Part I -
Context and challenges
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High but declining youth employment

- Youth (15-29) labour market conditions are favourable in OECD comparison, but the youth employment rate has declined by 7 ppts since its peak in 2008.
- This reflects rapid youth population growth because of high immigration; the absolute number of young people in work has increased, but so has the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Context and challenges
Low NEET rate, but widespread inactivity

- The NEET rate in Norway is one of the lowest across OECD countries (9% vs. OECD average of 14%).
- 2/3 of NEETs are inactive and this share is growing: these young people are generally further from the labour market, and often not in touch with public services.

86 000 NEETs in 2016, 2/3 of them are inactive.
**Context and challenges**

**High school drop-outs are particularly at-risk**

- Young people without an upper-secondary degree account for 56% of all NEETs in Norway, a much greater share than in the OECD on average (36%)
- Those without an upper-secondary degree face a risk of being NEET that is seven times higher than for university graduates (numbers for 25-29 year-olds)

**Context and challenges**

... and early school leaving rates are quite high

- The share of young people without upper-secondary degree is higher in Norway than in the OECD on average and shows no sign of declining
Context and challenges

But NEETs face various forms of disadvantage

Migrant background
NEETs are **twice** as likely as other young people to have come to Norway as migrants

Ill physical health
NEETs are more than **nine** times as likely as other young people to report poor health

Poor mental health
NEETs are **six** times as likely as other young people to report feeling depressed

Intergenerational disadvantage
NEETs are **twice** as likely as other young people to have a father who was not working when they were 16 years old

Context and challenges

Many youth spend at least some time as NEETs

- Over **two-thirds** of all young people have a NEET spell between the ages of 16 and 24; over **one-third** remain NEET for **more than a year** in total;
- Among young people without a high school degree, the share of long-term NEETs (>12 months) is **70%**; it is twice as high for migrants as for natives

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**Young people’s total time spent as NEETs between the ages of 16 and 24 (1990 birth cohort, 2006-13)**

Source: OECD calculations based on register data delivered by Statistics Norway.
Norway has the highest receipt rate of **incapacity-related benefits** across the OECD; a **countercyclical receipt** pattern of incapacity benefits indicates that they serve as income support for difficult-to-employ youth in bad times.

There’s moreover been a gradual shift in receipt patterns from the temporary Work Assessment Allowance to the permanent Disability Benefit.

### Context and challenges

Receipt of incapacity-related benefits is widespread.

### Part II - Main policy conclusions
Combatting early school leaving has long been a priority in Norway:

- Norway is very successful at ensuring that compulsory school graduates transition into upper-secondary education (enrolment nearly universal)
- The "Follow-up Services" are highly effective at tracking high school drop-outs: 94% of NEETs in their target group are successfully contacted

... but the challenge remains:

- Completion rates are low especially for students in vocational education and training (VET): only 63% graduate within two years of the regular programme duration (72% in Sweden, 80% in Austria)

Explanations:

- VET is relatively academic: first 2 years mostly school-based, only then do young people start their 2 years of apprenticeship
- The transition to an apprenticeship is often difficult: 30% of applicants did not find a training place in 2016

Main policy conclusions

1. Promoting school completion and quality VET

Norway should consider strengthening the labour market ties of the VET system

- Combine school- and work-based training from day one to better align VET provision with labour market demand
- Permit students to specialise on an occupation during the school-based part of VET to raise the attractiveness of training and make apprentices’ skills more relevant to employers

... making the hiring of apprentices more affordable to employers

- Encourage the social partners to reconsider apprentice remuneration to flatten the wage structure in the second year such as to better align apprentice wages with their productivity

... and improving the VET system’s inclusiveness for weak students

- Continue expanding lower-level VET tracks to prevent drop-out of academically weak or more practically minded students
Support for NEETs is comprehensive and highly integrated

- NAV offices serve as “one-stop shops” for employment and social services and are generally well-equipped to support young jobseekers
- NAV carefully profiles all jobseekers to identify barriers to education or work and effectively targets resources to the most disadvantaged jobseekers

The New Youth Effort has the potential to improve support for NEETs

- Recent studies have cast doubt on the effectiveness of the old Youth Guarantee: insufficient awareness of contents among NAV caseworkers; not user-centred; no systematic outcome measurement
- The New Youth Effort addresses some of these shortcomings promising personalised support to all youth within eight weeks of registration

A recent reform tightens access to the Work Assessment Allowance

- Clarified eligibility criteria, strengthened follow-up support, reduced maximum benefit duration, etc.

Norway should take further steps to promote the labour market integration of youth with reduced work capacity

- Clearer guidance for the caseworkers responsible for work capacity assessments and better guidelines/compliance monitoring for GPs assessing disability
- Strengthened support for highly disadvantaged social assistance recipients, including by expanding the Qualification Programme

... improve the effectiveness of labour market measures

- Re-assess reliance on work experience measures and expand use of training programmes (upper-secondary qualifications, language classes for migrants)
- Increase the use of rigorous impact evaluations to measure programme effects

... and expand data collection and exchange

- Facilitate data exchange between educational authorities and NAV
- Intensify reporting on local-level programme implementation
Thank you!

Access Investing in Youth: Norway online: http://oe.cd/youth-norway

Earlier volumes of the Investing in Youth series have been published for Brazil (2014), Latvia, Tunisia (both 2015), Australia, Lithuania, Sweden (all 2016) and Japan (2017). Check also the OECD’s flagship publication Society at a Glance 2016 with a focus chapter on NEET youth: http://oe.cd/sag

OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs: www.oecd.org/els