. However, 32.7% of the young population and 39.7% of the NEETs, being employed before, have lost their jobs more than 6 months and less than 2 years ago. That is not the case for seasonal employment. Within the group aged 15-24 and with prior work experience, the majority are men 20-24 years old. Forty-four percent of the young people (26.4% of NEETs and 47.8% of their peers) have never entered the labour market. Twenty six percent (26.3% of NEETs) of the ones had, and are now long-term unemployed (see analytically KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a). Delaying entry or being disengaged from the labour market hamper, decisively, the possibility of (re)integration into employment in general and eventually feedback the vicious circle of youth unemployment.

Regarding the employment status and broadly the relationship of young people (including NEETs) to employment, the research findings clearly document that the economic crisis has contributed decisively to youth unemployment, while two main taxonomic categories are formulated, *grosso modo*: a) those who never have worked, and b) those who have worked for a while and have been laid off. This tends to be a result of cutbacks in personnel or the bankruptcy of the enterprise they were employed in, or because they were seasonal or occasional employees. Of course, there will also be some who left voluntarily.

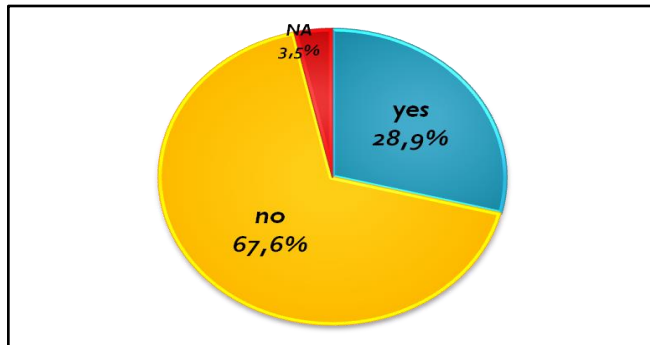
With regard to training and its relation to employability, the findings are discouraging. Just 15.9% of young people (17.7% of NEETs and 15.6% of their peers) have attended a training programme in the past. The minority of young people has attended a training programme and, among them, the vast majority considers training ineffective. It is obvious that despite unemployment, young people neither are attracted from training nor trust it at all (see Figures 16 & 17).

Figure 16: Evaluation of training effectiveness by the participants (whether it helped them finding a job – with regard to the ones who have attended a training programme) (Young People, in total)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 16.

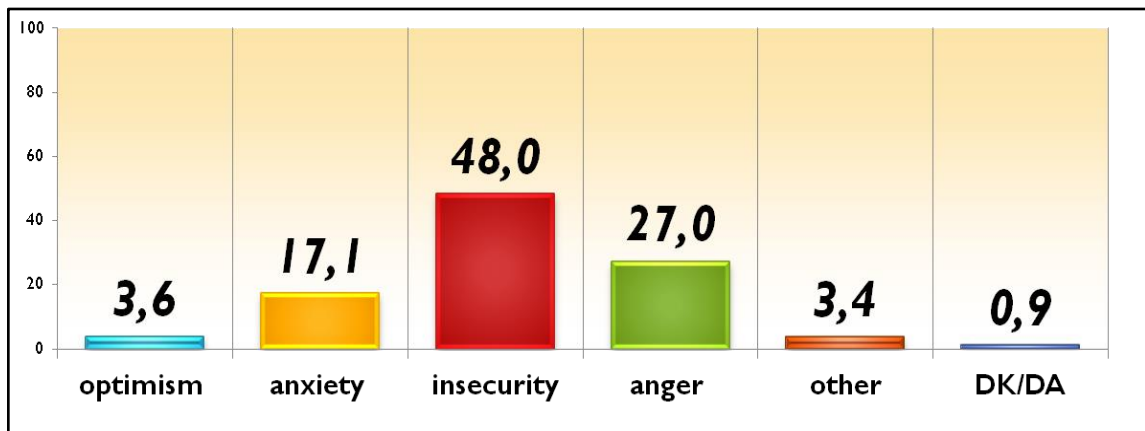
Figure 17: Evaluation of training effectiveness by the participants (whether it helped them finding a job – with regard to the ones who have attended a training program) (NEETs)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 16.

The emotions experienced by young people in Greece as a result of the economic crisis are mainly insecurity (48%), anger (27%) and anxiety (17.1%). Almost none is optimistic (3.6%), while there are no statically significant differences between NEETs and their peers (Figure 18).

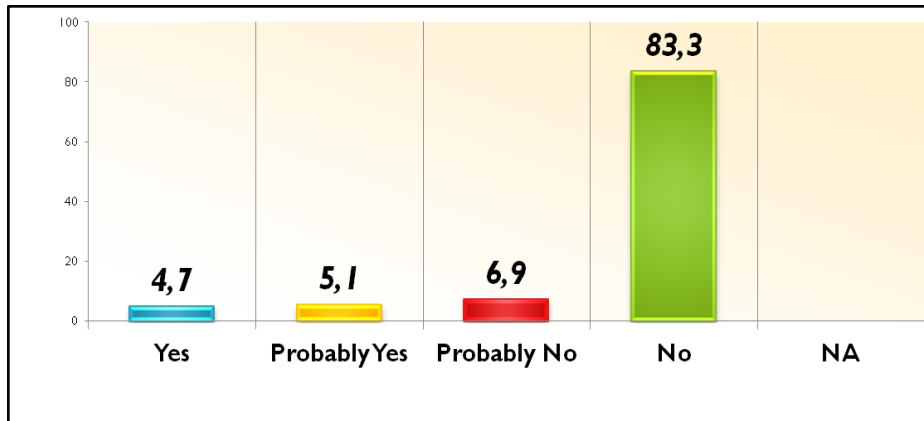
Figure 18: Emotions caused by the ongoing economic crisis



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 35.

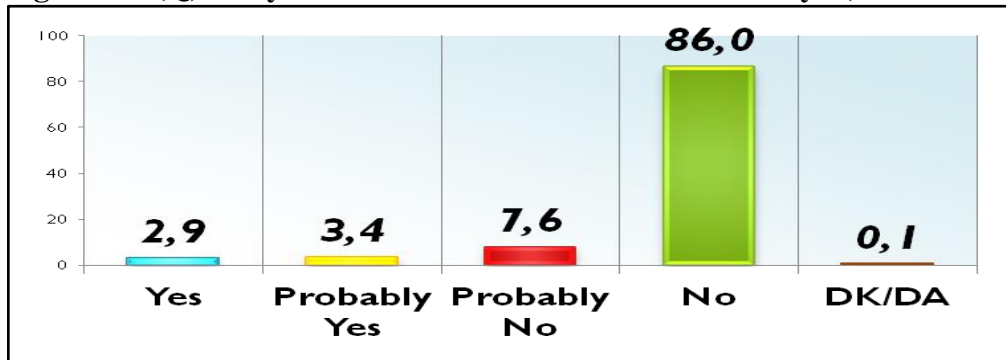
However, when it comes to the individualized perception of social exclusion, a seeming paradox arises. The relevant findings, related to whether NEETs feel socially excluded, seem unexpected: 90.2% of NEETs do not feel socially excluded, almost equally to their peers (93.6%) (see Figures 19 & 20).

Figure 19: (Q): Do you feel cut off/ isolated from the society? (NEETs)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 26.

Figure 20: (Q): Do you feel cut off/ isolated from the society? (non-NEETs)



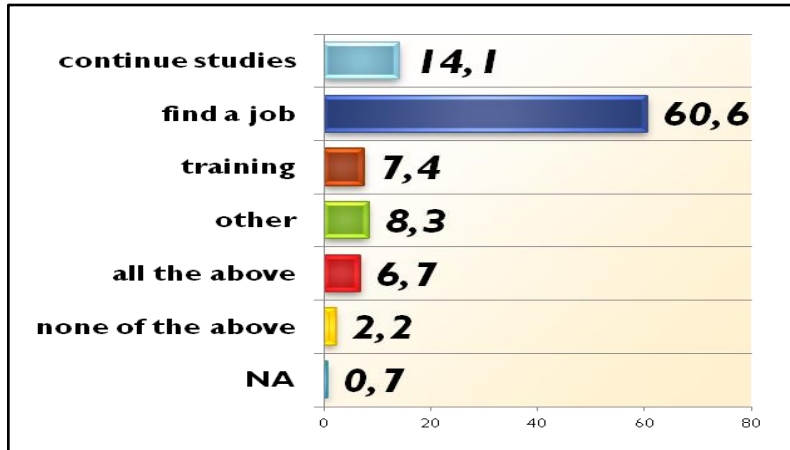
Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 26.

Undoubtedly, NEETs qualify for classification as socially excluded. However, as already stated, the majority of them do not feel socially excluded. Given that, is the abovementioned finding interpretable? Definitely. In fact, this finding reinforces the finding of the previous study ('Absents Barometer' / 2011-2013) that *'the family security grid ...[and] the widening of social vulnerability that inevitably brings many young people in a similar situation with Neets, reduce the feeling of alienation and isolation'* (Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 64). In other words, NEETs are not on their own, since a lot of their peers are in similar situation. The broader troubled state of play diminishes the feeling of isolation, however it clearly documents an ongoing hardened situation for numerous young people in Greece. In other words, NEETs do not feel excluded mainly due to the fact that there are so many others suffering.

Based on the abovementioned, how do young people cope with this extremely troubled situation? Here, we can easily notice a totally reverse image, in terms of life-course design,

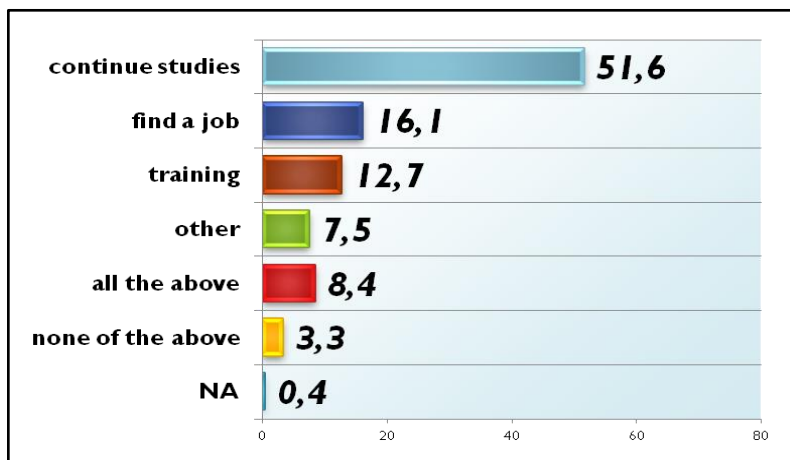
between NEETs and their peers. While job-seeking is a clear priority for NEETs, learning process far exceeds in their peers' priorities (see Figures 21 & 22).

Figure 21: Priorities of NEETs



Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 30.

Figure 22: Priorities of non-NEETs

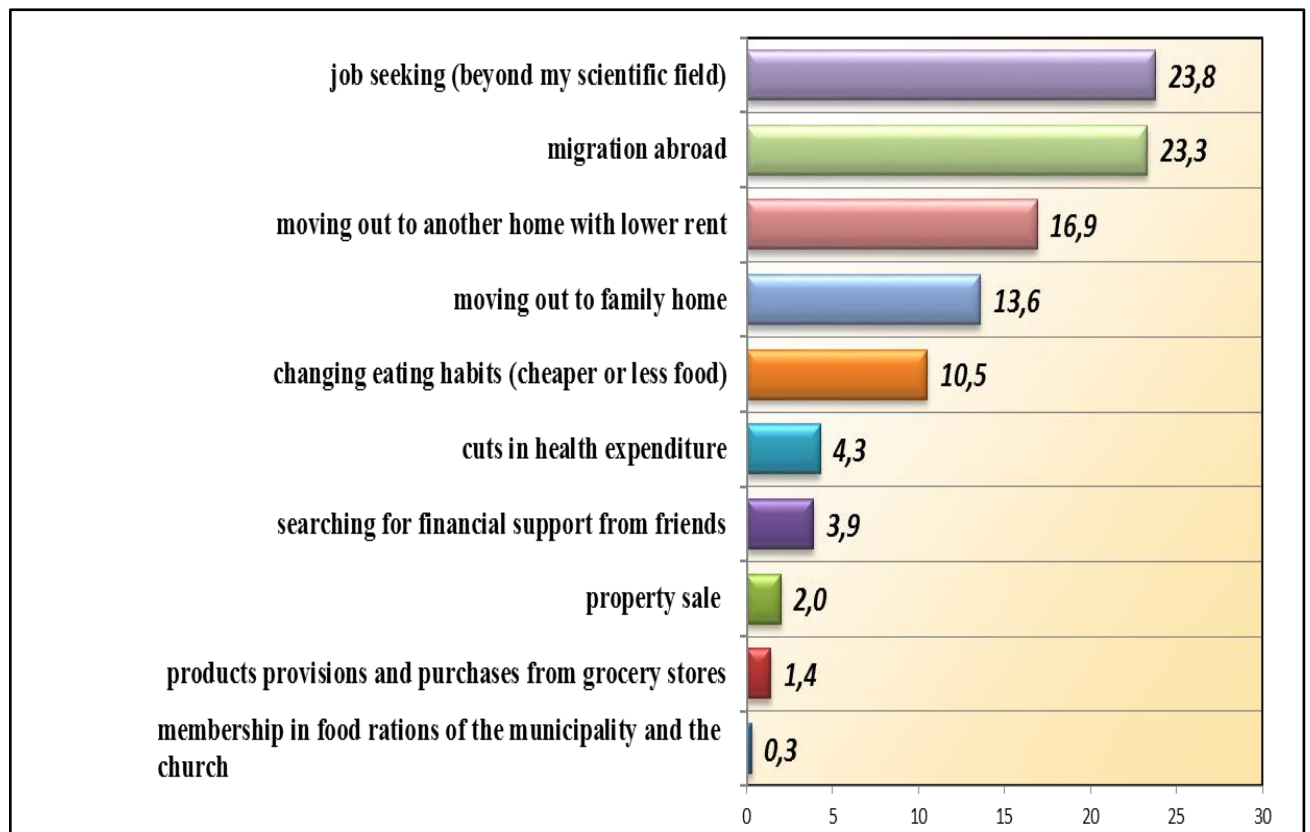


Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 30.

The abovementioned clearly affects young people's survival strategies. The key choices, that young people have already done or are highly likely to make, include job seeking regardless its relation to their specialization and studies, migration abroad, changing residence (moving to another cheaper apartment or to family home) and changing even their dietary habits, by proceeding in severe cuts (see Figure 23).

It should be mentioned at this point, that these top five choices are identical both to NEETs and their peers, namely the rest of the youth (see KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 28). Indeed, the impact of the crisis is multi-parametric, affecting substantial aspects and facets of young people’s daily life.

Figure 23: (Q): Which of the following are you the most likely to do first, or have already done, as a result of the crisis? (Young People, in total)



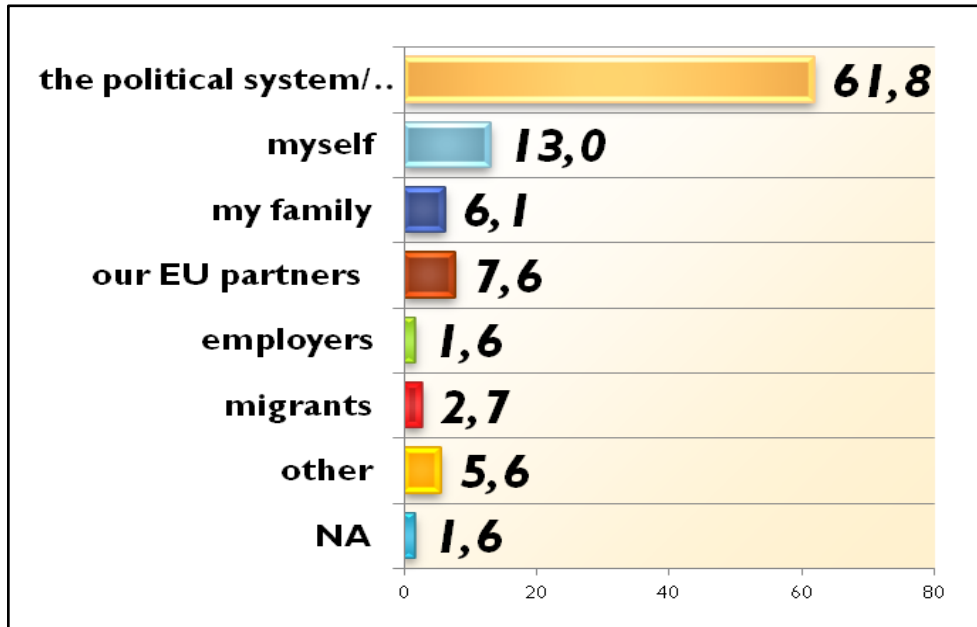
Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 27.

4.4. Issues of political behavior

The findings of the research project “NEETs2” are indeed alarming when it comes to issues of public trust and political behaviour. Public trust is collapsing among youth, while the vast majority of young people have a negative view on the political system and personnel, blaming them for their discouraging situation and the increasing difficulties that they face in their daily life.

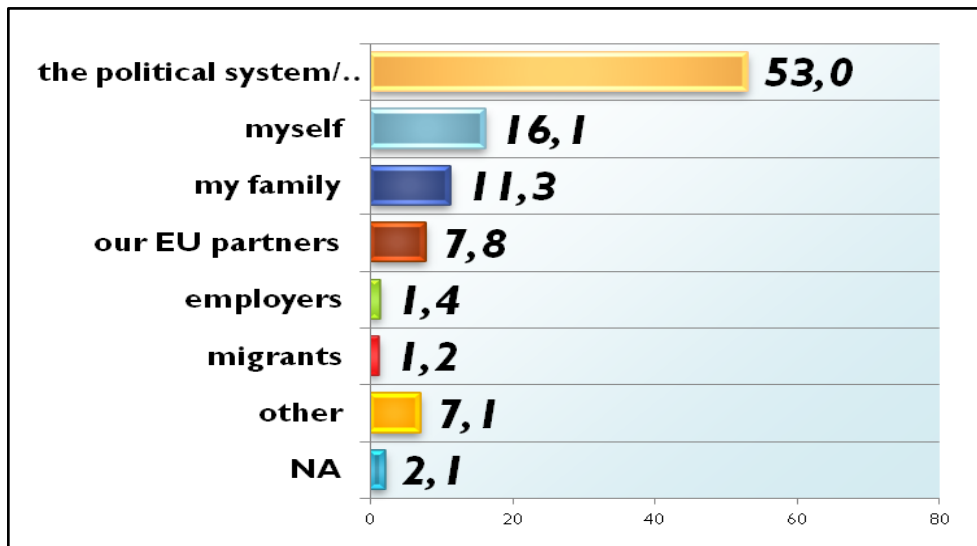
More specifically: 54.4% of the young people (61.8% of NEETs and 53% of their peers) blame primarily the political personnel for its gradually worsening situation.

Figure 24: (Q): Who's to blame for his/her own condition? (according to young people themselves) (NEETs)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 34.

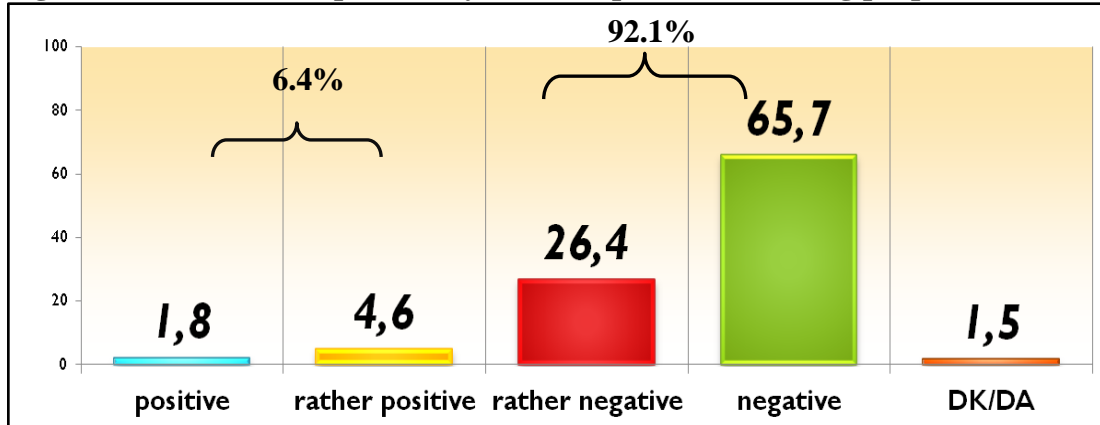
Figure 25: (Q): Who's to blame for his/her own condition? (according to young people themselves) (non-NEETs)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 34.

Additionally, 92.1% of the Greek youth (95.3% of NEETs and 91.5% of their peers) have a negative or rather negative view on the political system and political personnel.

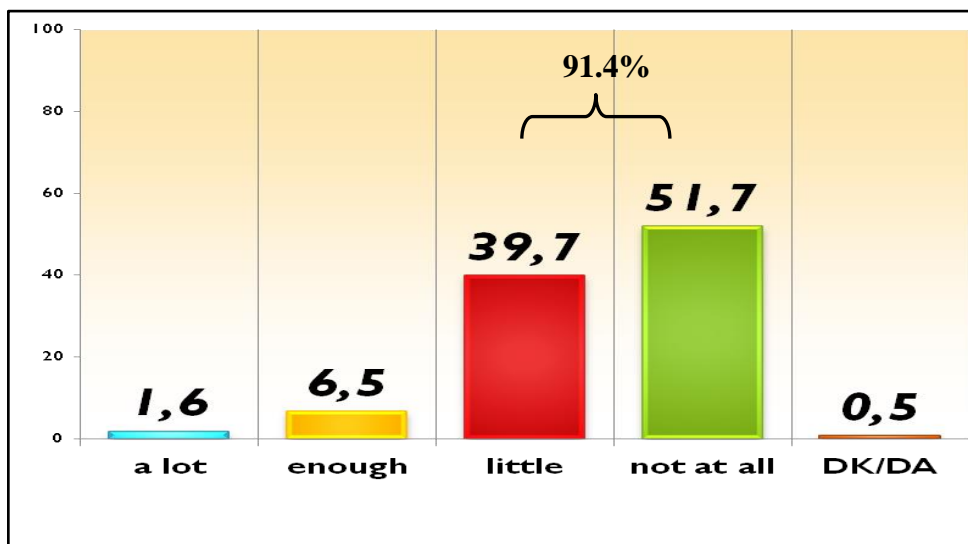
Figure 26: View On the political system and personnel (Young people, in total)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 39.

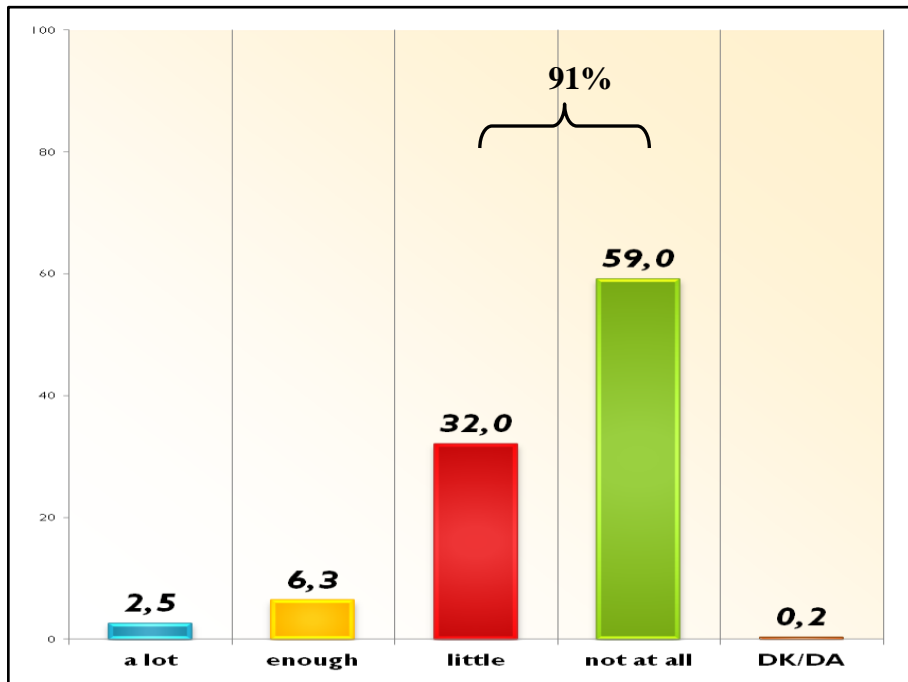
When it comes to the degree of confidence on the Greek State in respect to the Welfare provisions, 91.4 % of the Greek youth do not trust at all or trusts a little the social welfare system in Greece. This lack of confidence is equally diffuse both in NEETs and their peers. Indeed, this is a further indication of the collapse of the public trust among young people in Greece (see Figures 27 & 28).

Figure 27: Degree of Confidence on the Greek State in terms of the Welfare provisions (Young People, in total)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 36.

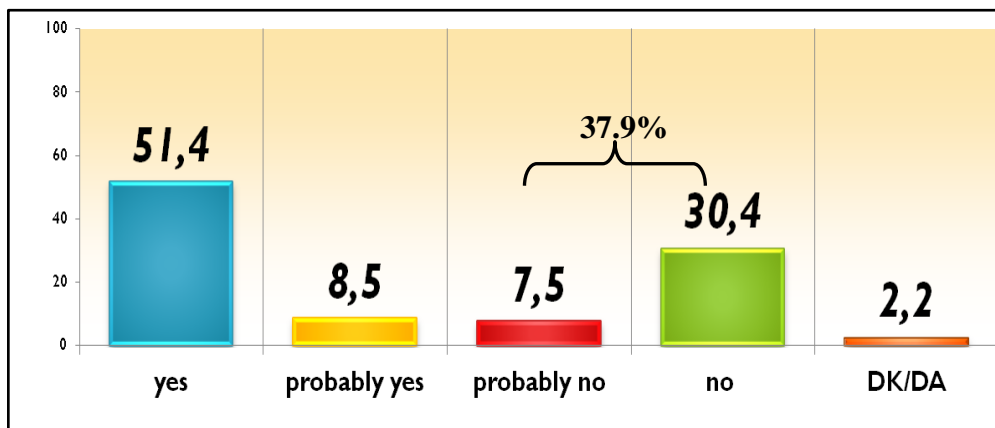
Figure 28: Degree of Confidence on the Greek State in terms of the Welfare provisions (NEETs)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 38.

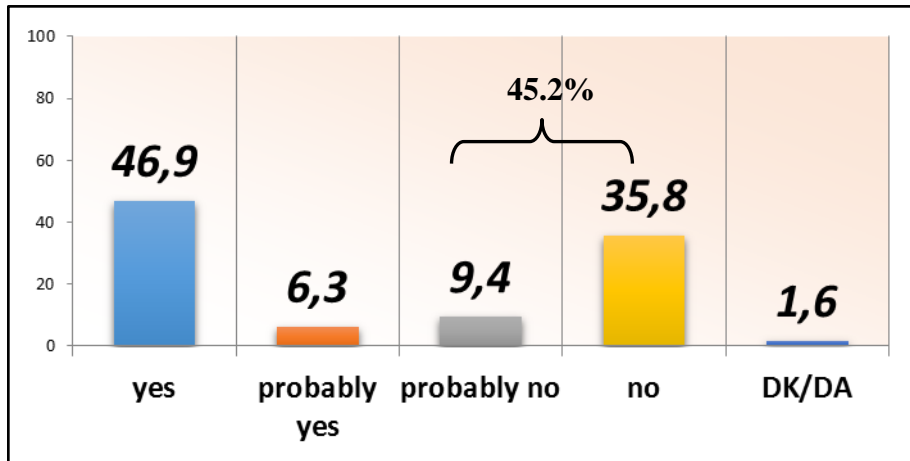
The lack of confidence in the political system, results in a remarkable intention for abstention from the election procedure. Almost 38% of the young voters (45.2% of NEETs and 36.2% of their peers) state that they do not intend to participate in the next elections, regardless of when they will take place (see Figures 29 and 30). Thus, the intentional turnout is limited to 59.9% among the youth. It is worth mentioning that the abstention rate increases as family income decreases, and it is correlated to the employment status (KEPET & KEADIK, 2016a: 46) (see Figures 29 & 30).

Figure 29: Intention to vote in the next elections (Young people, in total)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 41.

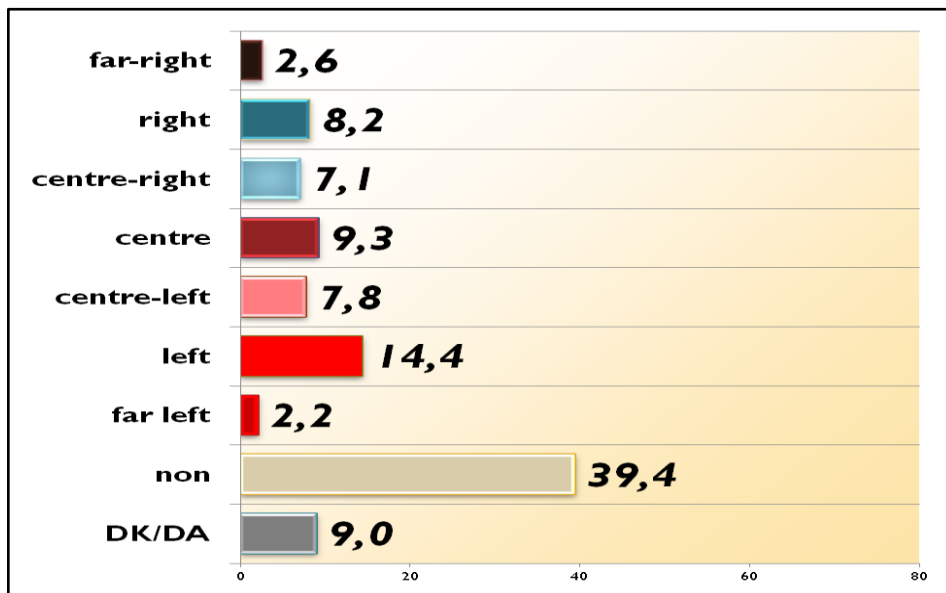
Figure 30: Intention to vote in the next elections (NEETs)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 42.

The rising of a ‘disengaged self’ is clearly and further documented by the findings related to the ideological self-definition. Almost 40% of the Greek young people (42.9% of NEETs and 38% of their peers) feel isolated and alienated from any established ideology. In other words, they are ideologically disengaged (see Figure 31).

Figure 31: Ideological self-definition (Young people, in total)



Source: KEPET & KEADIK 2016a: 43.

5. Discussion: A disrupted life course

Jennifer M. Silva, based on her research on adulthood trajectories and working class lives in East Coast US (see Silva, 2013), documents her breakthrough concept of the “hardened self” in findings such as the following:

for these young men and women, adulthood is not simply being delayed; Instead, adulthood is being dramatically re-imagined along lines of work, family, relationships, intimacy, gender, trust, and dignity.... At its core, this emerging working- class adult self is characterized by low expectations of work.... widespread distrust of social institutions, profound isolation from others... the sources of dignity and meaning of adulthood of their parents' and grandparents' generations – the daily toil of the shop floor, the making of a home and family - slip through their fingers.... (Meanwhile), experiences of betrayal within both the labor market and the institutions that frame their coming of age experiences teach young working-class men and women that they are completely alone, responsible for their own fates and dependent on outside help only at their peril.... (Silva 2013: 8-10 & 83).

Given the current state of play in Greek economy and society where the ongoing recession prevails and its impact over-determines adulthood and the life course young people, things seem even worse. Facing a discouraged and devastated reality, substantially reflecting on every key aspect of their life course, young people in Greece become increasingly frustrated, pessimistic and even angry. Their trust in social and political institutions is gradually collapsing, resulting in a crystal clear ideological alienation that affects their political behavior. Lack of prospects, hopeless job seeking in a disjointed labour market, social exclusion (even not perceived as such, due to the extent of social vulnerability), ineffective training and severe cuts in the welfare provisions define their present and undermine their future. Not surprisingly, the abovementioned result in a deepened and extended discrediting of the political system and the political personnel.

The insecurity and uncertainty that exist among young people, deconstruct the framework of standard biography¹⁵ of numerous young people in Greece. While the long lasting crisis and the subsequent recession limit their future prospects and over-determine their choices.

¹⁵ see in detail on this issue Alheit & Bergamini, 1998: 122.

This is particularly true for those who have been unwillingly isolated from every major welfare provision and from the labour market (let alone the long-term unemployed ones), and who are trapped in daily stress, relying almost exclusively on family (in many cases, a family “squished” in terms of available resources). Indeed, this is a deadlock that affects self-esteem and maximizes pessimism and anger. Not surprisingly, young people’s survival strategies, mainly, include (any) job seeking and migration abroad, which might probably further increase the existing brain drain.

The combination of social vulnerability and pessimism results in both an individualized multi-level withdrawal (see Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 67) and a broader institutional disengagement, transformed into a vicious circle of degradation. Social vulnerability piled upon social exclusion combined with the widening of socio-economic disparities and inequalities, directly threatens social cohesion (see Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Green, Janmaat, Han, 2009: 4; Green & Janmaat, 2012), leading to more social exclusion. Given all the above (including the increasing intergenerational transmission of poverty that deepens socio-economic inequalities among youth), social cohesion is at great risk in Greece.

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